

Notes of the Weardale Area Action Partnership Board Meeting – 2nd March 2023



Eastgate Village Hall

ATTENDEES

Board Members

Public Representatives: Adrian Holden (AHo)
Richard Lawrie (RL)
Alison Humble (AHu)
Will Wearmouth (WW)

Partner Representatives: Damian Pearson (DP) – Believe Housing – **CHAIR**
Sgt Grant Cockerill (GC) – Durham Constabulary
Jamie Clarkson (JC) – Tri-Responder / Fire & Rescue Service
Sarah Lee (SL) - Health

Elected Members: Cllr Anita Savory (AS)
Cllr Helen Barrass (HB) – Muggleswick Parish Council
Cllr Olive Wilson (OW) – Witton-le-Wear Parish Council

Officers Angelina Maddison (AM)
Tracy Edwards (TE)
Fiona Barber (FB)
Bill Lightburn (BL)

Presenters Jack McGurk (JM)

Other Adam Turnbull (AT) – Durham Constabulary

APOLOGIES

Public Representatives: Kevin Roddam

Elected Representatives: Cllr John Shuttleworth
Cllr Angela Hawkes (Stanhope Parish Council)
Cllr David Sugden (DS) – Wolsingham Parish Council

Partner Representatives: Jeff Bell – Business Representative
Michael Kelleher - Durham County Council
Dan Wootton (DW) – Fire & Rescue Service
Julian Haynes (JH) – Voluntary Sector

Officers Tracy Edwards (TE)

BOARD MEETING

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions were made and apologies recorded as above.

2. Declaration of Interest

OW declared an interest for the Witton-le-Wear Youth Club project.

HB declared an interest in the Champing at Muggleswick and the Muggleswick Parish Hall Extension project.

The Chair asked that Board members declare any additional interests as they arise on the agenda.

3. Agreement of Notes from Board Meeting held on 19th January 2023 and Matters Arising

The notes of this meeting, as circulated, were **AGREED** and confirmed as a true record by those present.

There were no matters arising.

4. Presentations

Jack McGurk - Chair of Values Group, believe housing

- **The Customer Voices Group and the role it plays within believe housing**

JM advised the Board that the Values Group consists of mainly tenants of believe housing as well as an independent and a staff member. He explained that they are currently looking for more members and to find out more visit their website - <https://www.believehousing.co.uk/>

The aim of the group is to ensure that the voice of the customer is heard and to ensure that the core values of the organisation are at the centre of everything that is done.

JM explained that the group look at trends and anomalies that are identified through such means as a customer survey and set up focus groups to investigate and look at ways to address any issues arising. JM spoke of a current focus on Neighbourhoods which has attracted a lot of interest from customers with 48 people being interested in taking part in a focus group. Future areas to research further include quality of homes and void properties.

JM encouraged Board members to spread the word that they are looking for new members and share the opportunity with anyone who may be interested.

There were no questions and the Chair thanked JM for his presentation.

Project Update – Rural Advice Worker – Linda Pearson

Unfortunately, Linda was unable to attend the Board meeting tonight as planned due to volume of work. She sent a brief update:

“We are now seeing a variety of different issues that many clients are facing, due to the current cost of living crisis. A lot of the clients are struggling financially, especially around the cost of food and heating bills for example. There is currently a lot of charitable help and grants available, therefore referrals, are needed more than ever, to look at the options available to individuals.

Several clients in the Dales have contacted us for advice on whether they can get help with different types of fuel (so not necessarily gas and electric) Indeed there is such help for example by way of Alternative fuel payments, which many clients are unaware of.

As always as part of the normal practice for referrals, a full benefit check is offered to all clients. This often flags up entitlement to other benefits, that also help the financial pressures on households.”

