



WASHINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD BOARD

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday 6th March 2026 at 10.30am at Ayton Centre,
Dunlin Drive, Washington, NE380DL**

Present:

Members of the Board

Ruth Walker (Chair)	Sunderland Youth Consortium
Cllr Beth Jones	Sunderland City Council
Cllr Linda Williams	Sunderland City Council
Emma Cottle	Education Partnership North East
Kim Hunter	Washington Area VCSE Network
Marc Edwards	Gentoo
Professor Graham Thrower	University of Sunderland
Sharon Hodgson MP	Member of Parliament
Simon Marshall	Together for Children Sunderland Ltd
Shaun Hair	Young People’s Representative

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

Welcome and Apologies

The Chair formally opened the meeting of the Washington Pride in Place Board and welcomed all attendees.

Apologies for absence were received from Paul McEldon OBE - North East Business Innovation Centre, Scott Watson - North East and North Cumbria Integrated Commissioning Board, Rachel Snaith - Police and Crime Commissioner and Bobby Hudson – Young People’s Representative.

Chair’s Overview

The Chair informed the Board that Scott Watson would be stepping down from his role as a representative, as he was due to retire from the ICB. It was proposed that Dr Raj Bethapudi be appointed as his replacement. Dr Bethapudi was a GP at the Galleries



Medical Practice in Washington and served as the ICB Sunderland Place-Based Clinical Lead. It was noted that he had already worked with supporting the Board during the development of priorities for the Washington 10-Year vision and Investment Plan.

Councillor Beth Jones declared an interest in any decisions that may follow within the meeting regarding the appointment of Dr. Bethapudi as a result of being a member of staff employed by the ICB.

Kim Hunter noted that it would be beneficial to have on the Board an individual who also sat on the GP Alliance. She added that Dr. Bethapudi was well known within the Washington area, had a strong understanding of the local context and could effectively bring health considerations to the agenda.

Board members raised no concerns regarding Dr. Bethapudi's appointment. It was therefore agreed that contact would be made with him to confirm his acceptance of the role and arrange for the completion of the necessary governance paperwork.

Board members were also informed that Austin McNamara had stepped down from the Board, as his tenure as Interim Chief Executive Officer of VSA was due to conclude shortly. It was noted that the Board may consider appointing a replacement for Austin to represent the sector at a later date. Kim Hunter requested that VCSE be used, rather than VCS, for references to the sector.

Action Points

- **Dr Bethapudi to invited to join the Board and governance paperwork completed.**

Declarations of Interest

Cllr Williams declared an interest as a Trustee of Oxclose and District Young People's Project Ltd, the organisation hosting the meeting. This interest related to items on the agenda concerning capacity funding for young people's engagement.

Graham Thrower declared an interest as a member of the SFSFT NHS Trust and advised he would update his Member Interest form.

Chair's Overview

The Chair provided a brief summary of the Board's current position, noting that it was now ready to progress into the delivery phase and begin allocating resources to begin to deliver the Washington Pride in Place vision and first 4-year investment plan. The purpose of the meeting was to receive an update regarding engagement with young people, consider the proposed Year 1 priorities (examining the three-stage investment approach which has been worked up following discussions at the previous Board meeting), and seek approval of the programme governance documentation within the context of ensuring that the Board remained community led. It was suggested that Community-led Approach should be considered as a standard agenda item moving forward.



Action Point

- Add Community-led Approach as standard agenda item for future meetings

Minutes and actions arising from the last meeting held on 23rd January 2026

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and it was confirmed that all actions had been completed or were covered on the agenda for today's meeting.

Engagement with Young People

The Chair explained that she wished to embed youth voices within the programme in a way that is purposeful and create meaningful opportunities for young people to contribute to the work of the Board. She emphasised the Board's intention for this involvement to be genuine and for young people to have a role in shaping investment decisions, supporting the programme's core aim of empowerment, which had been discussed from the outset. She noted that young people would grow up with the programme across its 10-year lifetime.

