



Better for everyone

## **4 Together Partnership Area Action Partnership (AAP) Minutes of the Special Board Meeting Wednesday 7 August 2024 Dean Bank & Ferryhill Literary Institute**

### **PRESENT:**

Carole Atkinson, Pauline Crathorne, Cllr Peter Atkinson – DCC, Cllr Janet Snowball – Cornforth Parish Council, Lee Copeland – Principal AAP Coordinator, Louise Porter – Principal Community Development Project Officer, Paula Nixon – Community Development Project Officer, Paula Stockport – AAP Support Officer

### **OBSERVERS:**

Ms H Wightman

### **APOLOGIES:**

Mark Booth, Joanne Burnip, Cllr Julie Cairns, Tony Cutmore, Insp Barry Evans, Craig Jewkes, Nigel Jones, Susan Kirby, Cllr Joe Makepeace, Victoria Murray, Cllr Elaine Peeke, Oliver Peeke, Dennis Ramsey

### **A1. Introductions**

LC welcomed attendees and explained that today's meeting had been called to fit in line with DCC's Local Network Boundaries Consultation.

### **A2. Presentation: Local Network Boundaries Proposals**

LC updated Board members in relation to the Local Network (LN) Boundaries proposals, which aim to:

- Align LNs fully to the new electoral division boundaries;
- Facilitate increased use of available data;
- Provide more consistent population sizes across the LNs;
- Provide more consistent County Cllr representation within LNs;
- Align County Cllrs to one LN only;
- Contribute towards achieving the Service's MTFP savings target of £500k.

LC set out the background to the consultation, and gave an outline of the main changes that will impact on the 4 Together Partnership AAP:

- Most of the 4 Together Partnership AAP communities, e.g. Ferryhill, Cornforth, Chilton and Rushyford will be aligned to LN '1';
- Bishop Middleham will move into LN 'A';
- Estimated population will increase from 17,940 to 52,700;
- Electoral divisions will go from 3 to 5, with no Cllr splits;
- County Councillors will go from 5 to 10.

Discussion took place and the following points were noted:

- Cllr PA is really concerned about the future for our area, feeling that we will be 'swallowed up' when we move into a bigger area. Cllr PA feels that the settlements in our area have already been overlooked for investment and funding over the years as it is, but once we are competing with other areas like Spennymoor and Coxhoe, then this will negatively impact on our communities even more. Cllr PA also feels that decisions on the proposals will have already been taken and feedback from this consultation won't make any difference. Cllr PA strongly disagrees with the proposals for our AAP area.
- PC expressed concern around the new electoral boundaries, and in particular how these will impact on West Cornforth going forward, noting that Cllrs will have a very difficult job trying to allocate their NB funding fairly across their whole ward areas. This funding can make such a big difference to smaller communities.
- LC noted PC's comments. LC added that a lot of the smaller community settlements are feeling the same way about the proposals, but likewise some of the larger settlements for example feel that they perhaps aren't being aligned correctly. It's a difficult balance and the LNs will need to try and make sure that everyone has an equal voice going forward.
- PC commented that the LNs may struggle to attract community reps going forward. LC noted that the LNs will have larger geographical pools to pull from. LC acknowledged that the 'board structure' may be off-putting for some people.
- PC asked whether geographical balance from across the settlements within each LN will be taken into account when recruiting community members, to ensure fairness. LC clarified that the LNs will be looking for as wide a geographical spread as possible when appointing community members. The panels will be made up of 7 x Cllrs, 7 x partners and 7 x community members, as they are currently.
- Cllr JS asked whether there are any plans to increase the Cllrs' NB budgets given the reduction in the total number of Cllrs across the County. LC clarified that there are currently no proposals to increase Cllrs budgets.
- CA commented that a lot of people can be put off completing consultation surveys online, and hence we end up with a low response rate on some really important topics. CA feels that DCC should do more to get out and about and carry out face-to-face events to try and encourage more participation. CA will share details of the consultation with the various local groups she attends. LC noted CA's point. LC added that the AAP have worked in this area for some 14/15 years now, supporting a lot of local groups and building great relationships with partners, elected members, Town & Parish Councils etc, but people still aren't completing the consultation survey.
- PN urged Board members to look at the positives that may come out of the move to LNs. PN believes that the AAP model in general is due a refresh, particularly in the 4 Together area. We seem to have lost our momentum over recent years, for various reasons, and PN is optimistic that the planned changes will help us to take a step back and review things thoroughly.
- PC commented that the staff team in our area have all worked really hard over the years, particularly in trying to keep our processes open, fair and transparent. PC noted that some of the larger scale public events held previously, such as participatory budgeting, were always really well attended. PC added the suggestion that groups in receipt of funding should be invited

to come along to a board meeting to showcase what they have achieved and celebrate their projects. LC noted that panel ambassadors are one of the topics for discussion via the current AAP Coordinator subgroups that are working on the development planning for LNs going forward.

LC thanked Board members for their comments. LC confirmed that a copy of the presentation slides will be circulated to Board members after the meeting.

LC advised that people can read further information about the proposals and complete the online survey via the website:

[Proposals for New Local Network Boundary Areas](#)

People can also submit any specific feedback directly to the dedicated email address:

[cer@durham.gov.uk](mailto:cer@durham.gov.uk)

The closing date for consultation responses is **5.00pm on 20 September 2024**.

LC added that all feedback will be considered, and updates to proposals made if necessary. The proposals will then be finalised and considered by our Cabinet before implementation in April 2025.

**A3. Date & Time of Next Meeting:**

Wed 4 September 2024, 6.00-8.00pm, Dean Bank & Ferryhill Literary Institute

LC thanked all attendees, and the meeting was closed.