Headline figures for Last Quarter (Oct – Dec 2022):

- 27 Advice Interventions – 1 via Home Visit
- £23,290 of extra income identified
- Age of clients helped ranges from 40-94
- 1 home visit carried out

AM encouraged Board members to pass on Linda’s information on to anyone who may benefit from her help. She also asked Board members to get in touch if they would like any flyers for Linda’s work as well as the Community Wellness Coordinator. **Action: AM to drop leaflets off at Stanhope Police Station**

AS commented that she had referred someone to Linda a couple of weeks ago and she had received a follow up call from that person to say that Linda had contacted her straight away to help. This person told AS that Linda had made a £100 worth of difference to her benefit which has made a big difference as it is a lot of money. AS asked the Chair if it could be placed on record our thanks to Linda for the work she is doing in Weardale.

5. Weardale Action Partnership Update

Durham Community Engagement Review (AAP Consultation)

AM asked Board members if they had any comments to make following the circulation of the report carried out by ERS.

Board members made the following observations:

- The language used in the report was hard to follow – a high usage of ‘management speak’ detracted from the message
- Felt document didn’t flow and that the conclusion was given at the beginning
- Welcomed the proposed shift away from administration of grants
- Felt that community development in Weardale was not reflected within the report when it suggested improvements are needed generally
- Belief that not all of the other AAPs work as successfully as Weardale AAP
- Concern that adopting a computer system to deal with grant applications removes the ‘personal touch’ which is unique to the AAP
- Concern that a large volume of work is landing on the desk of elected members

- Comments that problems identified in the report with regard to political differences is not evidence of a systemic problem but is instead a people problem.
- Concern that it is easy to hijack public meetings with a political agenda so this may create a problem that the report recommendations are trying to avoid
- Don't think that a thematic approach will work as it is not responding to the individual needs of an area
- Concern that the volume of work put into project development before application stage is not reflected within the findings
- Concern that losing the Board setup loses the opportunity for people with varied and different specialisms and knowledge to come together and share their experiences and work together for the good of the AAP

AM took up SL's offer to spotlight and provide information on the Health section of the report as she felt that this part of the document was positive.

AM shared that as an AAP our door is always open for groups to come and talk to us and to discuss application requirements. It is through doing this that we are able to link groups and projects together. She welcomed the acknowledgement of the work of the AAP during events such as Storm Arwen but cautioned that this must be distinguished from the actual AAP role.

AM advised that Board members will be invited to a series of online consultation events and dates will be forwarded once received. She suggested that in the meantime, an email be sent out to all Board members asking for a confidential response to be sent in response to the report. **Action: FB**

HB asked that it be borne in mind that not everyone has access to computers when the consultation takes place.

Warm Spaces

AM shared a series of photos taken with groups offering a 'Warm Space' who received vouchers from the Lakes and Dales Co-op to assist with the purchase of teas and coffees.

AM asked Board members to let her know of any group who is offering warm space activities or craft groups etc in order that we can arrange to supply them with some vouchers.

6. Towns & Villages Funding Update

AM began by giving an overview of projects considered to date:

- **Witton-le-Wear Community Centre** - not in a position to put forward a project proposal at this time.
- **Weardale Open Air Swimming Pool** – There is a current land dispute which is unlikely to be resolved in time for an application to be made
- **Weardale Museum** – update to be given by BL
- **Champing in Muggleswick** – update to be given by BL
- **Ashcroft MUGA** – approved and underway
- **St Thomas' Church Hall** – update to be given by BL

- **Other Play areas** – AM advised that if there is a struggle to deploy funding then the play areas could be brought forward. Project development is underway.

BL gave an update on the various projects which are being considered for Towns and Villages funding.