Members were advised that a discussion had taken place with Washington Youth Council about the programme and the idea of a Shadow Youth Board at Pitstop the previous week, which Helen Peverley attended, and the young people were really keen to be involved. The Youth Council had shown strong enthusiasm, and it was noted that the two young people to be represented on the Board would ensure information was fed in from, and back to, the Youth Council.

The Chair reiterated her commitment to encouraging the participation of young people and suggested that the young people themselves should shape the mechanism that works best for them, noting that Board reports and papers can feel daunting for some people but work well for others. Councillor Williams emphasised that effective engagement was essential and suggested that the Board consider allocating funding to support the Youth Council, to help the Shadow Board to operate successfully.

Simon Marshall highlighted the upcoming State of the City debate and Make Your Mark campaign for potential links. Board members discussed a wide variety of ways that could open up greater engagement with a diverse range of young people. These included easy wins such as a drop-in at the Football Hub (building on the initial engagement work that was done there with surveys, putting up posters to reach more young people), putting together a mailing list of all youth groups in the area, links to groups who meet at Arts Centre Washington (connecting in to arts, music and culture), opportunities through Culture Start (noting Graham and Ruth sit on the Board), and links to uniformed groups.

Simon Marshall also noted that there may be vulnerable groups whose voices were not currently being captured, including where there was no statutory mechanism to reach those young people. He highlighted that communications could address this issue for example with elective home education.

Emma Cottle offered support through the College for the Board to seek input from home-educated young people as they have a programme. The Chair advised that there were a range of existing support groups for home-educated young people, as well as for care



experienced young people and those in supported accommodation which could be approached to help with engagement.

Graham Thrower expressed full support for incorporating youth voices into the Board's work and noted the huge range of circumstances and experiences of young people but highlighted the need to consider the practical mechanisms by which that would happen. For example, how information would flow between the young people involved, the Youth Council and the Board and how feedback would be cascaded and responded to, and the timing of meetings.

The Chair thanked all Board members for their comments and support for the proposal of including young people in this way and it was agreed that a Task and Finish Group would be established to discuss and determine the most appropriate practical mechanisms.

The Board agreed that Shaun Hair and Bobby Hudson would become members of the Washington Pride in Place Board and arrange for the completion of the necessary governance paperwork.

Action Point

- **Shaun Hair and Bobby Hudson to be invited to become Board members and complete all governance paperwork**
- **Task and finish group to be established to formulate mechanisms for Young people's shadow Board to be developed**

Year 1 Proposals

A) Washington Grant Programme – Investment Fund (approval with effect from April 2026) – including increasing capacity

Helen reminded the Board that at its January meeting they emphasised the importance of ensuring that the Washington Pride in Place programme investment of grant delivered meaningful impact across Washington communities and that the appropriate infrastructure was established to maximise impact from a large-scale grant funding programme over the next ten-years.

They agreed that the overall programme approach and mechanics should enable the Board to allocate funding in line with programme aims and objectives, measure impact effectively, evaluate delivery and outcomes throughout the programme's duration, prioritise communities with greatest need, implement a fit-for-purpose grant application process proportionate to grant value and assess and manage risk.

The Board was advised that the proposed process would enable them to strengthen community-led investment and decision making, develop flexible plans that reflect local priorities, balance immediate actions with long-term goals, gather the insight and create the mechanisms to build the long-term community relationships needed to begin programme delivery effectively and on firm foundations. It would also support them in building confidence in the use of participatory methods, using data to continuously refine the Washington investments and evidence progress, identifying and addressing gaps in existing support arrangements.



The Board was advised of the proposed Year 1 delivery resources for the Washington Pride in Place Investment Fund. The total allocation for 2026/27 amounted to £592,000 comprising £232,000 revenue and £360,000 capital, subject to approval of the Vision and Investment Plan by MHCLG.

