

**Meeting:** County Durham Economic Partnership Board

**Date & Time:** 5<sup>th</sup> June 2024 3.30pm

**Venue:** Cavill Room, Raddison Blu Hotel, Durham



<b>Present:</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation/Pillar Rep</b>
<b>New College</b>		
	Glyn Llewellyn (GL)	Chair
	Ailsa Anderson (AA)	Engineering & Manufacturing Network
	Andy Bailey (ACB)	Durham County Council
	Andy Kerr (AK)	DCC Head of Economic Development
	Duncan Peake (DP)	Raby Estates
	Kate Burrows (KB)	Durham Community Action (VCS Voice)
	Kirsty Wilkinson (KW)	Public Health, DCC
	Michelle Cooper (MC)	County Durham Community Foundation (VCS Voice)
	Paul Marsden (PM)	Head of the Association of Secondary Schools
	Reshma Begum (RB)	Federation of Small Businesses
	Richard Baker (RBaker)	Durham University (Lead for Innovation)
	Sarah Slaven (SS)	Business Durham (Lead for Business Competitiveness)
	Sue Parkinson (SP)	CDEP Vice Chair
<b>Also, in attendance</b>		
	Angela Brown (ABrown) (minutes)	Durham County Council
	Glenn Martin (GM)	Durham County Council
	Andy Coulthard (AC)	Livin
	Lucy Dixon (LD)	Karbon Homes
<b>Apologies:</b>		
	Alan Smith	Believe Housing (Lead for Inclusive Growth)
	Alison Clark	Head of Culture, Sport & Tourism, DCC

	Alison Gittins	Durham Business Group
	Amy Harhoff	Durham County Council
	Andy Broadbent	New College Durham (Lead for People)
	Cllr Elizabeth Scott	Durham County Council
	Sarah Glynn	Culture, Sport & Tourism, DCC
	Linda Wilson	New College Durham

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1.	<b>Welcome and apologies</b>	GL welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies for the meeting were noted		
2.	<b>Minutes of CDEP Board meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024</b>	Minutes of 28 <sup>th</sup> February 2024 were agreed as a true record of the meeting All matters arising are covered on the agenda		
3.	<b>Chair's Opening Remarks</b>	<p>GL said was interesting time and these will change, unsure of direction of travel and need to control what we can do ourselves in the Northeast working together in Partnership. We need to look at ways to do that and he asked the Board members 'what was next for the Partnership'. He said he was working with Andy Kerr in relation to Inclusive Economic Strategy (IES) and need to get involved in other things as there is so much going on.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GL suggested having groups of specialist groups to work together to contribute to the overall strategy or the overall plan</li> <li>• It was important to consider the issues of young people leaving school, and the visibility they had to emerging opportunities. Communications are important to raise awareness of the delivery plan and its aspirations.</li> <li>• GL had today attended the County Durham Space Conference which he had found remarkably interesting and thought provoking</li> <li>• SS stated that The UK Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiif) Conference takes place in Leeds every year, the event gathers all the key players, influencers and decision makers</li> </ul>		

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		<p>within the Investment and Real Estate markets to highlight investment and development opportunities. The NE Mayor was in attendance. Durham received positive feedback on its clear and joined up propositions which is important given the need for investment including from the private sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RBaker felt it would be good to see on agenda what next steps for partnership post general election as we may have to change direction</li> <li>• DP asked now the IES has been rolled out, is there opportunity for the Board to understand what is going on with the Delivery Plan? Also, there is quite lot of activity going on promoting the County so there are a lot of strands, is there an opportunity to bring all these strands together?</li> <li>• SS responded that the last time the Board met there was a presentation from Alison Clark on piece of research done that would help with the place branding for County Durham. That work is underway and representation from the Board at an upcoming workshops session would be welcome – interested Board members are asked to respond to SS direct. DP mentioned he was already involved, and MC mentioned she had recently been involved in conversations around this.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>What is next for the Partnership post general election to be included on future agenda</b></li> <li>• <b>If anyone is interested in being involved workshop session led by Alison Clark, please let SS know after today’s meeting</b></li> </ul>	ALL	
4.	<b>State of the County</b>	<p><i>Ailsa Anderson</i>  A lot of businesses are doing all right. Order numbers are down but outputs are quite high. The businesses she had spoken to are buoyant about what is happening. Recruitment and retention are the biggest</p>		

