

WASHINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday 14th November 2025 at 1.30pm at Washington Business Centre, Sunderland

Present:

Members of the Board

Ellen Thinnesen OBE (Chair)	Sunderland College
Sharon Hodgson MP	Member of Parliament
Cllr Linda Williams	Sunderland City Council
Cllr Beth Jones	Sunderland City Council
Paul McEldon OBE	North East Business Innovation Centre
Professor Graham Thrower	University of Sunderland
Ruth Walker	Sunderland Youth Consortium
Kim Hunter	Washington Area VCS Network
Marc Edwards	Gentoo
Ronnie Lynn (<i>for Simon Marshall</i>)	Together for Children Sunderland Ltd

All Supporting Officers

Catherine Auld	Sunderland City Council
Helen Peverley	Sunderland City Council
Lucy Nicholson	Sunderland City Council
Kristofer Bendelow	Sunderland City Council
Debra Bond	Sunderland City Council

In Attendance

Rebecca Rees	Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG)
Charles Farrer	MHCLG
Bethany Gorman	MHCLG

Welcome and Apologies

The Chair formally opened the meeting of the Washington Neighbourhood Board and welcomed all attendees.

Apologies for absence were received from Scott Watson - North East and North Cumbria Integrated Commissioning Board, Austin McNamara - Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance, Simon Marshall – Together for Children Sunderland Ltd, Rachel Snaithe – Police and Crime Commissioner and Patrick Houghton – Sunderland City Council.

Minutes and actions arising from the last meeting held on 19th September 2025

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and it was confirmed that all actions had been completed with the exception of exploring more detailed data on economic inactivity in Washington which was ongoing.

Washington Regeneration Plan

The Board was informed that the Government Programme name had now changed and was no longer Plan for Neighbourhoods, but was now Phase 1 of the Pride in Place Programme (PiPP). Helen provided an overview of the progress made to date and reminded members of the three core objectives for the programme, along with the programme aims and strategic objectives.

Helen highlighted the eight programme interventions and reminded members that the Regeneration Plan was required to be submitted to MHCLG and must comprise two key components: -

- A 10-year vision – a PDF document setting out the strategic vision for Washington, detailing where, why, and how funds would be targeted and managed compliantly and effectively over the 10-year period. This document must take account of local challenges and opportunities and include a 10-year spending profile.
- A 4-year investment plan – a more detailed plan, submitted via the online portal, outlining how the Board proposed to utilise funding during the first investment period (2026–2030).

Catherine thanked members for their support with the data workshops and summarised that the data informing the development of the vision and 4-year investment plan focused on areas with a high proportion of deprivation, as identified in the 2025 Indices of Deprivation. Deprivation was defined as populations living within the 20% most deprived areas in England. The analysis considered meaningful geographical areas for the local population and utilised LSOA-level information.

Decision 1: Focus for geographical areas in first investment period (2026-2030)

The Board noted that the 2025 Indices of Deprivation for the whole of Sunderland had been compared with Washington, and that the 2025 data had also been compared with the 2019 Indices of Deprivation. Members discussed the geographical areas within Washington that would benefit from inclusion in the first investment period (2026–2030).

Councillor Williams, when referring to the data for Washington, noted that some locations listed in the presentation slides were not accurately described as ‘villages’ and suggested that the term ‘communities’ be used instead. The Board unanimously agreed.

In referring to the presentation, Catherine explained that the blue areas represented the areas proposed as the primary focus and noted that need in some areas would be more acute. She emphasised that, as this was a ten-year programme, the Board would need to ensure ongoing resident engagement, particularly with young people. Graham Thrower commented that, due to the different types of intervention, such as access to schools,

employment, green spaces and transport, there could be overlaps, from the resident engagement across the identified communities.

In response, it was confirmed that the consultation had achieved sufficient representation and included a range of voices. While the data had not yet been fully analysed, responses had been mapped to show their geographical origin.

