



Minutes of the Bishop Auckland and Shildon Area Action Partnership Board Meeting

Thursday 21 September 2023

Bishop Auckland Football Club, Heritage Park

Present

Partner Representative

Deborah Richardson (DR) - Community and Voluntary Sector Representative
Temporary Insp Victoria Ord - Durham Constabulary
Paul Cooper (PC) – Durham County Council
Rachel Edmunds (RE) – Believe Housing – Vice Chair
Colin Davis (CD) - County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service
Steve Robson (SR) – Business Representative

Public Representative

Peter Quinn (PQ)
Jayne Nicholson (JN)
Nicola Craddock (NC)
Bob Simm (BS)

Elected Members

Cllr George Smith (GS)
Cllr Shirley Quinn (SQ) – Chair
Cllr Cathy Hunt (CH)
Cllr Mike Harker (MH) – Town and Parish Council Representative

Officers

Andrew Walker (APW) – Senior AAP Co-ordinator
Sheilah Metcalfe (SM) - AAP Community Development Project Officer
Emma Walton (EW) - AAP Support Officer
Peter Henderson (PH) - AAP Towns and Villages Team Community Development Project Officer

Apologies

David Bell (DB) - Town and Parish Council Representative
Bernadette Crooks (BC) – Public Representative
Kirstie Hutchinson (KH) – Public Representative
Tony Bird (TB) – Vice Chair – Public Representative
Cllr Samantha Townsend (ST) – Elected Member
Cllr Joanne Howey (JH)
William Lightburn (WB) - AAP Community Development Project Officer

Public / Other Attendees – 9

Board Meeting

A1. Introduction and apologies

Introductions and apologies were made.

Please see page 1 & 2 for attendees and apologies.

SQ welcomed Board and Forum members to the meeting and introduced the following to the BASH Board:

- Bob Simms newly appointed Public Representative
- Temporary Neighbourhood Inspector Victoria Ord
- Cllr Mike Harker – Town and Parish Council Representative

APW informed the Board that Tommy Taylor has sadly passed away. Since 2009, Tommy had been a valued member of the partnership first as an elected member, then as a Public Representative and was later co-opted as an honorary public representative on the Board in recognition of his work and dedication to the AAP. Tommy will be a huge miss and our thoughts are with his family and friends at this sad time.

The Board observed a minute's silence.

A2. Agreement of minutes and matters arising from previous meeting held 6 July 2023

The Board agreed the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

A3. Declaring an Interest

Steve Robson declared an interest in the Bishop Auckland College - Upskilling, Employability and Discretionary Fund project.

Cllr George Smith declared an interest in the Memorial Community Association - West Auckland Memorial Hall Renovation project.

A4. Local Neighbourhood Issues

➤ Durham County Council Budget Consultation

Board Members received a presentation from Paul Cooper (PC), Head of Pensions – Durham County Council on the 2024/25 County Council Forecast Revenue Budget Consultation.

PC 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 £56.6 million gap in the council's budget in the next financial year. This is 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.

PC 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.

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?

The Board made the following comments:

SQ asked will those receiving council tax benefits continue to receive this support. PC confirmed the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme would remain unchanged for 2024/25.

CH asked whether the council tax reduction scheme could be reviewed. PC stated that there is a legislative requirement to protect pensioners under the scheme. If the council were to reduce the support for working age residents claiming council tax relief, then individuals may not be able to afford their bill and collection rates would consequently go down. There would be implications for the time, effort, and cost of pursuing such collections.

BS confirmed he is in favour of the 4.99% increase in Council Tax for those who can afford it, in order to help those that can't pay. BC asked about the analysis undertaken. PC reiterated that the National Living Wage, linked to

care fees, and inflation are the biggest drivers of budget pressures and are both out of the council's control. PC stated that there are large proportions of the budget that provide statutory services where there is limited ability to find savings, but highlighted the list of front-line services where the consultation seeks feedback on prioritising funding reductions.

BS reported that there are two large schemes taking place in Bishop Auckland including a new Bus Station at Bishop Auckland and improvements to Newgate Street and asked whether consideration was given to the funding of these schemes? PC reiterated the various streams of funding the council utilises. Highlighting the Bus Station, PC confirmed that the council successfully bid for £11.8 million of funding from the Future High Streets Fund to improve transport and parking facilities in Bishop Auckland. If this funding had not been secured for Bishop Auckland, the money would have been allocated to bids elsewhere in the country.

