

Durham Area Action Partnership Minutes of the Board Meeting  
Tuesday 26 September 2023  
Sherburn Community Centre, Front Street, Sherburn Village, DH6 1HD

**Board Members**

**Attendance:** Cllr Mark Wilkes, Sheela Bell, Rebecca Ashby, Cllr Liz Brown, Jen Straughan-Hawley, Sarah Burns, Chris Tindale, Cllr Bill Kellett, Mick Henderson, Sam Humble, Paul Howard, Paul Lysaght, Cllr Lucy Hovvels, Cllr Richard Ormerod

**AAP Officer**

**Attendance:** Craig Morgan – AAP Co-ordinator  
Wendy Lavelle – Community Development Project Officer  
Lyndsey Hunter – Community Development Project Officer  
PJ Harding – Community Development Project Officer (Towns and Villages Team)  
Marie Ainscough – AAP Support Officer

**Presenter:** Jeff Garfoot, Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services - Durham County Council (DCC)

**Apologies Board:** Parish Cllr Maureen Boettcher, Cllr Eric Mavin, Cllr Lesley Mavin, Gary Tidbury, Dave Clarke, Hannah Shepherd, Georgia Donohue, Tony Hockey

**Forum Members:** 15 forum members attended the meeting.

1 [Welcome from the Chair, Introductions and Apologies](#)

Jen Straughan-Hawley (Chair) welcomed everyone to the Durham AAP Board Meeting and a round of introductions followed.

Apologies for absence, [as above].

Dan Lonsdale from the Student's Union is the new Durham University representative on the Durham AAP Board and is keen to attend the meetings.

2 [Presentation: Council Budget / Medium Term Financial Plan \(MTFP\) Consultation](#)

Jeff Garfoot, Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services – DCC delivered a presentation providing an overview of Durham County Council's 2024/2025 Forecast Revenue Budget Consultation.

We would like to hear your views on our spending plans, the current savings proposals and on which areas you feel we should prioritise for further, future savings including:

- Our proposals for saving £3.7 million and how these may impact on you.
- Our proposal to increase council tax for 2024/25 by 4.99% (with 2% of that to help meet rising adult social care costs)
- What other service areas we should prioritise for savings to meet the shortfall of £6.2 million for next year, and to achieve the remaining £43.5 million required in savings over the next four years.

To have your say you can:

- Complete an online survey on [www.durham.gov.uk/consultation](http://www.durham.gov.uk/consultation)
- Pick up a paper survey at our libraries and Customer Access Points
- Attend one of the AAP Board meetings.
- Contact us at [www.durham.gov.uk/consultation](http://www.durham.gov.uk/consultation) if you need the information in an alternative format.

The closing date for online comments is 5.00pm on Friday 20 October 2023.

Jeff was thanked for his presentation and the meeting was opened for discussion. The following points and questions were raised and responses given:

- How much could the council raise if they were able to charge council tax on student HMO's?  
It would be about £8.5m. The grant the council got off the government used to take this into account but the funding formula for this has now been frozen.
- Is the increase in children in care the same in other areas.  
Yes it is and the Council do rely heavily on the private sector to provide care and the council are also buying more properties so children can be accommodated and looked after.
- Will there be any funding available through the new regional mayor as they have some responsibilities for regeneration.  
There will be some limited capital and revenue funding but not to the scale of what DCC already has.
- Front line services should be expanded not cut. Choices are being forced to be made.
- What is the Council doing about empty homes?  
The council charges an uplift of up to 100% on council tax for empty homes. This is bringing in an additional £900K to the council but this income has been included in the figures. The council also has a fund to help developers get empty homes back into use.
- If you increase the cost of waste disposal, then this could impact on fly tipping.  
All cuts are risk assessed to gauge their impact and Durham has some of the lowest fly tipping rates in the country.

- The music service to schools has the potential on the health and wellbeing of young people. Please take care of the music service. Durham is one of the few councils to still have a music service.

[Cllr Richard Ormerod joined the meeting]

### 3 [Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 13 July 2023 and Matters Arising](#)

The Chair reviewed the previous minutes for matters arising, actions and accuracy.

