



Teesdale Area Action Partnership – Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting Held: 15 November 2023

Witham, Barnard Castle

Elected Members:

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

Public Representatives:

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

Partner Representatives:

Craig Jewkes
Insp Ed Turner
Jeff Garfoot
Linda Bird
Tim Viggars

Presenter:

Jeff Garfoot – 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: 5 x Forum Members

Apologies:

Bob Danby
Peter Locke
Cllr James Cosslett

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 Veterans Legacy Programme - Durham County Council project.

AW reminded meeting observers they would be welcome to comment under Items 4,5,8, & 9 of today's agenda.

AW informed the Board that there has been a change to the agenda as Digital Durham will not be presenting at tonight's meeting. The item will be deferred to a future TAP Board meeting. The reason for deferral is that GoFibre have not made a public announcement on the information yet, the release is still going through the relevant government sign off.

A **forum member** asked if a written update from Digital Durham can be obtained and circulated. **(ACTION 1: AW)**

3. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

The draft minutes from the meeting held on 13 September 2023 have been circulated in advance with the meeting papers. **AW** reviewed the minutes for matters arising, actions and accuracy.

Matters Arising:

AW reported that the Board approved the Gainford Play Area Budget (AB) project, electronically. Unfortunately, the covering email did not mention the £7k AB contribution. This was, however, highlighted within the application along with the match funding from T&V and NB. The Board noted the information and ratified the original, electronic decision, to approve the application.

AWard to forward the Area Budget application to the DCC Funding Team for technical appraisal. **(ACTION 2: AWard)**

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. 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 previous medium term financial forecasts and provided an update on the revised forecasts. The deterioration in financial forecasts and the additional saving plans to assist in balancing the budgets were highlighted.

JG stated that the total savings needed at this stage for 2024/25 to balance the budget is now estimated to be £16.308 million around £4.2 million more than was previously forecast. Across the next four years, the total savings required are estimated to be £67.602 million around £11.6 million more than was previously forecast.

A total of £5.878 million of savings have already been approved, of which £2.332 million can be delivered in 2024/25. Cabinet agreed additional saving proposals of £3.7 million for 2024/25 and £6.617 million in total across the budget planning period, at its meeting in July 2024. Cabinet have now approved further saving proposals of £1.943 million in 2024/25 and £2.909 million across the four-year period for consultation.

JG referenced the savings that AAPs will need to make as part of this MTFP process.

The Board were asked to comment on the following questions:

- Our proposed approach to balance the budget further has identified additional savings of £1.9 million in 2024/25 and £2.9 million across the four-year period from savings from back office and making efficiencies, raising additional income and changes to delivering frontline services – what is the AAP view on this approach?
- What do you feel will be the impact of this approach upon you, your communities or those you represent? – why do you believe this would be the case?
- Do you have any additional ideas or suggestions as to areas where we can raise further income or become more efficient in the years to come?

JG stated that the consultation is live. The deadline for comments is 5.00pm on Sunday 3 December 2023. Feedback from the budget consultation will be presented to Cabinet in January 2024 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.

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

Cllr RB asked is further detail available on the future savings in the consultation papers. **JG** confirmed a summary document detailing potential savings is available online.

A **forum member** asked does Durham County Council joining the North East Mayoral Combined Authority (NEMCA) affect the budgets. **JG** confirmed there will be a contribution of capital, however, this will have a limited impact on the revenue budget.

Cllr GR asked how many children are currently in care. **Cllr TH** confirmed that there are currently 1,178 children in care which has risen from 400 in 2013. In the last month 7 new foster carers have been recruited, and the authority has purchased 2 new care homes. **Cllr RB** stated that a further £8million has been allocated to children and young people's services.

Cllr RB stated that this meeting will be **JG** last Board meeting. **Cllr RB** thanked **JG** for his time and dedication to the TAP Board. This was echoed by the Board.

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

RT thanked **JG** for the presentation.

5. Digital Durham

AW informed the Board that the above presentation has been cancelled. **AW** apologised for any inconvenience caused to Board and Forum members. **AW** highlighted that an update will be provided at the March Board meeting.

6. 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.

AW highlighted that an Area Budget application, from Bowes Museum, has been submitted. This application did result in debate, at the task group, due to press coverage in the local and national media around their winter festival. As agreed at the task group, **AW** requested that Board members consider the project on its own merits and refrain from being influenced by recent media coverage.

AWard gave a brief outline of each application.

6.1 Woodland Community Group – Together Project 24

Amount of funding requested: £5,000.

Total Cost of Project: £13,114

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

6.2 Bowes Heating System – The Bowes Museum

Amount of funding requested: £5,000.

Total Cost of Project: £38,726.91

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

6.3 Veterans Legacy Programme - Durham County Council

Amount of funding requested: £5,500.

Total Cost of Project: £7,500

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 3: AWard)**

7. 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.