Noting 'Culture' among the list of front-line services JN enquired about the benefit of Lumiere to the County? PC stated that the economic benefit of the event was greater than the cost of event.

JN asked if clarification on the cost and benefit of Lumiere could be provided? PC confirmed that the council's Cabinet considered an evaluation of the 2019 event, prior to Lumiere 2021. The council had invested £600,000 and the net economic impact was £11.5million. This figure includes the net spend from visitors to the County, the value of contracts awarded and the PR value of the event.

ACTION – PC to circulate the public report to APW. APW to circulate the report to the Board.

CH stated that home to school transport is a large cost to the council, is this being reviewed? JN echoed these concerns, particularly in terms of those who move away from their closest school. PC confirmed that in terms of Home to School Transport, the majority of contracts are under review for procurement later this year.

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/thehousingconversation.

APW offered the support of BASH AAP in promoting the consultation.

SQ thanked PC for the presentation.

A copy of the presentation is available by contacting a member of the BASH AAP Team on bishopshildonaap@durham.gov.uk or 03000 268663.

A5. Priorities and Action Plans

➤ Area Budget - Community / COVID Recovery

APW explained that the Board have agreed the single theme of 'Community COVID19 Recovery' as its main priority this year as such a specific Community COVID19 Recovery task group was established. The task group agreed the key themes for the brief to allow a flexible approach to deal with local issues. Following the approval of the brief and the agreement to put out a call for projects, there were 38 applications requested, and 20 applications received. Applications were submitted from a wide range of organisations. The funding requests totaled in excess of the Area Budget funding available.

The AAP will have the following funding resources available to allocate in the financial year 2023/24:

- £100,000 Area Budget Funding
- £9,902 Youth Funding
- £10,000 Welfare Reform Funding
- Previous project under spend - £6,309

With the support of the AAP team each application was assessed and considered by the funding panel which consisted of the following Board members: Rachel Edmunds, Bob Simm and Cllr Shirley Quinn.

The panel met on 7 September 2023 to consider the applications and to agree on which proposals to recommend to the Board for approval. Each application had been reviewed by the BASH AAP team and a number of factors were taken into consideration including:

- Fit to the brief
- Balance with previous AAP priorities
- Geographical balance across the AAP area

- Beneficiaries
- Value for money
- Funding available
- Fit with Budgets available.
- Ability to deliver.

APW reported that after extensive consideration, the panel agreed 8 project proposals from the 20 submitted. Each project is subject to a full application and satisfactory project appraisal. Further recommendations were made on the unsuccessful projects and support is being offered by the AAP team.

The Board were provided with the Area Budget and Task Group progress report.

The following project proposals were presented to the Board for consideration, and for any added value or comments:

- **West Auckland Memorial Community Association - West Auckland Memorial Hall Renovation**
Amount Requested: £12,833
Match Funding: £12,860
Total Project Cost: £25,693

The Board received the project proposal and subject to final application and full appraisal **AGREED** the recommendation of approval for an Area Budget allocation of £12,833.

- **Bishop Auckland College - Upskilling, Employability and Discretionary Fund**
Amount Requested: £50,000
Match Funding: £3,457.51
Total Project Cost: £53,457.51

The Board received the project proposal and subject to final application and full appraisal **AGREED** the recommendation of approval for an Area Budget allocation of £50,000.

- **Aclet Close Nursery School - Sensory Secret Garden**
Amount Requested: £5,986
Match Funding: £7,014
Total Project Cost: £13,000

The Board received the project proposal and subject to final application and full appraisal **AGREED** the recommendation of approval for an Area Budget allocation of £5,986.

- **Influence Church – Elevate Youth Group / Breakfast Hub**
Amount Requested: £11,995
Match Funding: £6,588
Total Project Cost: £18,543

The Board received the project proposal and subject to final application and full appraisal **AGREED** the recommendation of approval for an Area Budget allocation of £11,995.

