



Teesdale Area Action Partnership – Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting Held: 13 September 2023

Elected Members:

Cllr Robert Potts
Cllr Ted Henderson
Cllr Richard Bell
Cllr Wendy Greenfield (Town & Parish Council's Representative)

Public Representatives:

Roger Peat
Susan Bainbridge
Elaine Laurie
Rachel Tweddle – Chair
Lynne Oxby
Christine Watters

Partner Representatives:

Craig Jewkes
Sgt Angela Drasdo
Linda Bird
Jeff Garfoot
Peter Locke

Presenter:

Jeff Garfoot (JG) – Head of Corp Finance & Commercial Services – Durham County Council

Officer Attendance:

Adam White, TAP Coordinator
Annalisa Ward, TAP Community Development Project Officer
Peter Henderson, TV Community Development Project Officer
Emma Walton, TAP Support Officer

Observers: 2 x Forum Members

Apologies:

Cllr James Cosslett
Cllr George Richardson
Cllr James Rowlandson
Bob Danby

Teesdale Action Partnership Board Meeting

1. Welcome from Chair, Introductions and Apologies

RT welcomed everyone to the Board meeting of Teesdale Action Partnership (TAP).

EW confirmed that apologies for absence had been received, as noted above.

2. Declaration of Interest and Meeting Protocol

AW made the Board aware of the declaration of interest procedure and informed all Board members that this is a standard item on the agenda.

RD declared an interest in the TCR Hub – Christmas Festival 2023 Neighbourhood Budget application.

AW reminded meeting observers they would be welcome to comment under Items 7 & 9 of today's agenda.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

The draft minutes from the meeting held on 12 July 2023 have been circulated in advance with the meeting papers. **AW** reviewed the minutes for matters arising, actions and accuracy.

AW confirmed there were no outstanding actions. The minutes of the last meeting were **agreed** by the Board as a true and accurate record.

4. Area Budget

AW confirmed that a full copy of both Area Budget applications has been circulated in advance with the meeting papers. **AW** highlighted that Board members were given the opportunity to provide any comments to the TAP team in advance of tonight's meeting. No comments were received.

The applications have been considered by the Community Recovery Task and Finish Group and the relevant service providers and are recommended for Board approval.

AWard gave a brief outline of each application.

4.1 Hamsterley Village Hall Association – Hamsterley Village Hall Kitchens

Area Budget request: £6,000

Neighbourhood Budget Funding: £2,465 (£1,231 Cllr Cosslett and £1,244 Cllr Potts)

Match Funding: £3,332

Total Project Cost: £9,332

No comments were raised, and the Board **APPROVED** the application.

4.2 Bishop Auckland College – Upskilling, Employability & Discretionary Fund

Area Budget requested: £20,000

Match Funding: £2,269.30

Total Cost of Project: £22,296.30

AW reminded the Board that it was agreed that the maximum grant will be capped at £12,000, however, consideration would be given to exceed this level if the project is an 'exceptional Teesdale wide initiative'. **AW** reported that the task group **AGREED** that it is an 'exceptional' project and warrants Board consideration.

No comments were raised, and the Board **APPROVED** the application.

AWard to forward the Area Budget applications to the DCC Funding Team for technical appraisal. **(ACTION 1: AWard)**

AW reported that an EOI from UTASS to purchase a new minibus was also presented to the task group. The task group discussed the application, and it was recommended for Board approval. This application is currently in development and will be circulated via correspondence, to the Board, in due course.

AW highlighted that the application would need to be approved by at least three members from each sector of the Board. This is to ensure a 'quorate' decision. If a 'quorate' decision isn't reached the application won't progress towards technical appraisal by the DCC Funding Team.

5. Towns and Villages Funding

AW stated that a Towns and Villages EOI from Gainford Parish Council to install new play equipment at Gainford Play area was also presented to the task group. The task group discussed the application, and it was recommended for Board approval. This application is currently in development and will be circulated via correspondence to the Board in the coming weeks.

AW highlighted that the application would need to be approved by at least three members from each sector of the Board. This is to ensure a 'quorate' decision. If a 'quorate' decision isn't reached the application won't progress towards technical appraisal by the DCC Funding Team.

6. Neighbourhood Budget

AWard confirmed that a summary sheet for the NB proposals has been circulated in advance with the meeting papers. **AWard** gave a brief outline of each proposal.