1. £20K Cllrs Towns & Villages Fund (£10K per Councillor)
 - £10K approved (ANPR Cameras)
 - £10K committed (play area improvements)
2. £210K AAP Towns & Villages Fund
 - Explored 8 projects in total (4 projects unable to progress beyond planning stage)
 - Approved 1 project - Ashcroft MUGA (£32K) – Start up meeting confirmed for 10/03
 - 1 project fully developed and now working to raise funding - Champing at Muggleswick (£50K ring-fenced)
 - Discussions are ongoing with St Thomas Church Hall & Weardale Museum
 - May also be an opportunity for the Fund to support a package of improvements to children's play areas
3. Programme ends 30 March 2024 (deadline for grants to be issued)

St Thomas' Church Hall, Stanhope

Background

- Total project cost indicated at circa £100K
- For a range of improvement works, to offer improved access, more flexible use of space, and extended use of the building
- Preplanning advice obtained from planning authority – but initial feedback on external element of proposed works unfavourable

Progress/Current Position

- Planning officers have visited the Hall and their stance remains unchanged
- The Hall is submitting a full planning application this week (with no amendments)
- Church Hall management will review the project following the planning decision (if current spec is not approved it would need to consider whether an alternative design is both practical and affordable)

Any formal application to the AAP will come after planning discussions are concluded

Champing in Muggleswick – HB declared an interest (Item 2 above) WW also declared an interest

Background

- Project costs significantly higher at £214K (high level estimates, including contingencies)
- Faculty (permissive approval from Church authorities) agreed
- Specialist expertise engaged to help with detailed project development and targeted match funding
- Church authorities provisionally agreed to use proceeds from sale of a local asset in support of the scheme

Progress/Current Position

- The Church Council has held discussions with 2 major national funders (Benefact Trust & National Churches Trust)
- Project confirmed as eligible for funding by both (but 30% of cost needs to be secured in advance of application for Benefact Trust & 50% for National Churches Trust)
- Full application submitted to the DCC Community Resilience Fund (CEDT) – currently being appraised
- PCC awaiting formal confirmation from higher church authorities re: ringfencing of sale proceeds

Application will be brought forward to AAP when the proposed funding package is finalised

AHu queried whether the funding from DCC will allow them to meet the 30% and 50% thresholds for match funding. BL confirmed that it would. AM commended HB for her determination in seeing this project through. WW shared that whilst at first, he was sceptical about the project and concerned at the lack of initial match funding from the church, he is now of the opinion that it could be a trailblazing project for the Church nationally and also applauded the financial commitment made by the church to provide some funding towards it.

Weardale Museum

Background

- Museum had indicated a prospective application to the AAP for new Chapel windows as part of a package of works to secure the building envelope (cost indicated a being in the order of £35K).
- Had also requested discussions with DCC CEDT with a view to opening an application to its Community Resilience Fund
- Board expressed concern that there was still insufficient information to be able to fully assess the project, therefore the proposal of a site meeting at the Museum was welcomed, to better understand the Project vision and progress towards achieving this
- Questions raised by Board Members had been collated with those asked by DCC CEDT and submitted to the Chair of Trustees of Weardale Museum, with an early response requested to allow circulation of information in advance of a site visit

Progress/Current Position

- Response to queries received from the Museum, and circulated to the Board in advance of the site meeting
- This took place on 23/02, and was attended by available AAP Board Members, AAP & CEDT Officers, and a number of Museum Trustees, advisors and partners
- Attendees viewed the existing Museum and the proposed Chapel extension, received an overview of the development proposals and were afforded the opportunity to raise further queries. Some key observations were made;
 - The scheme is ambitious - significant resources (circa £1m) are still required to realise it in full
 - Re-prioritisation of funders post-Covid means major capital funding is currently very hard to find
 - Trustees advised of risk-related concerns around the integrity of the Chapel structure – with a meeting pending with DCC planning/building control

representatives to discuss this (to take place on 03/03). Its currently unclear how significant the risk is

1. A window replacement application to the AAP would be integral to completion of the Chapel external works
2. There is a sizeable funding gap to achieve this works phase – indicated at around £50K plus windows
3. A range of additional information was requested at the meeting – including confirmation of this funding gap and provision of more detailed business planning/financial information.

