

**3 Towns Partnership Board Meeting  
5.30pm on Thursday 9 November**

**PRESENT:**

**Partner Organisations**

Gordon Elliott  
Jono Holmes  
Liz Bradley  
Graham Tomaszko  
Insp. Grant Cockerill  
Helen Ward

**Public Representatives**

Pauline Moger  
Mary Hall (Chair)  
Fiona Nicol  
Dianne Mackay  
David Dixon  
Chris Ebdon

**Elected Members**

Councillor Anne Reed, Durham County Council  
Councillor Mike Currah, Durham County Council

**Officer Attendance:**

Sandy Denney	AAP Coordinator
Nicola Woodgate	Community Development Project Officer
Joanne Ashworth	Towns and Villages Community Development Project Officer

**Presenters:**

Peter Ollivere- Combined Consultation Homelessness and Housing Strategy

Gordon Elliott – 2024/25 County Council Forecast Revenue Budget Consultation Nov 23

**Public Attendance:**

2 members of the public were in attendance

**Apologies:**

Councillor Richard Manchester, Durham County Council, Councillor Patricia Jopling, Durham County Council, Councillor Fraser Tinsley, Durham County Council, Councillor Paul Stokes, Tow Law Town Council, Councillor Olwyn Gunn, Durham County Council, Councillor Margaret Elgie, Greater Willington Town Council, Jay Conlon, Jill Matthewson

### **A1. Welcome and Introductions**

MH opened the meeting and thanked the Board for attending.

### **A2. Agreement of minutes from the previous meeting 28 September 2023 – Matters Arising**

The minutes from the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.

### **A3. Countywide Partners**

#### **Combined Consultation Homelessness and Housing Strategy- Peter Ollivere**

PO gave a presentation on the Homelessness and Housing Strategy which is currently out for consultation. PO thanked the Board for their contributions to the Housing Conversation which he had presented to the meeting earlier in the year. He informed the Board that the comments from that consultation has shaped the strategy. The Board were given the opportunity to ask questions.

The question was asked if PO was aware of how many people were currently sleeping rough in County Durham. PO responded that the presentation highlighted that there were 2,500 people in the County who fell into the 'legal definition of homeless' however there are currently only 11 people living on the streets across the county. It was commented that there are also a lot of other people who are homeless but are 'sofa surfing' so therefore not included in these figures. There will also be people who have been housed in temporary accommodation to prevent them from becoming rough sleepers. A discussion took place around the Housing Solutions service and the challenge that they face in finding accommodation for the numbers of people who are presenting as homeless and how this is often not in the person's preferred location. Concerns were raised around the statistic presented that 34% of people said that they didn't feel safe in the area that they live. PO offered to look into a breakdown of this figure further to ascertain if this is countywide or if the data is coming from a specific area.

GE told the Board that DCC are purchasing housing in the county with a view to offering temporary accommodation to those who find themselves short term homeless.

**Action- 3 Towns Teams to circulate the presentation and reports that Peter referred to.**

**Action – PO to look into the breakdown of the statistic given around people feeling safe where they live.**

### **A4. Local Neighbourhood Issues**

#### **Neighbourhood Budget Applications and Neighbourhood Budget Report**

NW gave an update on Neighbourhood Budget. She told the Board that two applications had been circulated to the Board electronically since the last meeting, Christmas Tree Lights and Microphones for Hunwick Community, Social and Environment group and Charity Shop 4 U Development project. NW said there were no applications to be discussed at the meeting.

### **A5. Priorities and Action Plans**

#### **Action Plan and Project Updates**

SD updated the Board and informed them that:

- Call for Projects. The call out deadline was on Monday 6 November. The Board have £135,900 available, of which £101,900 is revenue funding and £34,000 capital. 13 completed applications were received with a total grant request of £217,878, £73,873 capital and £144,005 revenue, meaning that the call out is £81,978 oversubscribed. We are currently

appraising all applications and going back to applicants with application queries. A further application was also received but has since been withdrawn. The Board have previously agreed to delegate decisions for the call for projects to a grants panel. This panel will meet on either 5<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> December between 9.30am and 2.30pm. SD has previously circulated a request for Board members to volunteer for the panel, if anyone is available and hasn't already responded, please let us know by close of play on Friday.

- Fun and Food – SD gave an update on the Fun and Food programme. 3 Towns had 6 projects awarded funding for October half term, however one project returned the grant as they had a very low take up of the activities on offer. £10,500 in grant funding remains available for February half term. The following projects took place:
  - Greater Willington Town Council - Halloween disco and pumpkin carving
  - Hunwick Community Social and Environment Group- Lantern workshops
  - Crook Library – Superheroes event
  - Jack Drum Arts- Spooky Stories
  - Groundwork North East and Cumbria - Halloween crafts and pumpkin carving from recycled materials; sporting activities

Data is now available for the summer holidays. 3 Towns area had 7 Providers deliver 65 sessions to 1247 Children. 1639 meals were provided as part of this programme.

The Christmas holiday funding is currently open to applications with a deadline of next Wednesday 15 November. £21,500 is available and so far, we have had a low number of application requests. SD asked the Board to encourage groups to apply for the Christmas holiday funding – it will be lost to the area if it isn't allocated for this holiday.