6.1 St Mary's Parish Hall – Chair Refurbishments

AWard confirmed that the request for NB is £2,000 (£500 each from Cllrs Richardson, Rowlandson, Bell, and Henderson)

No comments were raised.

6.2 Teesdale Gun Club – Driveway Improvements

AWard confirmed that the request for NB is £2,000 (£1,000 from Cllr Richardson, £500 from Cllr Henderson and £500 from Cllr Bell)

No comments were raised.

6.3 TCR Hub – Christmas Festival 2023

AWard confirmed that the request for NB is £2,000 ((£500 each from Cllrs Richardson, Rowlandson, Bell, and Henderson)

No comments were raised.

AWard to forward the NB applications to the DCC Funding Team for technical appraisal.
(ACTION 2: AWard)

7. Durham County Council Budget Consultation

Board Members received a presentation from **Jeff Garfoot (JG)**, Head of Corp Finance & Commercial Services – Durham County Council on the 2024/25 County Council Forecast Revenue Budget Consultation.

JG gave an overview on the Council's budget for this financial year, the council tax position, the budget pressures, and the proposed approach for balancing the budget in 2024/25.

The consultation has been launched for the public to give views on the proposed approach to try and meet a £45.4 million gap in the council's budget in the next financial year, as a result of cost pressures such as increases in inflation, increase in demand for services and rate rises, expected pay settlements and the continued uncertainty regarding future government funding.

JG stated that the consultation is live. The deadline for comments is 5.00pm on Friday 20 October 2023. Feedback from the budget consultation will be presented to Cabinet in December 2023 with the budget report being presented to Cabinet on 14 February 2024. The budget proposals will then be presented to Full Council on 28 February 2024 where budget approval and the council tax for 2024/25 will be set. If additional saving options are to be consulted on further consultation may take place in October / November.

The Board were asked to comment on the following questions:

- What is the AAP view on our savings proposals for 2024/25, particularly the £3.7 million of savings derived from back office savings and efficiencies, income raising and reductions in third party contributions and savings from changes in the way we deliver front-line services?
- What do you feel will be the impact of this approach to savings for 2024/25 upon you or those you represent?
- What is the AAP view on areas where the council should focus to achieve additional savings still needed for 2024/25 of £6.2 million and £43.5 million over the following three years? Please choose three services you would prioritize for funding reductions from the list to provided.
- What is the view to the council raising the council tax by the maximum amount of 4.99% to protect service provision and ensure the additional savings required are kept to £6.2 million for 2024/25? If you disagree with the 4.99% increase, go back to the list and please choose a further 3 services to reduce.
- Do you have any additional ideas as to where we can raise further income or become more efficient?

A Q&A session took place, and the following points were noted:

Cllr RP asked whether the council tax reduction scheme could be reviewed. **Cllr RP** reported that some unemployed claimants feel that there is no incentive to work as they are better off on benefits. **JG** stated that the council collects 99% of council tax payments. The majority of residents that receive council tax relief are pensioners. If the council were to reduce the numbers claiming council tax relief, individuals would not be able to afford this, and further funds would be used to collect this money from defaulted payments. The council have a council tax team in place to recover funds.

LB highlighted that there are a lot of new properties being built, across the County, and asked if this will make a significant contribution to additional income. **JG** stated that those buying houses may also be entitled to council tax benefits. The council forecasts how much council tax will be paid each year. Overall, unemployment rates are increasing leading to a rise in the number of individuals claiming council tax benefits. In addition, the number of new properties being built is decreasing due to interest rates.

EL asked whether RAAC found within schools will have an impact on the budget. **JG** stated that the government has made assurances that the capital cost of repairs will be met by the government. In addition, the council have also been advised that revenue costs will also be met. **JG** reported that the issues identified, across the County, are in academy operated schools, as such, these buildings are not maintained by the Council.

CJ asked are there any other types of buildings in the County affected by RAAC. **JG** confirmed no other DCC buildings have been identified.

WG asked if council tax bands will be reassessed. **JG** reported that the council tax bands were assessed in 1990's and these will not be reviewed. **JG** stated that the increase of 4.99% in council tax is across all council tax bands.

A **forum member** asked if the majority of residents said they didn't want a 4.99% council tax rise, would it still be implemented? **JG** stated that the council tax increase is to protect the most vulnerable people across the county. **Cllr RB** stated due to the increase in inflation this will be an ongoing issue.

