

Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Management Board

Community Engagement Review update

9 December 2024

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Recap

- AAP Reform an early Cabinet priority
- March 2022 – April 2023 – Review of council’s main community engagement function (AAPs) including countywide consultation on review’s findings and recommendations
- July 2023 – Cabinet approve new community engagement model for new Local Networks (LN) to replace AAPs
- November 2023 – New electoral boundaries for County Durham published
- February 2024 – Council agree review of the LN boundaries to achieve Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) savings (2025/26 – 2026/27)
- May 2024 – AAP service transfers to Regeneration, Economy & Growth
- July-September 2024 – Countywide consultation on proposed boundaries for LNs
- November 2024 – Cabinet approve boundaries for LNs, draft Terms of Reference and Funding Criteria & Guidelines

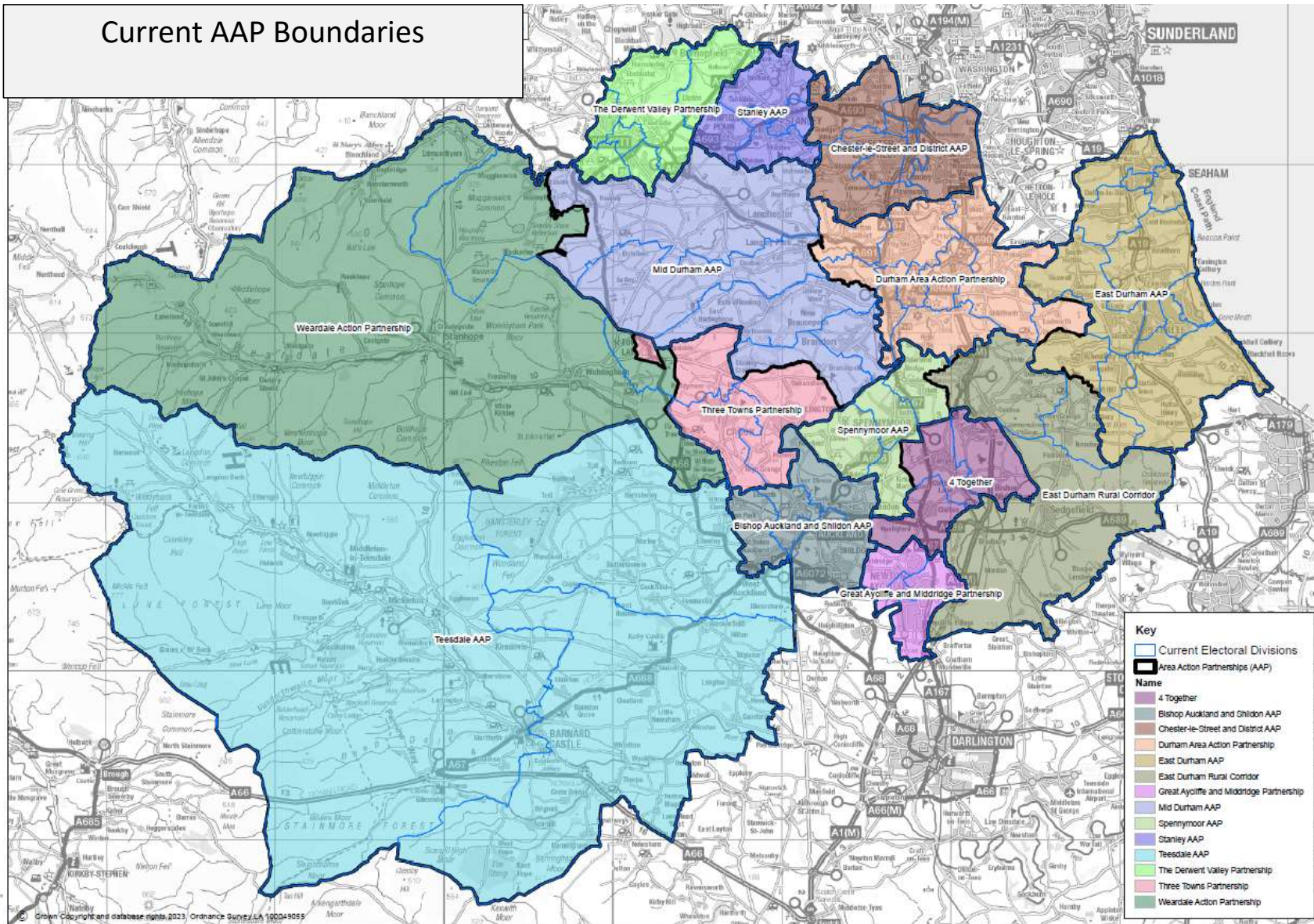
November 2024 Cabinet report

- Focus on 4 key areas:
 - Local Network Boundaries
 - Governance/Model
 - Funding
 - Identity & Branding

