

Warrington UKSPF Local Partnership

5th October 2023

In Attendance:

Eleanor Blackburn (EB)	(Chair) Warrington Borough Council (Officer)
Stephen Fitzsimons (SF)	Warrington Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Rebecca Anderson-Moss (RAM)	Warrington and Vale Royal College
Lucy Gardner (LG)	Warrington and Halton Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Leah Biddle (LB)	Culture Warrington
Paul Chapman (PC)	Cheshire and Warrington Business Growth Hub
Andrea Morley (AM)	Warrington Business Improvement District (BID)
Pat Jackson (PJ)	Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
Georgia Millership (GM)	Department of Business and Trade
Nicola Freaney (NF)	Department for Work and Pensions
Kerry Hall (KH)	Warrington Borough Council
Tim Smith (TS)	Warrington Borough Council

Apologies

Cllr Cathy Mitchell (CM)	Warrington Borough Council (Member)
Alison Cullen (AC)	Warrington Voluntary Action
Nichola Newton (NN)	Warrington and Vale Royal College
Locklynne Hall (LH)	LiveWire
Susan Savage (SS)	Department for Work and Pensions
Martin Wood (MW)	Department of Business and Trade
Dave Thompson (DT)	Warrington Disability Partnership

Declarations of Interest:

Rebecca Anderson-Moss (RAM)	Workforce Development and Community Learning expressions of interest
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1 [Welcome and Introductions](#)

EB welcomed everybody to the meeting and members introduced themselves.

2 [Minutes of Previous Meeting](#)

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 31st August 2023, were accepted as a true record.

TS reported that the Business Support procurement opportunity had closed on 2nd October 2023, and that 3 bids had been received. The Decarbonisation procurement opportunity was currently live on The Chest with a closing date of 24th October 2023.

EB and PC had not been able to attend the latest Cheshire and Warrington digital inclusion and stakeholder group meeting, but a mapping exercise has been compiled and could be helpful in informing our UKSPF intentions.

3 UKSPF Financial and Outputs/Outcomes Position (Sep 2023)

TS presented a spreadsheet showing an updated financial profile, including allocations against each “activity theme” together with figures for approved projects, live procurement exercises, proposals received, Expressions of Interest received, and proposals expected.

TS was currently collating the latest position on outputs/outcomes and spend from project deliverers and this would inform the 6 monthly return to Government, due in by 1st November 2023. This information would be mapped against programme targets and would then indicate if any reallocations needed to be suggested.

PJ asked about possibilities for joined-up work across Cheshire and Warrington. TS had been frustrated so far but thought that there might be opportunities around the Apprenticeship Levy and a project for missing children, and maybe some other activity in 2024/25.

4 Expressions of Interest

Warrington Sports Club Network

An EOI had been received from Livewire to set up a voluntary organisation to support local sports clubs, funded from subscriptions and managed by LiveWire. However, there were concerns, including:

- The level of engagement with sports governing bodies and do they cover some of this activity anyway?
- What consultation has there been with the sports clubs?
- Is there evidence of demand?

The Council had met with Live Wire and advised them to submit a request for a feasibility study to do that preparatory work.

Street Based Youth Work

An EOI from Warrington Youth Zone to enable the development of a Street-based Youth Work Team representing a partnership between Warrington Youth Zone and Warrington Borough Council Youth Service, who would jointly provide a 7-night per week programme of Detached Youth Work. The project would work with teenagers and young adults in the Town Centre and surrounding Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) hotspots, with the aim of engaging young people involved in or at risk of crime and ASB, in positive diversionary activities.

The Council were generally supportive of the proposal in principle but had asked for more information on:

- How it relates to existing funding from the BID
- Evidence, maybe from other examples, to show how it will be effective
- Clarity around outputs/outcomes to be delivered; it looks expensive

The Local Partnership also gave supportive feedback, including:

RAM – opportunity to collaborate with schools and colleges to get referrals

NF – youth unemployment is a key DWP priority, so this could link with Youth Employability Coaches

LG – importance of street youth work being connected to other services/priorities - e.g. access to education and employment, living well hub etc

Workforce Development

An EOI from Warrington and Vale Royal College to support their work with employers, expanding opportunities for workforce development and helping to meet employer needs. There were three main pieces of activity proposed:

- The launch of a workforce development fund – open by application to Warrington-based employers to help fund training for their employees, where there is a lack of internal funding available and a need for upskilling can be demonstrated
- Capacity building in order to provide employer engagement across a wider breadth of sectors, expand the portfolio of employers accessing support and help to reduce skills gaps within the Warrington area
- The development of a Professional Business Academy, based at the WVR Warrington campus and offering employers and local workforces access to training courses in business, administration and customer service, leadership and management, project management, human resource management, coaching and mentoring, accountancy and marketing.

