

Warrington UKSPF Local Partnership

6th June 2024

In Attendance:

Eleanor Blackburn (EB)	(Chair) Warrington Borough Council (Officer)
Paul Chapman (PC)	Cheshire and Warrington Business Growth Hub
Naz Ghodrati (NG)	Warrington Voluntary Action
Dave Thompson (DT)	Warrington Disability Partnership
Andrea Morley (AM)	Warrington Business Improvement District (BID)
Vaughan Taylor (VT)	Culture Warrington
Lucy Gardner (LG)	Warrington and Halton Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Kerry Hall (KH)	Warrington Borough Council
Tim Smith (TS)	Warrington Borough Council
Gail Thomas (GT)	Warrington Borough Council

Apologies

Nichola Newton (NN)	Warrington and Vale Royal College
Aimee Ruddy (AR)	Warrington Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Stephen Fitzsimons (SF)	Warrington Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Leah Biddle (LB)	Culture Warrington
Mark Rathbone (MR)	Culture Warrington
Colin Billingsley (CB)	Department for Work and Pensions
Susan Savage (SS)	Department for Work and Pensions
Pat Jackson (PJ)	Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
Martin Wood (MW)	Department of Business and Trade
Georgia Millership (GM)	Department of Business and Trade
Elliot Grimshaw (EG)	Department of Business and Trade

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 4th April 2024, were accepted as a true record.

The meeting that had been scheduled for 2nd May 2024 had been cancelled due to the number of apologies and only having one new project proposal to discuss (Town Hall upgrades to encourage more community use, tourism activities, emphasise local heritage etc).

3 UKSPF Financial Position (May 2024)

TS presented the spreadsheet showing actual/expected spend in each area of the programme. He highlighted the bottom line showing that, if all projects spend to the figures that they forecasted, then we are pretty much fully allocated. We don't want to say that "we're closed" with 10 months still left to run, so we are regularly asking projects for accurate and up-to-date forecasts and also to think about any areas which might not be considered as high a priority as originally.

We know that there are other proposals currently being worked up, including:

- accessibility audits and supply of equipment for town centre businesses, other shopping areas, access routes, open space, parks, walks and play areas
- temporary pop-up venue in Golden Square (and subsequently Pyramid) for small/medium performances, music, comedy, theatre
- purchase of equipment for outdoor events, where the cost of purchasing would be more economical than continually hiring it
- support for businesses to address social value, climate change and cyber security tender requirements
- a couple of proposals expected from Warrington Youth Zone for clean-up / refurb of locations around the town centre

EB suggested that any underspend from the town centre wardens project could go towards an expanded remit to include some of the physical improvements ideas above.

DT asked if we could look at smaller individual projects. EB suggested that it would be good to have a "standby list", with an emphasis on deliverability and spend, that could be supported if there looks to be any spare funding remaining in the programme.

4 New Project Proposals (Supported by WBC Steering Group)

Improvements to Community Facilities

This proposal, from the Council's Neighbourhoods team, requested funding for improvements to the buildings and/or surrounding green spaces at (in order of priority):

- Padgate Community Centre
- Orford Community Centre
- Greenwood Community Centre
- Culcheth Community Centre
- Fearnhead Community Centre
- Westy Community Centre

These are our larger and busier centres and are not expected to be affected by the estates review. All have significant footfall, but need remedial work and/or adaptations, both inside and out, to maximise the usage. This would lead to more classes being delivered, more hiring and use by community groups, including "after hours", more use of outdoor garden space by the local community etc.

Some of the work is already spec'd up and ready to go to tender. WBC Building Services are involved and confident about timescales and completion by March 2025.

Coverage for maintaining the gardens and community areas, including from local voluntary groups, is in place, with confidence that such arrangements can be sustained.

The proposal ticks lots of boxes re “Healthy Place” and is a good fit with the Public Health Lifestyles Survey, e.g. mental health, older people, loneliness and isolation.

DT knows these venues and confirmed that they are in need of improvement. They also give a good spread of areas with deprivation, vulnerable groups etc. NG has also heard similar comments about the condition of the venues, but also their importance and opportunities for increased use.

Enhance Volunteer Training

This proposal, from WVA, requested funding to enhance current volunteer training by:

- increasing the capacity of delivering the core volunteering programme in multiple localities, extending the reach to communities and improving the diversity of volunteers
- assisting with the faster understanding of volunteers during core training for the most appropriate volunteering paths; volunteers will be matched with teams to have the specialist training in that team: Talking Points, good neighbours, dementia, chair-based exercise (fall prevention), special interest (experienced, high-knowledge volunteers)
- organising internal and external training for more experienced volunteers to support the community and other volunteers with more specialist knowledge, including safe disclosure management, domestic abuse risk screening, brief mental health interventions, brief alcohol interventions, mental health first aid, LGBTQ support, and intersectional inclusion

Partners suggested some possible links: LG – the Living Well Hub needs some more capacity for meet and greet, triage etc; DT – can provide disability awareness training, also has a potential audience for chair-based exercise.

Feasibility Study – Warrington BID

An expression of interest to look at two angles:

- (1) survey work to inform discussions about adapting the current consumer brand, We Are Warrington, to a more focused tourism destination brand, such as Visit Warrington or Discover Warrington
- (2) research into a new visitor centre in Warrington, located in Golden Square

EB confirmed that We Are Warrington is the biggest entry point in terms of our customer facing / visitor economy approach, but improving it is probably a good thing.

There is a Golden Square visitor centre already, by Starbucks, with very busy footfall. But the wish is to expand that – sell tickets, leaflets, log on to websites, look at forthcoming events etc.

AM explained that there would be no ongoing liability as Warrington BID would take up the website costs, and the location for the visitor centre site has been gifted by Golden Square. There is some current frustration at the Golden Square site as staff face a huge range of questions but can't always answer them. VT added that Culture Warrington had already been looking at having a box office in Golden Square that could sell tickets for Pyramid, Parr Hall and other events.

Warrington BID were waiting for quotes from Voodoo, their appointed contractor. They would be submitted to the Council's steering group which had already approved the proposal in principle.

5 New Project Proposal (Not Yet Considered by WBC Steering Group)

Together We Can Live Well

This proposal is for a holistic sustainable community support offer to expand the affordable food provision and align with Talking Points. It would be a collaboration between Warrington Community Food Network, WBC and WVA. However, there had been nobody who could advocate for the proposal or answer any questions at the recent steering group meeting, and so the proposal was deferred for consideration next time. However, TS was keen to get comments from the Partnership that he could report back to the steering group.

NG explained that the idea came from the Food Network, with a desire to open 9 pantries in local areas, and ultimately to move away from food banks to people actually buying the food, albeit at low cost.

DT supported to the start-ups and food coordinator elements but questioned whether existing groups could deliver the local networking and workshops instead of bringing in National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTI) to do it. NG updated that that element was being reconsidered.

EB recommended that more information should be provided regarding the actual locations for the venues and also how they would be maintained and delivered going forward.

NG said that they were still negotiating final arrangements on locations, and that no two sites are the same: there are a lot of community volunteers involved – host, workers, advisors – some are multi-activity, one has been run by veterans recently, one also sells plants etc.

DT suggested discussing this proposal with Changing Lives Together who have been doing something similar in Cheshire.

6 Next Steps

TS and GT will be gathering a full analysis of activity and outputs achieved as part of the forthcoming quarterly monitoring exercise. That should allow time for any recovery actions if gaps are identified, e.g. lack of coverage for certain groups or areas.

7 Any Other Business

None

8 Date of Next Meeting

Thurs 4th July 2024, then first Thurs of every month (if required)