7.1 Teesdale School – Wellbeing Garden

AWard confirmed that the request for NB is £3,000 (£500 each from Cllrs Richardson, Rowlandson, Bell, Henderson, Cosslett, and Potts)

RT stated a clinical councillor is available at the Hub. **RT** reported that work with Teesdale school to refer into this service has taken place, however, the dialogue with the school has been limited.

No further comments were raised.

7.2 Romaldkirk Parochial Council on behalf of St Cuthberts Cotherstone – Bell Ringing Group

AWard confirmed that the request for NB is £4,000 (£2,000 from Cllr Bell and £2,000 from Cllr Henderson)

LB commented positively on the project and the working taking place at St Cuthbert's.

No further comments were raised.

7.3 Cotherstone Parish Council – Additional Defib

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

No comments were raised.

AWard to forward the NB applications to the DCC Funding Team for technical appraisal.
(ACTION 4: AWard)

8. Locality Neighbourhood Issues

8.1 Locality Policing Issues

Insp ET Turner gave an update on the key issues for the TAP area:

- Vehicle crimes have increased especially in cars with keyless- entry systems.
- Farrans are currently working in the Teesdale area installing a waterpipe and several thefts have been reported. Partnership work has taken place with Farrans to reduce this.
- **Insp ET** stated that Safer Streets funding is available to allow forces and local authorities to invest in transformative crime prevention initiatives. This year the criteria has changed and now includes rural communities as a priority. As a result, a £200k bid has been successful. The funding will be used, to build on the success of Rural Watch, to purchase a drone, crime prevention equipment, enhance vehicles and to employ a full-time coordinator.
- There will be a new chief constable in place shortly.
- **Cllr JR** asked for an update on the level and types of crimes in the Teesdale area. **(ACTION 5: ET)**

AW confirmed there has been one neighbourhood issue raised by a forum member in advance of the meeting. A forum member and residents have raised concerns with regards to the ongoing road closure at Saunders Avenue (Hamsterley Village). This road is the main direct route to the A68. **AW** stated that the issue has also been reported to the local MP. **AW** also highlighted that the neighbourhood issue has been forwarded to DCC Highways and a response provided to the forum member. For the purpose of the minutes the response received from DCC Highways is as follows:

'Previous works undertaken addressed the immediate drainage issues and the carriageway instability. However, these works have been undermined by a rising water table identified as part of additional intrusive ground investigation works recently conducted. The results of which identified the presence of the water table approximately 3.5m beneath the surface of the road. The impact of ground water

at this level has caused significant embankment subsidence and structural failure of the carriageway which continues to fail.

The Council is currently working with a specialist consultant to develop a design to ensure the long-term stability of the embankment and carriageway. One of the preferred design options is to re-route the road to the south. This requires planning permission as it is a "change in use" of the land. It also involves negotiations with the current landowner to purchase the land. As I am sure you will appreciate all of this takes time and currently there are too many unknowns to be able to provide a definitive programme of works.

In the meantime, the road will remain closed for the foreseeable future utilising the existing diversion. I appreciate the impact/disruption this has on the travelling public but unfortunately it is necessary to ensure the safety of all road users. Everyone's continued patience is very much appreciated.'

Cllr GR raised concerns with the repairs on the road and the accessibility issues this will cause emergency services. In addition, he raised concerns with fly tipping in this area. **JG** confirmed that provision for a new road is included within the Council's Capital Programme.

AW also gave an update on additional adopted cemetery provision. The update was given as a result of the issue being brought to the Board's attention, previously. **AW** highlighted that the neighbourhood issue was forwarded to DCC's Neighbourhood Protection Manager within the Council's Neighbourhood and Climate Change directorate. The following information has been provided:

'DCC is currently considering the options for this area and across the County. A review of all burial sites is taking place and an update will be provided in due course.'

JG stated burial sites are being discussed as part of the cabinet report, tomorrow.

Cllr RB highlighted the roadworks taking place at Middleton. **Cllr RB** stated that information on future planned and unplanned works can be found on the one.network website. **Cllr RB** suggested an update be provided at a future Board meeting, inviting Parish Council's, to discuss how to use the website. **CJ** stated the fire service use one.network and stated he would be happy to provide an update at the January Board meeting. This was welcomed by the Board. **(ACTION 6: CJ/AW)**

A **forum member** suggested inviting Parish Council's to the Board meeting through the County Durham Association of local councils.

9. Coordinators Update

9.1 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.

The Towns and Villages funding is now fully allocated. An update on the projects supported will be provided at the January Board meeting.

Cllr TH commented positively on the levels of match funding.

9.2 Quarterly Monitoring Updates

AW stated that the quarterly updates (July - Sept 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.

AW raised concerns with the quality of some of the updates received and the high number of applicants that submitted late monitoring information.

9.3 TAP Press Articles

The Board were provided with an update on the press coverage TAP has received in Teesdale Mercury over the September – November 2023 period.

10. Date/Time/Venue for Next Meeting

RT thanked Board members for attending the meeting.

The TAP Board meeting will be held on Wednesday 31 January 2024, 6pm, on Teams.