Local Network Boundaries



Current AAP Boundaries



AAP Boundaries

- Remained unaltered since created in 2009

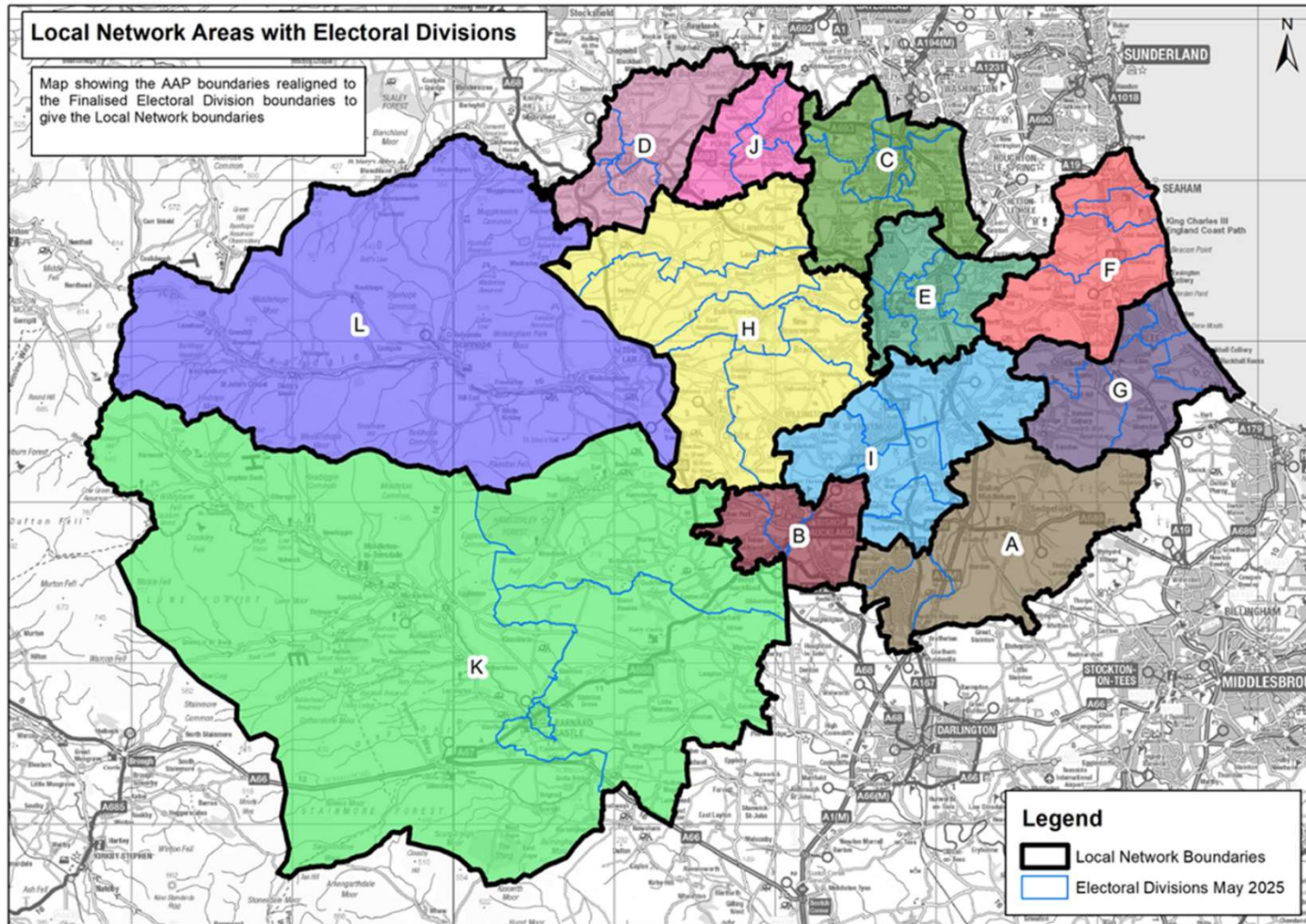
Aims for Local Network boundaries

- Commitment by Cabinet to review LN boundaries following publication of Local Government Boundary Commissions new electoral division boundaries
- Proposals aim to:
 - Align LNs fully to the new electoral division boundaries
 - Facilitate increased use of available data
 - Provide more consistent population size
 - Provide more consistent county councillor representation within LNs
 - Align county councillors to one LN only
- Contribute towards achieving MTFP savings of £500K

Local Network Boundaries

- Consultation exercise delivered between 5th July and 20th September 2024
- 299 survey responses, 24 responses were submitted via e-mail and presentations were delivered to all 14 AAPs
- Cabinet are recommended to include Pelton within Local Network C (Chester-le-Street area) instead of Local Network J (Stanley area) - change remains consistent with all the strategic drivers
- Overall, 12 Local Networks to cover County Durham

Boundaries agreed



Governance/Model



Governance/Model

- Move away from annual priorities to 4-year plans
- LN Panels will consist of 21 Members
- Chairs will serve a maximum of a 12 months term
- LN Panels to be set-up post Local Elections in May 2025
- Community Members will serve a maximum of 4 years (12-month break period)
- LN Panel Meetings require 10 LN Panel Members to be quorate
- LN Panels will be required to hold a vote for all decisions
- Enhanced processes around declaration of interests
- ToR will be fully reviewed and approved by Cabinet every four years

Funding



Funding

- Flexibility with core budgets
- New funding guidelines
- DCC Councillor projects will not go to LN Panels for approval (including those with DOI)
