



**4 Together Partnership Area Action Partnership (AAP)
Minutes of the Board Meeting
Wednesday 5 July 2023
Dean Bank & Ferryhill Literary Institute**

PRESENT:

Joanne Burnip – Livin Housing, Richard Morgan – Fire Service Representative, Victoria Murray – DCC Representative, Carole Atkinson, Susan Kirby, Oliver Peeke, Dennis Ramsey (**Chair**), Cllr Peter Atkinson – DCC, Cllr Curtis Bihari – DCC, Cllr Joe Makepeace – Ferryhill Town Council, Cllr Elaine Peeke – DCC, Lee Copeland – Principal AAP Coordinator, Peter Garrod – Principal Community Development Project Officer, Paula Stockport – AAP Support Officer, Steph Rich – DCC Senior Policy Officer (Regen, Economy & Growth), Ben Race – Capture Films

OBSERVERS:

Mr A Coulthard, Mr C Rich

APOLOGIES:

Mark Booth, Nigel Jones, Insp Mike Sammut, Tony Cutmore, Paula Nixon, Angela Blanchard

A1. Introductions & Apologies

DR welcomed everyone to the meeting of the 4 Together Partnership Board. Apologies for absence had been received, as above.

A2. Agreement of Minutes from Previous Meeting (3.5.23) - Matters Arising

LC reviewed the previous minutes for matters arising, actions and accuracy. There were no outstanding actions or other matters arising, and the minutes were **AGREED** as a true record (DR signed a copy).

A3. Countywide Partner Issues

A3.1 DCC Housing Strategy Consultation (Steph Rich)

Board members received an update presentation in relation to the Council's current Housing Strategy consultation. The Strategy will provide a strategic framework to inform the actions and investment of the Council and its partners.

The Vision for the Strategy states:

'By 2035 County Durham will be a place that has good quality homes that meet the needs of existing and future residents that they can afford. The provision and quality of housing will support economic growth, contribute to improved health, and create and maintain sustainable, mixed and balanced

communities. People will live long and independent lives within connected communities.'

SR gave a brief outline of the proposed principles and priorities for the Strategy.

The consultation poses 2 x questions:

- **What do you think are the housing issues in your area?**
- **What do you think the potential solutions are?**

Questions/comments were invited from Board members and the following points were noted:

- OP commented that he believes there isn't enough support or incentives currently for first-time buyers and also people who want to invest in their own homes. A number of 'arms-length' housing companies are placing people in certain properties/areas, resulting in increased antisocial behaviour, which subsequently puts people off investing in their own homes. OP feels there is a cycle of areas across the County that are sinking economically; sustainability comes from first-time buyers, and they should be afforded a degree of protection from DCC. SR commented that DCC are keen to ensure a broad mix of housing & housing products, which supports sustainability, e.g. not just affordable housing to buy but also affordable rents. DCC work in partnership with registered providers to ensure their stock is to a good standard, as well as offering tenancy support.
- Cllr PA commented that there a number of empty homes, particularly in Ferryhill, and asked whether DCC are proposing any 'new ways' to bring these back into use. Often, this process can drag on for years. SR commented that there's no 'silver bullet' for resolving the situation with empty homes, which can often be a symptom of other issues which then becomes a wider problem. DCC's approach would be to look at various options to help tackle more than just the empty homes.
- Cllr JM commented that empty homes have been a problem for decades in Ferryhill and feels that DCC has a very poor track record of using existing powers to take people to court. Absent landlords are still buying cheap properties and letting them fall into a poor state. Cllr JM would like to see more proactive measures taken by DCC; it would appear that no one is ever taken to task over empty homes. SR noted the point.
- Cllr EP expressed concern at the high number of empty properties across the County, some of which no one seems to know who they belong to. This results in them falling into disrepair, as well as a loss of income to DCC from Council Tax.
- CA expressed concern about the number of people being housed in the area without the required infrastructure to support them; often these people have little to no furniture or belongings, and they aren't being signposted to relevant support services. CA also feels that DCC need to support not just new people coming into the area but also the people who have lived here for years. Our local bus services are inadequate, people are having difficulty accessing medical services, and schools are struggling with the excess influx. CA strongly feels that DCC should be doing more to provide support, particularly for vulnerable residents being brought into the area.
- VM commented from a DCC perspective that there's a lot of related activity already happening outside of this consultation. A report is being heard at Cabinet next week in relation to the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan, which references some new powers that will be available around empty

properties and second homes. There will also be some consultation launched shortly in relation to the introduction of additional premiums for long-term empty properties around recovering Council Tax. Work is also ongoing in relation to supported housing to make sure DCC has the right provision and standards wrapped around that. The consultation should hopefully be going live on 19 July, and feedback on the proposals would be welcome once it's been launched.

SR advised that the Housing Strategy consultation is open until 18 August 2023. Further information is available via the website:

www.durham.gov.uk/thehousingconversation

DR thanked Steph for the presentation.

