

Darlington Neighbourhood Board

5th May 2026, 2:30-4:00pm

Room 411, Darlington Town Hall

1. Welcome & Apologies

Present - David Gartland, Sarah Bentley, Gordon Pybus, Cllr Steve Harker, Cllr Jim Garner, Brett Nielsen, Seth Pearson, Lola McEvoy, Mike Poulter, Janine Brown, Stephen Fenwick, Lorraine Hughes, Chris Farlow, Kay Sandham, Sarah Small, Graham Hall, Yvonne Beattie, Angela Howey, Andy Casey, Cresta Crawley.

Apologies – Karen Hawkins, Jonathan Gilroy, Trevor Watson, Anthony Hewitt, Hilary Bevan, Naomi Jenkins.

ICB Representative Martin Short has moved within the ICB and will be replaced by Karen Hawkins.

Sarah Bentley is moving on to a new role in Newcastle, therefore stepping down from the role of Deputy Chair. David thanked Sarah for her contribution to the board and her support in relation to the appraisal group and wished her well in her new venture.

New members suggestions from board:

JG suggested asking the VCS Sector as Sarah is a VCS representative.

DG suggested a brief CV from possible new members.

2. Minutes from Last Meeting – all agreed

Actions from the previous meeting:

	Actions	Person Responsible
1	Suggestions for new board members – send to Sarah Small.	All
2	Invite Public Health representation to meetings.	SS
3	Undertake a short comms exercise, share outcome with colleagues at the next meeting.	SP

3. Programme Delivery – Seth Pearson

SP made a presentation to colleagues – circulated to board.

Reminded the board this is a 10 year programme, the funding is staggered over the 10 years. Mindful that there is also a commitment of £5 million to the STEM Centre.

Neighbourhood Vision "To foster connected, inclusive, safe and sustainable neighbourhoods across Darlington that celebrate local identity, support community wellbeing, and can adapt to the evolving needs of residents, ensuring every neighbourhood is a great place to live, work, and thrive."

SP shared the grant profile which demonstrates how the funding comes in, there is a much lesser amount of capital funding this year, this is the 'ramp up' year.

SP introduced Cresta Crawley, Cresta has joined the Partnerships team, PiP is one of the programmes which will be included in Cresta's role.

DBT are allocating funding for the STEM Centre, which has outputs specific to business, PiP will hold outcomes based around number of young people benefiting from the STEM Centre.

LM – asked for Community Engagement Data, SS will share.

LM Discussed Community Organisers – is there scope to use capacity funding to support a community organiser role in each of the target areas.

DG asked if capacity funding a revenue scheme that could be used?

SP all spend to date has come from capacity funding and the rest can be used over the 10 year programme.

LM – Community Organisers are very different, they facilitate, ease out tensions, challenges, to bring communities together.

DG asked for this to be agenda item at a later meeting for further discussion.

SS – need to be mindful we have some stronger community assets (people) within the targeted communities.

LH asked for health specific insight from the community engagement work. Possible drug & alcohol support. Health Squad model, visits communities where residents are, so please invite them to any engagement events in the future where appropriate.

JG be mindful of any overspend as the programme is over the 10 year period.

BN referenced the funding profile, DBC is cash flowing and covering the risk of the funding. We need to be conscious of the council's position and don't commit everything in day one.

The funding for year one has been received, the MOU is only for the first four years, so there is an added risk as the programme is for 10 years.

The overspend occurs over the first four years, DBC will fund this until further years funding comes in. However, we don't want to be spending money on borrowing costs so need to keep borrowing to a minimum.

GH PCC is undertaking work on a youth strategy, a lot of work has been done and is soon to be completed. Following on from this there will be possible funding available.

Also need to be aware of the assets in relation to police. Diary of events already planned for this year, which could be built upon.

SP – real opportunities working with partners- health, police, to enrich the community engagement.

LM – Youth Update at the next meeting from PCC, all agreed. JG suggested this should be a joint update from PCC, YMCA and Youth Partnership.

Small Grants Programme – Seth Pearson

Point North would be happy to support the delivery of the grants. It is likely that there will be a greater call for revenue funding which could be done using capacity funding. This could be a partnership with Darlington Connect.

SP will bring the proposal to a later meeting.

Priorities for 26/27

4. Dropped Kerbs – Andy Casey

All new developments include dropped kerbs, but there is an issue with some existing routes across the town. Such as routes to main points – town centre, hospital.

DG asked if there is a possibility to have a map of priority areas.

GP like with the community asset mapping we need to be careful about highlighting specific roads, not to build expectation.

AC DBC will need to demonstrate a strategic route and shown progression for the work and improvements on specific routes. A technician is working to highlight priority areas where there are gaps, where work needs to be done to complete routes.

SH there is definitely a need to understand what we are doing and what the money is being spent on.

DG Board approved the £75k spend on dropped kerbs, on the condition that after four years, MOU period, we look at the work carried out and carry on with the work beyond year 4 as the board agrees.

LM Since the 80s Darlington has not been a town fit for purpose in relation to inclusive access. This project will support the years of underfunding.

5. Project Development Process / Monitoring and Advisory Group – Sarah Bentley

1. Capacity
2. Capital
3. Revenue

Require a flow chat for each pot, in relation to processes.

SP will bring to a later meeting.

6. Comms Support – Seth Pearson

SP Three organisations have come forward with comprehensive proposals to provide comms support for the PiP programme.

Using the criteria SP recommended Barron Media at an overall cost of £9,900 per year.

All agreed.

7. Towns Fund Update – Mike Poulter

Edward Pease House – works on roof commence this week, in final stages of delivery.

156 Northgate – minor snagging underway.

Northern Echo – on programmes for ground floor to open July 2026. Remaining building due for completion December 2026.

Skinnergate – Proposals underway for long term use.

GH – asked if Northgate house is connected?

MP this has been taken forward as part of the work with Cityheart. Work is underway with the owner and their agent. The outcome is unknown but will be shared as appropriate. DBC are in a good place in relation to a compulsive purchase.

8. STEM Centre – Mike Poulter

STEM Centre – The allocation of £16.5 million has been increased to £19 million from the Department of Business & Trade. An outline scheme was produced but didn't have a full comprehensive cost profile as it was developed at pace. There is now a slightly new design which looks at efficiency, resource, etc. Making sure everything is affordable, especially with the middle east conflict in mind.

MP suggested the revised designs are shared at the next meeting.

The Final Business Case will now be finalised, with all the cost profiles and delivery plan in a much stronger position.

DG suggested we hold the next meeting for two hours – all agreed.

9. AOB – None recorded.

Date of Next Meeting – Tuesday 16th June 2026 Time TBC

	Actions	Person Responsible
1	Share community engagement findings with LM	SS
2	Small Grant proposal from Point North	SP
3	Agenda Item – Findings from the PCC Youth Engagement	SS
4	Project Development Process / Monitoring – process for future meeting.	SP
5	STEM Centre revised designs to be shared at the next meeting	MP
6	Extend meeting time for June meeting	SS