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2023 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

#### *Matters Arising*

There were no further updates on the Community Engagement Review. Craig will continue to update as progress is made.

The following projects had received their offer letters –

- Waddington Street Centre
- St Margaret's Centre
- Lumiere

### 4 [AAP Funding Update](#)

An update on the current funding position had been included in the papers.

£73,318 of Area Budget projects had been approved; and there was £54,476.54\* left to allocate.

\*This figure may change depending on whether the applications are approved by the board at this meeting.

#### **Towns and Villages Funding**

£170,307 of Towns and Villages Fund projects had been approved; and there was £39,694 left to allocate.

\*This figure may change depending on whether the Whinney Hill Resurfacing application is approved by the board at this meeting.

### 5 [Task Group Updates / Review](#)

#### **Healthy and Resilient Communities Application Discussion**

At the Healthy and Resilient Communities Task Group meeting held on 5 September 2023, task group members considered the following applications and recommended that they be brought to this board meeting for wider consideration. Board members had received a copy of the area budget applications and a project record form for each project prior to the meeting.

- Kings' Church Achor Project

An application had been received for £5,393 towards a total project cost of £16,271.

Kings Church offer services that support isolated older people in and around Sherburn Road in Gilesgate. This includes a weekly lunch club, a befriending service and gardening service. The funding will enable them to continue to deliver these essential services to older people in the area.

The Board was happy to support this project and the application was approved.

- Move the Masses – Move Mates

An application had been received for £19,297 towards a total project cost of £23,297.

Move Mates is a project that pairs volunteers with people who, for a number of reasons have become socially isolated. Together they set realistic aims that get people out of the house and walking. Referrals come to the scheme from a variety of sources including carers and GPs. The funding will support the development workers whose role is to recruit, train and support volunteers as well as managing the pairings and other elements of the project.

The Board was happy to support this project and the application was approved.

[Paul Lysaght left the meeting while the Board discussed the following project]

- Durham Community Boxing Club

An application had been received for £7,500 towards a total project cost of £10,183.

The boxing club works with a large number of young people providing boxing and fitness training. To help the club develop its offer they had requested funding to enable them to install a competition standard ring at their gym in Belmont. It is hoped this will help to increase membership and the profile of the club.

A comment was made on what percentage of people using the club were from the Durham AAP area and surrounding areas?

The Board was happy to support this project and the application was approved.

[Paul Lysaght re-joined the meeting]

- Northern Learning Trust (NLT) – Pelaw View

An application had been received for £12,680 towards a total project cost of £32,780.

The funding would allow NLT to employ a tutor to work with residents of Sherburn Road Estate through provision at the Pelaw View Centre. Activities would include healthy cooking on a budget, arts and crafts, local and family history and family learning. The aim is to give people employability skills, functional skills, ICT skills and will introduce them to vocational programmes.

The Board was happy to support this project and the application was approved.

Craig asked the Board if they found the project record sheet useful and they said they did.

The following applications that were not recommended to the September Board were –

- Pitlington Scouts
- Little Wardrobe CIC
- Climate Emergency Centre
- MK Youth Sports
- Littletown Cricket Club

Craig gave some background information on each of the projects and explained the reason why they were not being considered.

[Cllr Richard Ormerod declared an interest in the following item of business]

### **Improving Our Villages and City Application Discussion**

- Whinney Hill Area Improvements

An application had been received for £20,000 towards a total project cost of £151,525.

Durham County Council had submitted an application for funding to make improvements to footpaths and roads in the Whinney Hill area of Durham City. This will improve pedestrian access and reinstate grass verges and bollards to protect them. The local community is supportive of this work. Local County Councillors are also contributing a substantial amount to this scheme through their Neighbourhood Budget.

[Cllr Richard Ormerod left the meeting]

The following questions/comment was raised –

- Have local resident groups been consulted upon?
- Who will maintain this project?
- A forum member felt that reinstating grass verges and bollards was not a good use of public spending.

The Board was happy to support this project and the application was approved.