It was noted that the first year of the programme aimed to ensure that communities most in need across Washington could benefit from targeted support, enabling the Board to identify gaps, understand investment requirements and build community capacity. The grant programme was scheduled to launch in April 2026 (subject to MHCLG plan approval and receipt of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) from MHCLG) and run to March 2027, or until funds were fully allocated. The first bidding window is proposed to operate from May to September, supported by monthly workshops to promote the grant and support organisations to complete applications.

Eligible applicants included voluntary and community sector organisations, including registered charities, not-for-profit organisations, higher and further education institutions, statutory and non-statutory public organisations and private sector SMEs.

It was confirmed that the Director of Finance at Sunderland City Council had been consulted and that the same process used by Area Arrangements for Area Committee funding would be followed for the smaller scale grants.

Marc Edwards raised questions about how bids would be ranked. He also emphasised that the Board's assessment should consider factors such as the number of people who would benefit from each proposal and the impact which could be achieved (not just focusing on numbers), as well as whether the funding would help accelerate existing initiatives where groups already had access to some funding and the deliverability of the projects, including how quickly they could be implemented within the year. Helen Peverley advised that workshops would be held with applicants to ensure that they understand the process and are able to present and deliver their proposals effectively.

Simon Marshall stressed that to ensure transparency the Board would require clear governance and documentation setting out the criteria used. He suggested that a scoring matrix would help provide the necessary transparency against the criteria. Catherine Auld advised it was proposed to set out the proposed criteria and a scoring matrix and share it with the Board.

Kim Hunter commented that the lead-in timescales proposed were short and also requested the Board to remain mindful that even modest amounts of funding could have a significant impact on small community groups and residents. The Chair responded that the proposed workshops were designed to ensure support was provided, recognising the need for this particularly for smaller VCSE groups. Kim Hunter also advised that she would ensure the Washington Pride in Place programme was a standing agenda item on the Washington VCSE Network agenda to keep everyone up to date and have a two-way flow of information.

Councillor Williams enquired how the Board would balance the needs of the ten communities with needs in other parts of Washington. Helen Peverley responded that applications from other communities would need to clearly demonstrate their specific needs and the Board would make decisions, linked to the scoring matrix which is to be agreed, once these were understood. Helen also noted that a capacity-building grant was



available which would be covered more fully under the next part of the agenda covering Pots 1 to 3, which could provide some support for applicants to make sure they can clearly outline what they would be able to achieve with the funding.

Graham Thrower concluded that the Board would be well supported and protected from any challenges if it followed the intended approach which was to deliver workshops and support and educate groups on the opportunity and the requirements, develop a clear weighting and scoring mechanism, and ensure consistent application of the criteria and governance arrangements. He concluded that in this way the process would be robust.

Helen Peverley, in referring to the presentation, summarised Pots 1, 2 and 3 ahead of covering them in more detail individually. In addition, examples were provided of the types of organisations that might apply for each funding pot. Board Members were assured that supporting officers would be available to advise applicants on which pot was most appropriate for their proposal.

Action point

- **Proposed grant fund scoring criteria and a scoring matrix to be finalised and shared with the Board.**

Pot 1 – Small one-off grant = 30no. x (£1,000 up to £5,000) Capital Grants

This was to be paid in a one-off payment on receipt of signed Terms & Conditions (T&Cs), which would be written to ensure the groups receiving funding also worked together and shared learning across Washington communities. Pot 1 would be made available to Community-based VCSE organisations for capital investment in Washington. It would be launched from May via workshops with promotion through the Washington VCSE Network.

The Board agreed the proposal for Pot 1 (total value £150k) and agreed to payment upfront upon receipt of signed T&Cs of grant.