- **Nifty Fifties – Community / COVID Recovery**
Amount Requested: £5,000
Match Funding: £2,650
Total Project Cost: £7,650

The Board received the project proposal and subject to final application and full appraisal **AGREED** the recommendation of approval for an Area Budget allocation of £5,000.

- **Shildon Alive – The Fruit, Veg and Eggs Pledge**
Amount Requested: £20,944
Match Funding: £82,625
Total Project Cost: £103,569

The Board received the project proposal and subject to final application and full appraisal **AGREED** the recommendation of approval for an Area Budget allocation of £20,944.

- **Bishop United CIC - Local Broadcasting Promotion of Bishop United Performances**
Amount Requested: £11,840
Match Funding: £9,240
Total Project Cost: £21,080

The Board received the project proposal and subject to final application and full appraisal **AGREED** the recommendation of approval for an Area Budget allocation of £11,840

SR commented positively on the range of projects supported.

The Board **AGREED** the content of the report.

The Board **AGREED** the proposals detailed in the report and is recommended to approve £126,211 Area Budget funding allocation to the projects as identified in the report.

- **Holiday Activities with Healthy Food**

Durham County Council has secured additional funding for holiday activities with healthy food during the school half terms. BASH AAP has been allocated £46,156. The funding available is to be allocated in 2023/24 and is for the February, May, October, and February half term periods. To date £19,655.25 has been allocated. This leaves a remaining balance of £26,500.75 for the October and February 2024 half term holiday periods.

The next round of funding was for the October half term. The deadline for applications was 12 noon on Wednesday 20 September 2023. Each application will be assessed and considered by the funding panel. An update on the projects supported will be provided at a future Board meeting.

APW reported that in addition Durham County Council has secured funding from the Department for Education to continue to deliver holiday activities with healthy food during the school holidays.

APW thanked panel members and the BASH AAP team for their time and support. APW encouraged Board members to become involved and asked if any Board members would like to support the funding panel to inform a member of the BASH team.

BS commented positively on the due diligence taken by the funding panel. BS stated that the funding panel gave him a greater understanding of the funding process and raised an awareness of the provision available in the BASH area.

➤ **Town and Village Revitalisation**

APW reminded the Board that BASH AAP had an additional £210,000 funding to address the priority of Towns and Villages over 3 years. In addition, elected members also received an additional £10,000 each to address Town and Villages Revitalisation.

APW reported that the AAP Towns and Villages and the Councillor's Towns and Villages Budget has now been fully allocated.

APW highlighted that work is now complete on the Henknowle project. Further updates on Towns and Villages projects will be brought to future Board meetings.

PH reported that the offer letter and T&Cs were issued today (21 September 2023) for West Auckland Parish Council for the Oakley Cross Multi Use Games project.

➤ **Neighbourhood Budget**

The Board received the following Neighbourhood Budget applications for information and comment, with one application requiring Board approval. Each project is subject to a full application and satisfactory project appraisal.

- **Durham County Council – Outdoor Facilities (DCC) - Jane Armstrong Play Area Improvement
NB Contribution – £17,825 (£8,912.50 each from Cllr Joanne Howey and Cllr Cathy Hunt)**

Match Funding - £0
Total Cost - £17,825

There were no comments received from the Board.

The Board were supportive of the project.

- **Little Chefs Big Chefs CIC (LCBC) - Community Development
Space Durham County Council
NB Contribution – £1,850 (Cllr George Smith)
Match Funding - £2,170
Total Cost - £4,560**

There were no comments received from the Board.

The Board were supportive of the project.

- **West Auckland Memorial Community Association
Renovation of West Auckland Memorial Hall
NB Contribution – £5,998.50 (Cllr George Smith)
Match Funding - £25,693
Total Cost - £31,691.50**

Cllr George Smith has a declaration of interest in this project.

There were no comments received from the Board.

The Board were supportive of the project.

The Board received the application and **APPROVED** a recommendation of approval of £5,998.50.

- **Bishop Auckland PCC - New ropes for St Andrew's Church Bells
NB Contribution – £ 1,600 (£800 each from Cllrs Shirley Quinn and
Charlie Kay)
Match Funding - £16
Total Cost - £1,616**

There were no comments received from the Board.

The Board were supportive of the project.