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		<p>problem, and some companies are struggling in terms of energy as they were forced to take out fixed term contracts when the rate was extremely high. Generally, the feeling is quite buoyant and that things are improving.</p> <p><i>Resham Begum</i>  Business confidence is rising and is much more buoyant in this region than it is nationally.  A lot of businesses expect revenue and investment to grow over the next few months. 2016-18 saw a dip in business confidence due to the EU referendum and COVID but they are now coming out of the other side. Some retail/hospitality/leisure are still running in deficit. Confidence in the manufacturing sector is growing and productivity is seeing an increase, a lot of businesses have had to find new ways of being energy efficient which will help with the NetZero journey.</p> <p>KW asked if agriculture and farming had been taken into account as one of the Community Champions have done a piece of work around the farming community and does not seem quite so positive around that area</p> <p>DP said we need to remember that County Durham is very much a rural county and farmers have been very resilient over the past few years.</p> <p>ACB asked if they were seeing more opportunity for remote work, not just businesses accessing people from other areas who may have necessary skills but also opportunities for people within Durham to access jobs in other areas</p> <p>DP replied said that in relation to the role out of rural connectivity, Digital Durham have done all they can but the procurement process for rolling out of digital connectivity in rural areas has been problematic, it is driven by BDUK, Teesdale have been trying to procure connectivity for around 7 years, they have now started to roll out but the way contracts are</p>		

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		<p>structured not all properties in Teesdale are covered, so there is still a long way to go before this could happen.  SS said there must be opportunity for the Board to tackle this  SP felt maybe we could we bring something to future meeting on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural Connectivity</li> <li>• Future of farming/land use</li> </ul> <p>SP felt these items would attract a good debate</p> <p><i>Richard Baker</i>  RBaker reported that the world rankings for universities have been published recently and Durham University has performed well and was ranked 78<sup>th</sup> best in world and 6<sup>th</sup> in the UK.  The University measure research bids and we looking to increase bids, by end of 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter they had submitted £340m hopefully will see positive results  They are also looking at how can make the best use of business capability.</p> <p><i>Michelle Cooper</i>  MC advised that the VCS is seeing interesting changes which could affect the safety net that the Voluntary Sector is providing, in the North of the Region they are actively helping charities to close down particularly in the youth area due to increases in costs and minimum wage being the same as the real living wage, which has had an impact on Charities some are having to use reserves to meet the uplifting costs.  There are challenges coming for the sector and a lot of worry about where funding is coming from.</p> <p><i>Kate Burrows</i>  After hearing of the charity closures, they did deep dive across Durham, and they are not finding closures in Durham. Notwithstanding this, the</p>		

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		<p>sector is underfunded and suffers from over demand and there is no visibility of it getting any better.</p> <p><i>Paul Marsden</i>  Recruitment crisis across the sector is only getting worse not getting the applicants and the cost-of-living crisis is affecting support staff. The number of staff in the Primary School sector is a problem and the numbers are dropping. In the Secondary School sector, the move to more working from home is not helping the attendance crisis, with the number of children being home educated has now doubled to c1200. This is in addition to a marked increase in non-attendance, with mental health being cited as the main cause. Within the 16-18 sector, there is an increase in the number wanting to do apprenticeships, including a number of incredibly academic children. There are a small number of apprenticeships offered to the market and those which have thousands of applicants going for them.</p> <p>AA mentioned that for small employer it is difficult to manage an apprentice</p> <p>KB said the VCS would love to build more apprenticeships and are looking at ways to support that.</p> <p>DP informed the Board that the apprenticeship covenant has changed, it is now not a cheap form of employment</p> <p>RBaker mentioned that the University has been looking to create apprenticeships</p> <p>AA felt that the qualifications for apprenticeships may change due to election</p>		

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		<p>RB said that the cost of insurance shoots up when an apprenticeship is involved. and the time it takes to train them takes up a lot of resource and commitment; some businesses who do not have the space or capacity. She felt that there was probably a lot we can do as a county to encourage more businesses to participate but also that the region needs to take more responsibility for that</p> <p>SS felt that, taking into account GL opening remarks relating to specialist groups to look at specific issues, this may be a way of taking this forward.</p> <p><b>Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Possible items for future agenda:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Rural Connectivity</b></li> <li>- <b>Future of farmers/land use</b></li> <li>- <b>Apprenticeship opportunities for post 16's</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
5.	<b>Place Labs – Sarah Glynn</b>	<p>Neither Sarah nor Alison Clark were able to attend the meeting today so it will be deferred to a future Board</p> <p><b>Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Place Labs deferred to the next meeting of the Board</b></li> </ul>		
6.	<b>Community Wealth Building – Andy Coulthard &amp; Lucy Dixon</b>	<p>AC &amp; LD presented on Community Wealth Building</p> <p>Questions/Comments KW mentioned there is community wealth building group already in existence and asked if were connected. AC mentioned they aware and have contact with Public Health (Mick Shannon)</p> <p>She asked from a County Durham Together Partnership perspective how do they integrate the work they are doing in Stanley? They would welcome the opportunity to speak to the County Durham Together Board to take this forward.</p>		