[Cllr Richard Ormerod re-joined the meeting]

## 6 Budget Updates

### Neighbourhood Budgets updates and approvals

The following neighbourhood budget projects were shared with the Board -

**Name of Scheme:** Durham Gymnastics – Running Costs

**Councillor(s):** Kellett / Hall

**Interest Declared:** No

**Amount:** £4,595.00

**Name of Scheme:** Lowes Barns Community CIC – Revenue grant & money for remedial work to path

**Councillor(s):** Scott

**Interest Declared:** No

**Amount:** £5,887.20

**Name of Scheme:** DCC Whinney Hill

**Councillor(s):** Freeman / Ormerod

**Interest Declared:** No

**Amount:** £123,175.00

The Board was happy for the projects to go ahead.

## **Fun and Food (Holiday Activities with Healthy Food)**

We received 7 Fun and Food applications for October Half Term 2023 totalling £9,130.50; there is £11,693.00 available for this holiday period.

The Board had received information on each application, and they were asked how they wanted to progress them. They decided a panel meeting to discuss the projects was not necessary and agreed to support all 7 applications.

### 7 Chair and Coordinators Update

#### *Chair's Update*

#### *Coordinator's Update*

- The AAP team had been busy working on applications.
- Craig had been working with the Anti-Social Behaviour Team looking to do some detached youth work in Durham City on a Friday evening. Will provide feedback at the next meeting.
- Craig had been heavily involved with the Community Resilience Group who had organised an online webinar focusing on winter preparedness for communities. The event will take place on Wednesday 18 October between 6:00pm and 7:00pm.
- We had been supporting local organisations by making them aware of the Northern Powergrid Foundation Funding.
- Durham AAP had visited two projects during September –
  1. Durham Action on Single Housing
  2. Framwellgate Youth and Community Wellbeing Project
- The AAP team had also visited groups/organisations who had received Fun and Food funding during Summer 2023.
- Jubilee Hall and West Rainton was taking up a lot of Craig's time.

### 8 Partner Updates

#### **Mick Henderson – Fire**

- Crews had attended two primary fires, 9 special services and 15 secondary fires.
- 180 home fire safety checks had been carried out.
- They had seen a high volume of false alarm calls.
- They had been working closely with Durham Safer City Group.

#### **Sheela Bell – VCS Representative**

- The cost-of-living crisis continues impacting on the sector.
- Accessing foodbanks is through the roof and volunteers are being supported in relation to their mental health.

- Witton Gilbert Breathing Space had received £83k towards its services over the next 3 years.

### **Sam Humble – Believe Housing**

- Housing register remains very strong and can't see any signs of this slowing down.
- High volume of hoarding cases which can take up a lot of time but can be fulfilling.
- Cost-of-living crisis continues to hit. Hoping for a warmer winter.
- Anti-social behaviour is slightly down but the complexity of the cases is becoming increasingly difficult to deal with. A specialist team are involved to help this.
- City centre is main area of concern in terms of anti-social behaviour.
- Posts going out as bonfire night approaches.
- If you know of people who need help, please let us know.

### **Paul Howard – Durham BID**

- Footfall in the city had tailed off over the summer months.
- Christmas is a key time for businesses and Durham BID will be pushing this hard this year.
- Number of closures namely Barclays. They are looking for a counter space, no money just a customer service point.
- New openings in leisure and hospitality.
- Restaurant week this week and there had been lots of reports from restaurants who were fully booked.

### **Sarah Burns – Health and Social Care Update**

- The Covid Vaccination Programme had started taking place in pharmacies and GP practices.
- NHS commissioning to make a 30% reduction affecting 100 staff in the North-east and Cumbria.
- Strikes had had an impact on NHS waiting lists etc.
- An inspection had been carried out to look at how safe and well-led maternity services were at both the University Hospital of North Durham and Darlington Memorial Hospital. The services that need to be improved are being addressed.
- Health and Social Care contingency plans are being developed.

## 9 [Any other Business](#)

It was highlighted that Durham AAP were still in need of a partner representative to act as Vice Chair on the Board.

## 10 [Date and time of next meeting](#)

Wednesday 15 November 2023, 6:00 pm, online.



Everyone was thanked for their attendance and the meeting closed.