The Council had been supportive of the proposal, feeling that we did need something like this in our programme, and it could fit in either Supporting Local Business or People and Skills. However, as follow up we needed to:

- Check that there will be no duplication, e.g. possibly with University of Chester's intentions.
- Set some priorities, parameters, e.g. target sectors, specific skills / levels, links to Skills Commission priorities etc
- Clarity around outputs/outcomes to be delivered; it looks expensive

RAM commented that the work would be aligned to the Skills Commission and the Schools Improvement Programme. Work with employers shows that funding is difficult for them, therefore skills gaps are growing.

The Local Partnership gave supportive feedback, including:

SF – a skills offer would be very beneficial for employers

LG – it is important that it is targeted at smaller, local businesses, which have no other way of funding training and education and also may not be aware of the range of what is available

PC – liked the idea of a workforce development fund; could be more flexible than skills bootcamp format

PJ – costs of backfill is a big problem, not just the costs of the training

NF – in work progression is now a DWP priority

Community Learning

An EOI from Warrington and Vale Royal College that would enable the college to expand its work out in the community, supporting the most vulnerable and socially isolated members of the local area to re-engage with education, build confidence and skill, and progress into employment or voluntary work. This would be done via two main pieces of activity:

- Building capacity to
 - nurture better relationships with members of the community, local community groups, charities, mental health organisations and other referral organisations
 - increase uptake onto learning programmes
 - work collectively with other local support agencies to provide wrap-around support
 - target the most vulnerable groups (i.e. unemployed, ESOL, disadvantaged, BAME)
- Developing new community-based learning hubs to help remove barriers associated with attending education in traditional learning environments and supporting digital inclusion

The Council had felt that we need to look at the range of proposed People and Skills activity in the round, as there is a finite pot and will be a number of potentially competing requests. There is also a new DWP mainstream programme being launched, specifically aimed at economically inactive people. This would seem to directly compete with intervention E33. We are unlikely to need anything else along those lines for 2023/24 and we need to keep looking at what is emerging from DWP as we scope out 2024/25 year.

Warrington Made Digital

An EOI from LiveWire to project manage and develop VR/AR (Virtual Reality/Augmented Reality) technology in the form of an app to provide users with the opportunity to explore Warrington in a different and future-proofed way. The app would allow users to interact with history, e.g. Burtonwood, Golden Gates, waterways etc via digital experience. It would feature AR technology for users to experience 'on top of reality' at place, and VR technology so potential visitors can view Warrington before confirming their plans, akin to Google Earth but with more detail on culture, heritage and local opportunities to experience.

The Council had felt that this was an ambitious submission which needed a lot more development work and scoping with museums, culture and heritage etc. Also this could be a huge project and the funding estimate was probably far too low and would not cover what would be needed.

The proposal had not been supported at this stage.

5 Project Proposals (Supported by WBC Steering Group)

TS introduced 4 Environment and Transport proposals that had been supported at the most recent Council UKSPF steering group meeting.

That group had also set the following requirements:

- Ensure that funding is only used for additional activity, not for routine maintenance.
- Categorise as capital spend where possible.

- Complete profiles of anticipated spend and outputs/outcomes to be achieved, mapped against programme targets. These need to be included in the 6 monthly reporting exercise in October.

Maintenance and Improvement of Sports Pitches

This project would deliver improved drainage solutions and pitch quality, reducing the number of cancelled matches and games, improving the health and wellbeing of the wider community. Currently the Council maintains and supports over 120 sports pitches across the borough. Prioritisation and demand could be informed by the Playing Pitch Strategy.

Comments from the Local Partnership included:

AM – do we know which pitches are in scope? do they include parish council involvement? could we join up the funding?