Board members are asked to consider the museum request in light of the information supplied by the Museum and the discussions at the on-site meeting

Board members had a lengthy discussion regarding the Weardale Museum's proposal. Concerns and observations included:

- Concern that funding landscape has changed significantly post-Covid and that the project will not be able to be completed within timescale
- Although it was evident that trustees are extremely passionate and committed about this project, statements were made directly to Board members that caused them concern.
- Concerns that projections are based on guesswork rather than evidence based.
- Concern that it is a substantial building with significant issues and requires a very large amount of funding to complete
- Concerns remain over siting of car park and safety of pedestrians accessing the museum – especially for those with pushchairs or wheelchairs
- Commended the enthusiasm of those involved but feel that the project needs to be revisited to concentrate on the basics first – i.e. ensuring roof and walls are secure first. This would need to be resolved before funding for windows could be considered.
- Concerns remain regarding lack of engagement with locals – no public meeting has been convened
- Suggestion that other funding opportunities may be more suitable
- Future sustainability concern that not only will the renovation require a large amount of funding, but future maintenance costs will also be substantial
- Concern that any funding allocated to windows may be re-directed to other works if deemed more urgent potentially violating any Terms and Conditions of a grant offer
- Public money is not usually used for development phases of a project – more for projects that will complete with tangible results being evidenced
- Concern that current timescales for the project are unachievable given level of funding required

Board members agreed to wait for the outcome of a planning meeting on 3rd March at the Weardale Museum before making a final decision on funding.

AS suggested that as an AAP we look to ring-fence our remaining Towns and Villages funding by the September Board meeting in an attempt to secure the money for Weardale.

7. WAP Budgets Update

Area Budget - £117,264

Projects Underway

Stanhope Market Place – Installation of Infrastructure & Lights - **£12,531**

- Project anticipated to complete this year

Killhope Tales - **£13,500**

Small Grants Fund - **£10,000**

Wolsingham Parish Council & Wolsingham Wayfarers – Family Walk Interpretation panels and noticeboard - **£9,500**

Accessible Advice in Weardale - **£19,635** (£10,000 Welfare Reform + £9,635 Area Budget)

Stanhope Barrington Wraparound Care - **£21,703**

Total allocated –	£76,869
Approved awaiting ratification -	£11,119
Unallocated -	£34,496

Applications circulated by email - for ratification by Board

- **Community Wellness Coordinator- £1,619** – The project was discussed; no additional comments or conditions were made. **Email approval ratified by Board.**
- **Killhope Wheel £9,500** – The project was discussed; no additional comments or conditions were made. **Email approval ratified by Board.**

Expressions of interest – for Board consideration

- **Muggleswick Village Hall extension- £23,820** - AM advised this could be an Area Budget application for next year as Board members have not had the opportunity to digest the information for discussion at the meeting.
- **Citizen Songwriters (revision in process) - £5,000** - Once this revised application is received it will be forwarded to Board members for consideration.

Ideas for Projects

- Play Areas – dependent on Towns & Villages application (£34,496)
- Frosterley Lights (£7k)
- Crawleyside Lights (£7k) – AM advised that the Christmas lights projects in Weardale are a fine balancing act given the current cost of living crisis.
- Weardale WordFest (£10k)
- Youth Work for Stanhope (£10k)
- New bridge – Killhope (£70k)
- Norman Wright Pavilion – work in progress
- Stanhope Silver Band – 200th Celebration
- Stanhope Silver Band – Refurbishment of door
- Community Resilience Planning - AM advised that Northern Powergrid have given a lot of money into the area. WW advised that Eastgate Village Hall has

received £19k to replace windows, doors, and lighting and thanked the AAP as the process was made easier due to a BEEP audit and report being completed.

- Harehope Quarry – Children’s Activities

AM explained that there is £34,496 remaining in the budget and asked the Board if they would be minded to ringfence this funding to develop play areas in Weardale.