- Clear guidance on allocation of Councillor budgets when they are unable to carry out their normal duties
- CIC's will only be supported if they have been in operation for at least 12 months and generate a % of their income through trade
- LNs will not be able to directly apply for LN funding or be the lead deliverer of projects
- Potential for new and improved application form

Identity and Branding



Branding

- The new identity aims to:
 - Look significantly different from current AAP branding to attract interest from communities and residents
 - Complement the existing identities for the County Durham Partnership and its thematic partnerships
 - Offer a fresh identity and flexibility in terms of LN names



Next Steps



Next steps

- AAPs continue to operate as Area Action Partnerships until 31 March 2025
- Nov 2024-April 2025 – implement Cabinet approvals
 - Fortnightly planning and development sessions with AAP Co-ordinators
 - Staff briefing sessions and required HR processes will see AAP staff re-aligned to their new LNs prior to ‘go live’ in April 2025
 - Targeted communications to all AAP Boards and relevant stakeholders to advise practical arrangements such as: final AAP board meetings; completion and closing down all AAP funding; and performance monitoring arrangements etc.
 - Programme of tailored briefing and training sessions for relevant stakeholders on the new governance and funding arrangements etc.
 - Promotion and briefing sessions for prospective community member applicants prior to the recruitment and selection process being delivered after the local elections in May 2025
- 1 April 2025 AAPs assume their new identity as Local Networks
- May 2025 – Local council elections
- June 2025 – Community Member interviews
- September 2025 – 1st meetings of Local Network Panels, Local Networks names

Questions