EB – the pitch strategy is very recent, so up to date; the Council also has some section 106 monies that could be used as match funding; we can also look at non-council pitches if a priority

Public Open Space Dog Control

This project would deliver a statutory Public Open Space Protection Order, creating powers to enforce dog fouling and control. There would be a public awareness/compliance campaign, including signage, press releases, use of social media and work with volunteers and community groups. The proposal would help to reduce the public health risk of contracted diseases, such as toxycosis and antimicrobial resistance microorganisms, especially for areas used by children.

Comments from the Local Partnership included:

EB – the aim was to increase visibility, high profile cases, change culture etc

SF – this is important and is always in local and parish priorities around cleanliness, health etc

AM – confirmed this is a long standing problem and is recognised by local groups

Active Travel Corridors

This project would deliver a package of works along key active travel corridors, with the intention to provide a long-term solution to ease ongoing maintenance and create a safe and attractive network. The objectives are to:

- Recover lost path width and repair edge deterioration caused by overburden to provide a safe and attractive environment for users.
- Provide earthworks and landscaping to provide adequate width to ensure ongoing maintenance is simplified to the rear of the path.
- Protect forward and junction visibility for users of the path.
- Protect visibility of signing, signals and junctions for drivers.

There would also be a package of targeted interventions at prioritised gateway locations to our greenway network across the borough.

There is no Council budget and previous improvements were also externally funded. The work could be linked to include routes to/from schools, and also volunteering projects as a follow up to keep on top of maintenance, litter picking etc.

Comments from the Local Partnership included:

SF – this work is needed but needs to complement what is included in the Town Deal programme
LG – recognise the challenges referenced with some of existing infrastructure

Travel Signage and Street Furniture

This project would deliver a package of improvements to a select number of routes across the borough, in accordance with the Council's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). A network audit would be undertaken on these routes to identify locations at which signing and street furniture improvements could be made, with the intention to replace some of these items on a 'worst first' basis.

Comments from the Local Partnership included:

EB – as with the previous proposal, the Council usually needs to bring in external funding for this kind of work; will be conscious of only funding additionality, not routine work

6 Project Proposals (Being Reworked, Looking at Other Possible Sources of Funding)

TS described 3 proposals which had not been supported by the Council at this stage, with recommendations that the applicants should look at alternative sources of funding.

Town Centre Cycle Shelters

A proposal for capital investment to expand the provision of secure cycle hubs within the Town Centre to encourage and support cycling and active travel. One new secure cycle shelter is to be provided near the bus interchange as part of the Sustainable Travel Town deal programme. Funding from UKSPF would allow a further shelter to be installed on the other side of the town centre to support cyclists arriving from the west of the town.

The Council steering group had not been sure of additionality, and felt that there were other examples where businesses have provided cycle shelters for free.

Bus Interchange Improvements

A programme of physical improvements to the Bus Interchange, including customer facilities and communication channels (using screens and paper-based information), cleanliness, window dressing and additional business facility improvements. There have been issues with the fabric of the building, including the roof which is currently being fully repaired, as well as incidents of ASB and inappropriate behaviour.

The Council steering group had recognised the need for these improvements, but the proposal was expensive in terms of the funding requested as against the number of UKSPF outputs it would deliver. Links could also be made with the BID, the Youth Zone, and other possibilities for funding, such as from businesses or the Bus Service Improvement Plan, should also be explored.

Best Bar None

A proposal to provide a safe public realm environment within the Town Centre around the night-time social spaces. This would be achieved by the restriction of motor vehicles of an evening to create a protected part time pedestrianised zone on several roads, to allow that space to be used in a more social capacity without the risk of vehicle related injury collision occurrence.

The Council steering group had felt that the proposal was expensive in terms of the funding requested as against the number of UKSPF outputs it would deliver. Also, could there be alternative sources of funding, e.g. the Community Safety Partnership, the Police and Crime Commissioner, or the businesses themselves that would benefit from this?

7 Next Steps

Development of ideas to form project proposals for:

- Digital Infrastructure in Community Facilities (currently rated as red)
- Made Smarter (business support) (currently rated as red)
- Feasibility Studies (currently rated as red)
- new ideas emerging from the July workshop

8 Any Other Business

TS asked if the information presented and nature of discussion in the meeting had felt appropriate.

SF – yes, members have the opportunity to discuss and input, and also to ensure a balance of external take-up, not just the Council

LG – it is a really good transparent meeting/process, which considers all views very well

9 Schedule of Future Meetings

9th Nov 2023 (9:30 – 11:00)

7th Dec 2023 (9:30 – 11:00)