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		<p>AK said regardless of the policy framework, this is a really good blueprint for working together, and felt that Durham partners are doing this very well</p> <p>LD felt that, although national policy in this area has yet to emerge with clarity, nevertheless Kim McGuinness, the NE Mayor has adopted some of this in her manifesto and in any event we have much so more power to affect change as a larger partnership group.</p> <p>SP said that this is one of the benefits of having this partnership structure. She felt Kim McGuinness and the new government will be inundated with lists of requests so we need to look at one or two priority areas and which have an evidence base that matches problems with a solution and that is where the benefit of this partnership She suggested that for next meeting should look at how change in government could affect us nationally and locally</p> <p>DP asked if they were working with Landowners LD replied that they were and identifying where young people cannot afford to live there.</p> <p><b>Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Agenda for next meeting to include how change of government could affect us nationally and locally</b></li> </ul>		
7.	<b>IES Update</b>	<p>AK reminded the Board that they adopted the strategy in December 2022 and had then taken time through to November last year in developing the Delivery Plan. He mentioned they are committed to doing a full annual review and will bring to this Board and Cabinet at the end of the year.</p> <p>He recapped that they brought the Investment Framework to the last CDEP Board meeting on which they are working. He received helpful</p>		



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		<p>feedback on this which was really appreciated. He mentioned there are two strands to the Investment Framework the first being the prospectus, which has been launched but with hard copies kept to a minimum as this is a live document. There is a downloadable link which will be circulated after today's meeting</p> <p>They are looking to take the report to Cabinet in Autumn and as a Council the Board's thought on how to take this forward are needed.</p> <p>The Investment Plan is just one strand of delivery plan; in the meantime, we have been working through the Delivery Plan</p> <p>GM spoke about activity in detail - H reported that last year had been spent in developing the delivery plan for the IES as a result of which the Board set up a Delivery Group which has met twice this year. AC has present on Community Wealth Building, as a result of which the Board has had the presentation on the issue at this meeting. The Delivery Group has discussed UKSPF and Devolution and how those things tie together, as well as highlighting the cliff edge in delivery which will adversely impact the ability to deliver the strategy as envisaged. The next meeting of the group will focus on BCorps and Good Work, developing some ideas generated through the Delivery Plan development, and will review Delivery Plan again to see what can be accelerated with the resources we have going forward. The Group has considered performance data as well and also lobbying on SPF. As a result, a meeting was held at the invitation of civil servants, being the Head of Future Funding at HM Treasury and Head of SPF at DCLG to set out again the impact of UKSPF and the result of the cliff edge looming in March 2025. There are also discussions ongoing through the Local Government Association.</p> <p>AK mentioned in relation to UKSP this Board is leveraging its influence and has managed to get this moved up on the agenda</p>		

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		<p><b>Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>GM will circulate downloadable link after the meeting today</b></li> </ul>		
8.	<b>UKSPF, TFG and DG Update – Sue Parkinson</b>	<p>SP mentioned that the paper was circulated for UKSPF, TFG and DG</p> <p>Wayehill Consultancy has been commissioned to carry out some evaluation on the extent to which the way we operate as a partnership makes a difference, she has been leading on this from the Board and is grateful to Richard Betton from UTAAS who has been involved, as well as voluntary sector Board colleagues.</p> <p>She informed the Board that they can be expected to be contacted by Wavehill shortly and asked them to give honest opinions.</p> <p>In respect of the meeting with representatives from Treasury and DLCHG which GM had referenced in his update, this research was mentioned and had elicited interest. A commitment had been given to share the results of this.</p> <p>SP had also been contacted by the national LEP networks Chief Executive who had asked for a discussion about how Durham partnerships worked, which she will arrange to have.</p>		
9.	<b>Any Other Business</b>	<p>SP mentioned she had been contacted by Paul Robson, a previous Board member who used to work for DWP but is now in charge of business development for NE Frist Credit Union and he had asked if there was anything he can do with partners. SP has his contact details if partners are interested.</p>		
	<b>Date and time of Next Meeting</b>	<b>25<sup>th</sup> September 2024 @ 1pm Venue TBC</b>		