A **forum member** asked if a reduction in the number of elected members would equate to cost savings. **JG** confirmed that there would be a saving, however, this would be minimal.

Board and Forum members were encouraged to respond to the consultation. Further details in relation to the consultation are available via the website:

www.durham.gov.uk/consultation

A copy of the presentation will be circulated to Board and forum members who attended the meeting. **(ACTION 3: EW)**

RT thanked **JG** for the presentation.

8. Holiday Activities with Healthy Food

Board Members received a presentation from **EW** on the Holiday Activities with Healthy Food funding.

EW informed the Board that Durham County Council has secured additional funding from the Department for Education to continue to deliver holiday activities with healthy food during the school holidays. Individual allocations to AAPs were based on the number of free school meal eligible children and child poverty rates for 5 –15 year olds. TAP was allocated £29,156. The funding available is to be allocated in 2023 and is for the Easter, Summer and Christmas holiday periods. To date £13,4341.76 has been allocated leaving £15,714.24 for the Christmas holidays.

In addition, funding has been secured from Durham County Council for holiday activities with healthy food during the school half terms. TAP was allocated £10,591. The funding available is to be allocated in 2023/24 and is for the February, May, October, and February 2024 half term periods. To date £5,196.83 has been allocated, leaving £5,394.17 for the remaining half terms.

The next round of funding is for the October half term. This is now live. Applicants can apply for amounts over £500 with a maximum amount of £750. The deadline for applications is 12 noon on Wednesday 20 September 2023. Board and Forum Members were encouraged to promote the funding available through their networks.

RT commented positively on the funding available and the opportunities this provides young people in the school holidays, however, reported that the project monitoring is onerous. **AW** also highlighted that 'onerous' monitoring has been flagged up by other groups. **AW** confirmed that the AAP doesn't set the monitoring criteria as all associated monitoring is a set by central government via the Department for Education.

A **forum member** raised concerns with the ability for smaller organisations to run sessions due to their capacity.

RT thanked **EW** for the presentation.

9. Locality Neighbourhood Issues

9.1 Locality Policing Issues

In the absence of Insp Ed Turner, **Sgt Angela Drasdo** gave an update on the key issues for the TAP area:

- In partnership with the fire service Road Safety Awareness days, for 15 – 17yrs olds, have been taking place at the Emergency Hub, Barnard Castle. Feedback from the schools and pupils involved has been positive,
- Partnership work is taking place to resolve the issue of ASB at Bowes Museum and in the grounds of the Castle,
- The Young Hero Awards remains a valuable and successful process of recognising and promoting the good work of young people. Nominations are received from schools, youth clubs, and family members,
- Rural Watch, Pub Watch and Shop Watch continue to run successfully.
- The police have supported game keepers with local shoots,
- The speed watch van is being deployed weekly across the TAP area. The resource will be promoted locally in the hope of recruiting additional volunteers,
- Rural Crime Action week will take place next week.

AW confirmed that no neighbourhood issues have been raised in advance of the meeting.

10. Coordinators Update

10.1 Area Budget Spend Profile

AW gave an overview of the Area Budget Spend Profile for 2023/24. The report includes the status of each project. A copy of the spend profile was circulated, in advance of the meeting, with the meeting papers.

LB commented positively on the work of the task group. **LB** thanked members of the task group for their work and commitment.

10.2 Quarterly Monitoring Updates

AW stated that the quarterly updates (April - June 2023) will be circulated to Board members shortly. **AW** stressed; if any Board members would like to submit individual comments for circulation that they are more than welcome to do so.

Cllr RB asked has monitoring visits been carried out. **AW** stated the task group have visited a number of projects and received regular updates from project leads. **LB** provided an update on the projects that have been visited by the task group.

The Board were provided with an update on the press coverage TAP has received in Teesdale Mercury over the January - March 2023 period.

AW highlighted that project updates and positive publicity are also promoted on Facebook.

10.4 Wider Work of TAP

The Board were provided with an update on the wider teamwork of TAP since the January Board meeting.

11. Date/Time/Venue for Next Meeting

RT thanked Board members for attending the meeting.

The TAP Board meeting will be held on Wednesday 15 November 2023, 6pm, at The Witham.