- Youth Panel - SD informed the Board that 2 members of the youth panel had met with her and Dave Wooley from the Fun and Food team during half term to carry out monitoring visits for some of the Fun and Food projects. This is the first time in the county that young people have been involved in monitoring of food and food projects and it was a valuable experience for all involved.
- Towns and Villages Update - JA reminded the Board that all Towns and Villages funding is allocated with offer letters issued for £207,300. Only the final project for £2,700 is awaiting an offer letter, this project is currently awaiting appraisal at the funding team. Both approved projects are in the final preparation for delivery. The large traffic project is underway with the 2 20mph zones awaiting confirmation of installation dates as well as the police hardstanding at Fir Tree. Traffic calming project for Stanley Terrace in Stanley Crook is in final design stages and will be aiming to be complete by Spring. Remaining schemes are in final planning stages. The procurement process is underway for the recreation area improvements. Consultation in each area to benefit will be to follow.  
It was asked about how members of the public find out about the programmes of traffic calming and how you go about requesting traffic calming. Concerns were raised about Park road and Railway terrace in Willington. MC advised that concerns should be raised with elected members.
- Staffing Update- SD informed the Board that we interviewed for the vacant Support officer post within the team on Tuesday and we are pleased to say that we have appointed.
- Future Boards- SD asked the Board if they were happy for the next 2 meetings in January and March to be moved to teams if inclement weather was forecast. The Board agreed.

## **A6. Countywide Partners**

**2024/25 Durham County Council Forecast Revenue Budget Consultation Nov 23- Gordon Elliott**

GE gave a presentation on the Durham County Council Forecast Revenue Budget Consultation Nov 23. Concerns were raised around the efficiency of the county council if more staff cuts occur. It was asked if an assessment of the council buildings had been carried out as a lot of staff have moved to hybrid working therefore many buildings appear to be half empty. GE assured the Board that staff are relocating from County Hall and filling existing buildings and that hot desking is being brought in across the county to make full use of the space. Plot C and Rivergreen at Aykley Heads will shortly replace the county hall building – CMT are currently working on this. The Board raised concerns around the negative side of hybrid working on staff and also the costs of being relocated to different parts of the county to staff. The Board were informed that the detail would depend on the contract for individual members of staff but that a relocation payment could be available in some circumstances for the first 12 months. Concern was expressed that good staff could be lost due to these increased costs.

Discussion took place around the proposals for car parking charges to be introduced on the Durham coast. Questions were asked if the £1.3 million saving was an actual saving and had the costs of introduction and monitoring of this been taken into account? Concern was expressed around the impact on the introduction of parking charges on the numbers visiting these areas – in particular the health and wellbeing affects and effects on local businesses such as the new café at Crimdon as people may be put off visiting if they also have to pay to park their cars. GE assured the Board that an Equality Impact Assessment would need to have been carried out to assess the impact of the proposed change. Concern was also expressed that visitors would move to park in local residential streets to avoid parking charges.

#### **Local Policing Update**

GC gave an update on local policing. He informed the Board that Crime is slightly higher than this time last year. The main increase is thefts, in particular, shop lifting. GC advised any Board members who have a land rover or transit van, that it would be worth investing in an old-fashioned steering lock. This is due to an increase in these vehicles being stolen. Those behind the thefts are using increasingly sophisticated methods to steal the vehicles and therefore a visible and difficult to remove security device is a worthwhile investment.

GC informed the Board that there are currently no major issues with ASB. PACT meetings continue to meet – Crook and Tow Law both meet w/c 13 November and Willington w/c 20 November.

Community Speedwatch is continuing. The issues with vetting of volunteers are still occurring however those without full vetting are still able to volunteer. GC added that the Crook team are expecting 2 new PCSOs in December. He added that the team currently has 2 trained drone pilots. Although the new 3 Towns Drone has not yet been purchased due to supplier issues, the team have access to another force drone.

GC was asked if there has been any progress with the issue that had been raised of drivers driving through the red light at the traffic lights in Willington High street. GC said that they hadn't seen any issues when they have been in the area but agreed to raise it with the team.

Questions were asked around the anti-social use of off-road bikes and if they can be returned after being seized. GC informed the Board that it depends on the reason for seizure. If it is seized for no insurance, then it can be returned once insurance is purchased and evidenced. However, if it is seized for Anti-social use, then the bike is crushed and destroyed.

GC was asked if there was any legislation around cars that create a big backfire or have a film attached to the front windscreen so that the driver is not visible. GC agreed to look into this at the times and location given.

**Action – GC to raise the issue at the traffic lights in Willington with the Crook team.**

**Any Other Business –**

**Welcome Spaces** - GE informed the Board that Welcome Spaces has now been launched. This replaces the scheme known as 'Warm Spaces' which ran last winter. £280,000 of grants is now available for groups who would like to provide warm and welcoming spaces to residents throughout the winter. The grant is being administered by County Durham Community Foundation and up to £3000 per organisation is available.

**Crook Winter Light Parade** - HW also asked if any Board members would be interested in volunteering at Crook Winter Light Parade on 26 November? GC also agreed to look into whether the drone could be used on the day of the parade.

**A7. Date and time of next meeting**

**5.30pm on Thursday 18 January 2024 at Crook Civic Centre**