The Board reviewed the areas listed in the presentation and agreed that they provided an accurate representation of where investment should be targeted. Members confirmed that there was sound reasoning for focusing on these areas and the proposed geographical areas were therefore approved.

Decision 2: Focus on key findings from resident insight

A recap was provided on resident insight, noting that 5,408 pieces of engagement had been completed. It was proposed that the first four years of the plan would focus on priorities for communities, which were outlined in the presentation as follows: Time in Nature (parks and green spaces), Feeling Safe (crime and antisocial behaviour), Vibrant Places (villages and town centre), Getting Around (transport and infrastructure), Thriving Lives (youth and family) and Improved Appearance (cleaner streets and spaces). It was considered that all of these priorities reflected the views of residents and aligned with Board members' experiences in Washington.

Councillor Williams, in referring to 'Time in Nature', queried whether the reference to parks and green spaces related specifically to play parks or to definitions used by the Council for formal parks and suggested that a clearer definition was required. Following consideration, it was agreed to amend the wording from 'Parks and Green Spaces' to 'Green Spaces'.

Kim Hunter, in referring to 'Thriving Lives', noted that the current definition focused solely on youth and family, which could imply exclusion of individuals without families. Following consideration, it was agreed to amend the definition from 'Youth and Family' to 'Youth and Community'.

A discussion took place regarding 'Improved Appearance'. It was suggested in order to avoid confusion between its intended meaning, which was connecting communities, with activities such as street cleaning, which fell under the Council's responsibility, it was agreed to amend the definition from 'Cleaner Streets and Spaces' to 'Streets and Spaces'.

To summarise, Board members agreed to focus on the key findings from the resident insight as follows: -

- Time in Nature (Green spaces)
- Feeling Safe (Crime and antisocial behaviour)
- Vibrant Places (Villages and town centre)
- Getting Around (Transport and infrastructure)
- Thriving Lives (Youth and Community)
- Improved Appearance (Streets and spaces)

Decision 3: Interventions and allocation of indicative funding for capital and revenue (2026-2030)

Board members were reminded of the programme interventions, as follows: -

- Regeneration High Streets and Heritage
- Housing
- Work, productive, skills, education & opportunity
- Cohesion
- Health & Wellbeing
- Transport
- Safety and Security

The allocation of indicative funding (capital and revenue) was also highlighted as follows: -

2026-2027	Year 1	£232,000 Revenue £360,000 Capital
2027-2028	Year 2	£256,000 Revenue £1,736,000 Capital
2028-2029	Year 3	£432,000 Revenue £1,605,000 Capital
2029-2030	Year 4	£432,000 Revenue £1,605,000 Capital

Bethany Gorman, who was in attendance from MHCLG, in referring to the interventions and funding allocations, reassured Board members that there was flexibility to reallocate funds as needed. She also noted that additional funding sources could be explored and applied for in relation to specific interventions, potentially reducing reliance on the current allocation. At this stage, it was considered that a pro-rata distribution of funds might be the simplest approach, with the option to review and adjust allocations later based on identified priorities.

On that basis, it was agreed the funds would be allocated equally across each intervention on a pro-rata basis, applying a proportionate capital/revenue split, with a review to take place annually.

Board members were reminded in summary of the following conclusions under previous decisions in the meeting regarding the approach to plan delivery for the first investment period (2026–2030): -

- The focus would be on communities with a high proportion of deprivation, where the Programme could have the greatest impact.
- Key priorities would be drawn from resident engagement and cross-referenced with data analysis, including: -
 - Time in nature
 - Feeling safe, secure, involved, and connected
 - Creating vibrant places
 - Improving mobility and access
 - Supporting thriving lives
 - Enhancing the appearance of places and spaces

Decision 4: Governance and Implementation Next Steps

Helen advised that MHCLG required specific information relating to governance and assurance. The Board discussed the guiding principles (previously agreed) which would be followed when agreeing investment for Washington. They are:

- **Working in partnership and maximising resources** harnessing the strengths of our communities, working with the Council, VCSE, health, housing, education, and businesses to create a place where people are supported to thrive at every stage of life. Making sure there is no duplication of efforts and that we connect into wider interventions and opportunities bringing added value that is felt by residents in Washington.
- **Prevention and targeted sustainable action** - investment is targeted in the areas of greatest need. All investments must be able to demonstrate their future sustainability plans, meaning longer-term access to support and services for residents, leading to a better quality of life, rather than short-term support that temporarily alleviates challenges.
- **Evidence-led and impact-driven** informed by robust data, which will be consistently monitored to measure change and impact, alongside local insights and learning from proven practice. We will monitor progress to ensure lasting change for people and communities is visible and sustainable.

A range of other documents need to be produced which would require ratification from the Board in due course in relation to governance and assurance.

Board members agreed to give consideration to the following: -

- A proposal for a targeted call for projects through a Small Grants programme, via expressions of interest, linked to key findings and funded from Year 1 resources;
- The development of proposals for future years (2027–2030), covering both capital and revenue, with seed-corn funding for feasibility and planning work also drawn from Year 1 resources;
- The finalisation of KPIs aligned to programme interventions; and
- Opportunities to maximise partnerships and avoid duplication by working with existing partners, programmes, and projects, while strengthening the Board's influencing role to support behaviour change.

Graham Thrower, in referring to the KPIs, asked whether there was any form of external validation to ensure that the Board's activities were having a meaningful impact. In response, Charles Farrer (MHCLG) advised that the MHCLG did not wish to impose a burdensome process and was primarily focused on project delivery. While MHCLG may request some metrics, assurance would largely be demonstrated through ongoing engagement and reporting rather than formal validation.

Cllr Jones noted that smaller organisations submitting grant applications might require additional time to provide the necessary information, as they did not have the same grant-writing experience or resources as larger organisations.

Cllr Williams emphasised the importance of working with the VCS and Voluntary Sector Alliance to provide grant writing support and asked whether officers would undertake the scoring process, which Helen confirmed they would.

Communication Plan and Identity for Board

Lucy Nicholson provided an update to Board members on communications and engagement, confirming that all deadlines had been met and that the communications journey remained ongoing.

Significant work had been carried out with primary schools, alongside numerous focus groups, activities and organised support initiatives. Strong relationships had been established and it was noted that the Washington programme section on the Commonplace engagement platform now had over 800 subscribers.

Decision 5: Next Steps for communication

Looking ahead, a press release would be prepared for early 2026, which would reflect the key messages emerging from engagement. In addition, a Communications Forward Plan would be developed, setting out milestones and using clear, accessible language to explain how funds were being allocated, the rationale behind spending decisions and associated timescales.

Board members thanked Lucy for the update and agreed the next steps for communication as detailed above.

The Chair thanked Board members for their valuable input and approved that the Regeneration Plan be submitted to MHCLG.

Any Other Business

At this point, the Chair advised Board members that she would be stepping down as Chair at the end of December 2025, as she was leaving her current position at Education Partnership Northeast to take up the role of Further Education Commissioner from January 2026. Board members congratulated Ellen and expressed their gratitude for her support.

It was confirmed that The Washington Neighbourhood Board would begin the process of appointing a new Chair in due course.

Action Points

To summarise, the following actions were agreed: -

- Finalise Vision and Investment Plan following Board discussions and submit to MHCLG **(HP)**
- Develop arrangements to bring forward expressions of interest for targeted Small Grants delivery
- Develop arrangements for consideration of appropriate feasibility / planning work during Year 1 in line with agreed priority areas
- Establish Investment Panel **(HP)**
- Consider nominations for, and progress appointment of, new Chair **(Board)**

- Arrange for Councillor Williams to meet with the new Chair (**HP/Cllr Williams**)
- Develop press release and forward plan for engagement (**LN**)

Date and time of next meeting

A date for an additional meeting in January 2026 was to be confirmed.

The next scheduled meeting was due to be held on 6th March, 2026 at 10.30am

(Signed) E. THINNESEN
Chair