

**East Durham Area Action Partnership Board Meeting
6pm on Wednesday 7th February 2024 at The Glebe Centre, Murton**

PRESENT:

Elected Members

Cllr Angela Surtees (AS) (Chair)
Cllr Julie Griffiths (JG)
Par Cllr Annabelle Lumsden (AL)

Partner Organisations

Ian Porter (IP)
Sgt Lucy Oxley (LO)
Jim Murray (JMurray)

Public Representatives

Danny Dickinson (DD)
David Blackwell (DB)
Andy Cammiss (AC)

Co-opted Members

Edna Connor

Officer Attendance:

John Murphy (JMURPHY) – AAP Coordinator
Laura Towers (LT) – AAP Support Officer
Ian Moran (IM) – Community Development/Project Officer

Presenters:

Tom Winter (TW), Assistant Director of Development, believe housing

Public Attendance:

No members of the public were in attendance.

Apologies:

Cllr Ivan Cochrane, Cllr Isabel Roberts, Graham Easterlow, Insp Phil Carter, Susan Robinson, Rona Hardy, Alison Paterson, Gill Rodgers, Amanda Moon

1. Introductions & Apologies

IM ran through housekeeping and health and safety.

AS welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were noted, as above.

It was noted that Annabelle Lumsden would be standing in as the Towns & Parishes representative for this meeting.

2. Previous Minutes & Matters Arising

The minutes of the previous Board Meeting on 13th December 2023 were accepted by the Board as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

No matters arising.

3. Police Report

Sgt Lucy Oxley – Seaham & Easington

The community garden in Murton has been vandalised, causing a couple of thousand pounds worth of damage. It will cost £1,500 just to fix the doors. Eight gardens were vandalised at the same time.

There has been a rise in male suicides in the area over the last three to four months. This has affected the community. A meeting was arranged to try and get groups running where people are able to access support. Funding has been secured for 12 – 24 months to offer support. This will start at the Glebe Centre from the end of the month. Hopefully some other services will become involved also.

The 'On My Bike' scheme is currently running in Murton for 8 – 18-year-olds. This involves independent learning and road safety on bikes. This may also link in with cycling proficiency.

An operation is running with Trading Standards targeting illegal vapes and cigarettes. In excess of 1,000 vapes, worth around £15,000, were found. Several people were arrested. This was intelligence-led and the Police would like to thank the community.

AS noted that the MSFOOC Priority Group has a strand about suicide prevention and asked LO to get in touch.

EC noted that the suicide rate in the area was high, however, there is a shortage of mental health services. AS agreed that this is a national issue.

JMurray also noted that attendance in schools is a national issue.

AS thanked LO for the report and noted that there was no fire report available for the meeting.

4. Development Presentation – Tom Winter, Assistant Director of Development, believe housing

Tom Winter (TW) provided an overview of the work of believe housing's Development Team.

The team was established in 2015 to deliver the organisation's new build aspirations. A range of tenancies is offered, including affordable homes, rent to buy and shared ownership.

TW gave an overview of completed schemes in the area.

Believe manages over 8,000 homes in the East Durham area and has provided new homes on 15 different schemes since 2015. 885 new homes have been delivered up to 30th January 2024, with 962 new homes forecast by the end of the financial year (up to 30th March 2024).

Believe offers new housing opportunities to a diverse mix of customers including families, couples, young people, elderly residents and those with physical disabilities.

The total new build investment is over £50m in the area.

There is a healthy pipeline of schemes in Seaton, Easington and Murton that would deliver circa 119 new homes with aspirations to do more.

Believe has ensured customers from the area have the opportunity of new, quality and affordable housing in an area of choice.

AS thanked TW for the presentation.

JMurphy asked whether bungalows are given to those who need them.

TW advised that people are placed in bands depending on their needs.

EC asked what would happen after five years if people don't have the deposit.

TW advised that people could continue to rent at the affordable rent price. IP added that this was not possible under the old scheme, but this has now changed.

DD noted the high number of bids on properties and asked whether this was due to them being new properties or whether is it indicative of a wider problem.

TW advised that the current cost of living has affected demand although there is demand for the new schemes also. IP added that the number of applications is up all the time. More housing is needed.

DD asked what the risks are for the pipeline projects.

TW advised this includes the time taken to obtain planning permission, rising costs since Covid and higher borrowing rates.

DB asked whether 962 new homes delivered by the end of the financial year is an achievable number.

TW confirmed that 150 new houses had been completed so far this financial year, with another 80 to be completed by the end of March.

Is there a common trend with those applying now? Is it people who are/were homeowners who are now looking to rent?

With the new homes, it may be people who are struggling to get on the property ladder. This may attract new people because of the product.