Board AGREED to ring-fence £34,496 for play area development in Weardale

Welfare Reform - £10,000

- Accessible Advice in Weardale – £19,635 - Underway
(£10,000 Welfare Reform + £9,635 Area Budget)

Youth Fund - £9,902

- Witton-le-Wear Youth Club continuation £9,788 - **OW declared an interest (Item 2 above)**
- The project was discussed - no additional comments or conditions. **Email approval ratified by Board.**

Older Peoples Social Isolation Fund (OPSIF)- £25,000

- Community Wellness Coordinator – Application approved
(£25,000 OPSIF + £1,619 Area Budget)

Young Peoples Healthy Relationships - £10,000

AM advised that the current criteria is currently unworkable in Weardale, and that flexibility is being investigated to see if this can be delivered in schools.

Fun & Food

AM advised that the money allocated to Weardale is dependant on the Free Schools Meal allocation. Not everyone who is eligible in Weardale has signed up for them and therefore the pot of money is not very big.

AM advised that three applications have been received for Easter provision

- Witton-le-Wear Youth Club- **£2,422**
- Citizen Songwriters- **£2,603**
- Wear Rivers Trust - **£2,023** (application not progressed at this time as it has not been considered to be value for money)

8. Neighbourhood Budget

Cllr Savory

Neighbourhood Budget

- Winter Warmers – Wolsingham School
- Wolsingham Christmas Market
- Coronation Badges – Wolsingham School – Application previously circulated via email for approval due to Cllr Savory’s DOI - approved by Board.

Small Grant Fund

- Wolsingham Nursery – Repairs to Castle
- Eastgate Village Hall – Printer
- Weardale Flower & Garden Club – RHS event, Newby Hall

- Weardale Community Hospital – Purchase and printing of Tea Towels
- Blind Life – New Age Curling Competition
- Weardale Flower & Garden Club – Wreath Making
- Wolsingham WI – Pantomime
- Wolsingham Toddler Group – Play and learning resources

Cllr Savory showed Board members a tea towel that had been designed by one of the pupils at Wolsingham School for the Weardale Community Hospital

Cllr Shuttleworth

Neighbourhood Budget

- Stanhope Photographic Society – Equipment
- High Pennine Horticultural Society – Support to group
- Weardale Agricultural Society – Weardale Show
- Wear Rivers Trust- Bash the Balsam
- Rookhope Village Hall – Electrical Update
- Rookhope Village Hall – Boiler
- Stanhope Show – CCTV, Barriers & Equipment
- Wolsingham Show – Storage Facility – No Board comments
- Wolsingham School – Coronation Badges – No Board comments

Small Grant Fund

- Rookhope Village Hall – Leek Show
- Cowshill Village Hall – Leek Club Running costs
- Wolsingham Football Academy – Karting
- St John's Chapel Recreation Ground – Repairs & Insurance
- Weardale Together CIC – Warm Hub in Stanhope
- Stanhope Town Football Club – Running costs (Referee, Hall hire & kit)
- Barrington Bites – Christmas Event for the Elderly
- Rookhope Village Hall – Village Flowers

Coronation Fund

AM explained new funding available to each elected member with an allocation of £300 to support local community activities that specifically celebrate/ commemorate the Kings Coronation.

All funding associated with the Coronation Fund will need to be fully spent by 31st December 2023. Advice and guidance is available to organisers of events who may need to apply to the council for road closures. The street party policy aims to make it quick and easy to apply for a temporary road closure licence, and to help more people enjoy the occasion, it is also FREE to apply. It is recommended that residents apply for their licence no later than 7 April - 4 weeks before Coronation weekend.

To find out more contact your elected member or AAP team.

9. Countywide Partner Issues

No issues were raised.

10. Dates and Times of Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Weardale Action Partnership Board will take place on Thursday **27th April at 6:00pm in Eastgate Village Hall** and will include the AGM.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.