[SR left the meeting]

A3.2 Capture Films – 150 Years of Chilton & Windlestone (Ben Race)

BR updated Board members on the 'Chilton & Windlestone 150 Years' project which was funded via the AAP. The aim of the project was to create a documentary covering the history of Chilton & Windlestone from 1970 to 2020, through local engagement and research. Part of the project includes creating an online archive of all photos, videos and documents collected, and the project will culminate in a celebration/premiere event.

Board members were in agreement that this is a fantastic project, and commended BR for all his hard work, and for the presentation.

BR will forward a short video clip to the AAP team for onward circulation to the Board.

[BR & AC left the meeting]

A3.3 Community Engagement Review (LC)

LC gave Board members an update presentation in relation to progress with the Community Engagement Review. A report will be considered by Cabinet next week, with a number of recommendations around the future model for AAPs, as well as revised governance and funding arrangements. LC updated Board members in relation to the proposed timescales:

- July 2023 – agreement at Cabinet
- Phased implementation project plan:
 - Number of improvement processes delivered by April 2024
 - Transition year (including additional process improvements) April 2024 - May 2025
 - Launch - First year of a 4yr planning cycle from May 2025
- Communications plan to promote new model and phased improvement delivery (between now and May 2025)
- Regular training opportunities
- New model goes live in May 2025
- New robust Governance and Terms of Reference and documentation with a commitment to review on an annual basis

Questions/comments were invited from Board members:

- Cllr JM asked where the proposals for the new Local Network model will leave current Board members? LC clarified that the AAPs will continue to operate as we are until 2025, but further discussion is needed on the specific detail around the transition from AAPs to Local Networks and how this will impact on existing members.
- OP asked whether there will be any future boundary changes. LC clarified that Cabinet will be revisiting this once the Boundary Commission's reworked boundaries have been finalised later this year.

LC will keep Board members updated on progress. DR suggested that this be added as a standing agenda item for future Board meetings (**Action 1: LC**).

A4. Local Neighbourhood Issues

LC confirmed that no local neighbourhood issues had been submitted to the AAP team to bring to the Board.

A4.1 Neighbourhood Policing Update

Item deferred, no Police rep present at the meeting.

A5. Area & Neighbourhood Budget Update

A5.1 Area Budget Update

PG briefly updated Board members in relation to Area Budget. In terms of 2022-23 funding, all projects have now received grant offer letters and most are now underway.

For our 2023-24 funding, PG clarified that the call for projects was launched on 5 June and is open for Expressions of Interest until 28 July. It is planned to carry out project ranking by mid-September, with a deadline for full applications in October. Following final Board sign-off and technical appraisal, projects should hopefully be ready for delivery no later than January 2024.

PG briefly updated in relation to our Towns & Villages funding. Three projects have previously been approved, with one complete, one which should be completed by the end of August and the third should be complete by September. There are two other projects still going through the application process.

A5.2 Neighbourhood Budget Update

PG confirmed that a report had been circulated in advance with the meeting papers, for Board members to note and make a decision on the approval/non-approval of those NB applications where a declaration of interest has been noted. PG gave an outline of the three project proposals in the report:

Project 3.1 - Councillor Julie Cairns – Chilton Town Council – **Community Youth Hub**

The aim of the project is to support the regeneration of the Chilton Miners Welfare facility. The funding will be used to update the play equipment within the welfare park providing a more inclusive, fun and safe environment for young people

Declaration of Interest: Julie Cairns – Chilton Town Councillor
NBTV Allocation: £10,000

Project 3.2 - Councillor Joe Quinn – Kirk Merrington Primary School – **Outdoor Learning in Early Years**

Funding would be used to improve the Early Years outdoor area by providing some additional equipment for young people to enjoy enhanced experience in School. The equipment will promote physical activity in an outdoor environment and support the improvement of fine motor skills and sensory skills.

Declaration of Interest: None
NB Allocation: £5,000

Project 3.3 - Councillor Joe Quinn – Dean Bank Primary School – **Dean Bank Primary School**

Funding would be used to improve the sports and physical activity equipment that will be made accessible to enhance the offer to existing and new community clubs. The school aims to increase the opportunities for the community to access the school outside of school hours and this equipment will allow them to attract more clubs.

Declaration of Interest: Cllr Joe Quinn – School Governor
NB Allocation: £4,289.98

There were no comments noted in relation to any of the applications included in the report, and Board members **approved** the report.

PG also confirmed that an updated summary of NB spend had been circulated in advance, for information.

A5.3 Fun & Food Funding Update

PG confirmed that a report had been circulated in advance with the meeting papers, for Board members to note. PG asked Board members to consider the two recommendations in the report:

- It is recommended that the Board consider placing an upper limit on future rounds of Fun and Food allocations based on the funding available from both the Department of Education and the funding made available for the half-term holidays through Durham County Council.
- It is further recommended that the Board delegate the responsibility of placing an upper limit to the Vice Chairs of each sector of the Board.

Board members **agreed** with the recommendations.

**A6. Date & Time of Next Meeting:
Wednesday 6 September 2023, 6:00pm (venue tbc)**

DR thanked everyone for their attendance, and the meeting was closed.