JMurray asked whether the people applying are people local to the area or whether they are moving from other places, leading to an increase in population.

TW advised that this is a mix of people eg for a site in Peterlee, approximately 70% of people were moving in from Peterlee.

AC asked whether asylum seekers are impacting the demand. What is the priority banding given to asylum seekers?

IP advised that this was not the case. AS noted that four schemes are in place across County Durham which are run through the Home Office, often through private landlords. Statutory need is managed by the Council.

IP highlighted that there are four bands. More people in Bands 1 & 2 are being housed as priority.

AS asked regarding challenging tenancies and infrastructure funding and whether Section 106 could be used for this eg drainage.

IP noted that where it is felt there is an issue, it will be investigated, but background checks cannot be done on everyone. Section 106 funding can also have nomination rights.

TW noted that the sites should be self-sufficient eg SuDS on new developments. Calculations are based on open spaces.

The Board commented that the presentation had been very useful. AS invited more presentations for upcoming meetings. AC offered to deliver a presentation on East Durham Veterans Trust at a future meeting.

5. Neighbourhood Issues

None noted.

6. Priority Group Updates

Maintaining the Social Fabric of our Communities (MSFOOC) – Cllr Angela Surtees, Chair

The minutes of the MSFOOC meeting on 29th November 2023 were circulated to the Board prior to the meeting and taken as read.

A presentation was delivered on the Draft Housing Strategy & Draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy.

A potential proposal came forward.

Children, Young People & Families (CYPF)

No CYPF meeting since the last Board Meeting.

Neighbourhoods & Place (N&P) – Danny Dickinson, Vice Chair

The capital grants applications and report were circulated to the Board prior to the meeting.

Danny Dickinson, Kimberley Batey (believe housing) and Paula Snowdon (Coalfields Regeneration Trust) formed the panel who met to assess the bids. DD advised that a scoring process was used to come to a consensus score based on the strengths and weaknesses of each application.

AS declared an interest as Director of Focus Easington and Chair of the Trustees of The Hazelwell Centre.

JMurphy drew the Chair's attention to the AAP Terms of Reference, Item 11, d (ii) and requested that the Chair hand over to another Board Member.

DD took the Chair. AS left the room.

DD asked the Board whether they agreed to give dispensation for AS to return to the meeting to vote to remain quorate. **The Board noted the interest and agreed this was acceptable.** AS returned to the meeting.

DD asked the Board whether they approved the recommendations from the capital grants report;

The Panel request the Board note the report and:

- a. Approve a further £5k to the capital grants pot**

b. Endorse the following applications to be submitted for Area Budget:

- *Wingate Parish Council*
- *Focus Easington (Charity) Ltd*
- *The Hazelwell Centre*
- *Haswell Parish Council*
- *Shotton Partnership 2000*
- *Peterlee Methodist Church*

The Board approved the above recommendations.

7. NBs for notification or endorsement of a declared interest & AB Position

IM highlighted the following NB project. AS declared an interest as Chair of the Trustees of the Hazelwell Centre. AS left the room.

As per Item 11, d (ii) in the AAP Terms of Reference, DD asked the Board whether they agreed to give dispensation for AS to return to the meeting to vote to remain quorate. **The Board noted the interest and agreed this was acceptable.** AS returned to the meeting.

Project Name: The Hazelwell Centre

Councillors: Cochrane

Project Cost: £21,152.00

NB Amount: £15,873.00

Description: The project was approved in September 2023. Applicant has requested a change of items to be purchased. Information to board about the change of items purchased - change from flooring £2,950 to point of water heaters / air heaters £2,950 for the Hazelwell Centre.

Conflict of interest was declared by Cllr Cochrane as a Trustee when the original application was approved. Cllr Cochrane is now a volunteer.

The Board approved this project and made no comment regarding the other NBs which were presented in the spreadsheet.

AS resumed as Chair.

Area Budget (AB) Position

IM confirmed the following AB position of available funding for this financial year (2023/24). Following the approval of the above Capital Grants applications and taking into account a potential application from Argus CIC for £7,500, there is £21,805 AB remaining.

IM asked the Board whether they approved to the remaining funding being used for an open funding call-out.

The Board agreed to a call-out for expressions of interest which meet the current priorities, with a deadline of 1st March 2024. Grants should be between £5,000 and £7,000. Expressions of interest should be considered by a panel with the aim of any applications coming to the East Durham AAP Board Meeting on 13th March.

8. Any Other Business

None noted.

AS thanked everyone for attending.

9. Date and time of next meeting

6pm on Wednesday 13th March 2024 at The Lisa Dixon Centre, Haswell