- **Artichoke Trust - Lumiere Recycling Project
NB Contribution – £200 (Cllr Andrew Jackson)**

Match Funding - £14,600
Total Cost - £14,800

NC raised concern over the number of beneficiaries against the total project cost. It was felt that the number of beneficiaries was low.

There were no further comments received from the Board.

Taking into account the above the Board were supportive of the project.

- **Outdoor Facilities, Durham County Council - Cockton Hill Play Area Access Surfacing Improvements**
NB Contribution – £11,360 (Cllr Sam Zair)
Match Funding - £0
Total Cost - £11,360

There were no comments received from the Board.

The Board were supportive of the project.

A6. Coordinators Update

➤ **Review of Community Engagement**

APW highlighted that work is taking place to establish how AAP's will work in line with some of the proposals taken from the community engagement review. Presentations will be delivered across the AAPs in the coming months to update the Board.

➤ **BASH AAP Office**

APW stated that from April 2024, AAP's will no longer have an accommodation budget and as a result, the BASH AAP team will no longer reside in the Rest House in Shildon. APW highlighted that work is currently taking place with DCC Estates to try and identify alternative accommodation, however the final office base has not yet been identified. The Board will be updated accordingly.

➤ **F & P Scotto Charitable Trust**

APW provided a brief overview of the work that has taken place with the F & P Charitable Scotto Trust. The last visit took place in June 2023. 17 applications were submitted to the Trust. As a result, 7 applications were successful

allocating a further £29,343. 5 of the applications were from the BASH AAP area with the remaining 2 from the Three Towns AAP.

➤ **The Community Action Team**

APW reported that the Community Action Team (CAT) will be visiting the Cockton Hill area in October. The CAT team deliver targeted work over a 6 – 8 week period to improve the area by bringing together residents and a range of organisations to tackle housing and environmental issues.

A7. Countywide Partner Issues

➤ **Fire Service**

Colin Davis gave an update on the main priority issues for the BASH area.

- There has been a reduction in secondary fires, from previous years, over the summer. However deliberate primary fires have increased. Partnership work is taking place to address this issue.
- The Bishop Auckland Community Fire Station Open Day was very well received.
- Bishop Auckland Fire Station work in partnership with the NHS to provide a community-based blood donation venue. The next session will take place in October.
- Board and Forum members were encouraged to report incidents.

➤ **Police / PACT Update**

Temporary Insp Victoria Ord gave an update on the main priority issues for the BASH area.

- The new Insp Mark Edwards will be in place in the next 2 weeks.
- There has been an increase in vehicle crimes. Target hardening work is taking place to tackle this issue.
- Off road biking continues to be an issue. Board and Forum members were encouraged to report any issues to the Police.

- This week is National Rural Crime Action week. The Police will be out in force across the county during a national week of action to prevent, tackle, and drive down rural crime.
- ASB, harassment and criminal damage remain an issue at Eldon and Coundon Grange.
- There have been several horse related crimes. Work is ongoing to deal with this issue.
- Thanks to BASH AAP Towns and Villages funding the CCTV camera have been installed at Eldon Lane and are providing vital intelligence.
- There is a Safe Hub in Durham to protect vulnerable people at night-time. The police are exploring funding to have a Safe Hub in the Bishop Auckland area, near Bishop Auckland Viaduct. This will provide a place of safety, to seek support and to make referrals into the services available. CH commented positively on the idea of a Safe Hub.

JN stressed the importance of those involved being appropriately trained.

The Board suggested VO link with the following organisations:

- Mind
- Samaritan
- Durham Dales Health Authority
- Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS services
- Cornerstone Community Hub

CH suggested promoting the work that has taken place. APW suggested due to the sensitivity of the subject advise is sought from Public Health.

APW suggested inviting Yusaf Meah, Public Health Advanced Practitioner - DCC Adult and Health Services to a future Board meeting to provide an update on the wider agenda of mental health and wellbeing. This was welcomed by the Board.

RS asked where information can be found on Section 106 funding. APW suggested speaking to his local parish clerk or elected members.

A8. Date / Time / Venue for next Board Meeting

SQ thanked Board and Forum members for attending the meeting.

APW encouraged forum members to register their attendance to future Board meetings to ensure adequate seating, meeting papers and refreshments are provided.

Board - Thursday 23 November 2023, 4pm, Bishop Auckland Football Club