Pot 2 – Capacity building grant to support Board to meet the key findings from resident insight themes across multiple geographies in Washington = 30no x up to £10,000 each (£200k revenue and £100k capital)

Applications to be developed with organisations via workshops with interested groups. It was expected that most projects would deliver a 12-month programme of activities focused on capacity building. The projects receiving the funding must ensure they work with established hubs (wherever appropriate e.g. Family Hubs, Locality Hubs linked to Anti-Social Behaviour) and in partnership to avoid duplication and maximise impact and sustainability. Projects must be forward facing and lead to a clear next step, they need to build social infrastructure and networks for the Board and support the Board with future investment planning (primarily capital from year 2 onwards). Helen Peverley clarified that Pot 2 is not about service delivery but is about building capacity in communities to help make sure that when the main capital funding is allocated it can have real and lasting impact.



As an example, a capacity building grant linked to young people would need to enable young people to support the Board in its work and the voices of young people in Washington must be clearly demonstrated in any application and in the activities proposed. Pot 2 would be launched from April, with a total value of £300k split between revenue and capital.

The Board agreed the proposal for Pot 2.

Pot 3 – Development grant fund (supporting future capital investment pipeline or new revenue models) to deliver future projects (year 2 onwards) which meet the programme aims and resident and data insights = Total value £142k (£110k capital and £32k revenue)

Pot 3 funding could for example support a feasibility study to develop a larger-scale project which the Board may agree to support in future years, such as an extension to a community building which required architectural plans, planning permission and a business plan to demonstrate facilities/services to be delivered within Washington. It was agreed that receiving funding under Pot 3 should not be seen as a guarantee of capital funding support in future years for the project itself to be delivered.

This was to be launched from Autumn 2026 with a series of technical workshops to understand the project proposals fully. Project applicants would need to present their proposal to the Board, demonstrating impact to be achieved and including partnership working to meet programme objectives. Total value £142k.

Discussions took place about ensuring that, while the focus remained absolutely on Washington, projects could also connect to other City-wide projects and services such as the Digital Hubs that could enable these to bring additional benefit to Washington. This was within the context of a discussion about the potential, for example, for applications to install wi-fi into community facilities to support access for young people and the relative value of this compared to enabling an improved offer within existing facilities that might benefit a greater number of groups collectively.

Points raised included that funded projects should have clear visibility of a future capital project, as well as be able to demonstrate value for money (for example, comparing build and future running costs of a proposed extension with rental costs for an existing community space) to ensure the Board can have maximum impact with the resources available.

In response to an enquiry from Shaun Hair regarding how organisations would be made aware that the funding pots were available, Helen Peverley explained that there was a Communications working group that would be looking at developing communications for the Board with representation from all the organisations on the Board. She confirmed the information would also be shared through the Washington VCSE Network, Social Media channels and Board members would be encouraged to circulate it also.

Kim noted that the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE) Network in Washington would include the Pride in Place programme as a standing item on their meeting agenda.

The Board gave agreement in principle to the proposal for Pot 3.



Action points:

- **Pot 1 and Pot 2 grant would be available from late-April 2026. Monthly in-community workshops and surgeries would be available to support groups to develop proposals, with monthly reviews and recommended projects presented to the Board for approval.**
- **Pot 3 would be available from September 2026, and workshops would help groups develop proposals to present to the Board for discussion and possible approval.**
- **Kim Hunter to ensure the Pride in Place Programme is a standing item on the VCSE Network in Washington meeting agenda**

Board members also discussed how they would work to ensure that they support the proposals which will be the most impactful investments. This included discussion about whether the Board included, or had access to, all the right people to ensure the right linkages to other existing delivery and to avoid duplication. Catherine Auld suggested that additional input could be requested from appropriate colleagues and partners to provide wider context and information for the Board, and the proposed Investment Panel, to help with this and that mechanisms would be put in place to carry out the necessary financial due diligence also as part of the project appraisal process. The Board also discussed the potential to encourage local procurement, to enable the impact of the Board's funding to be increased further including through social value activity, while also recognising the overall need to ensure the best person / company is contracted for the job required to ensure deliverability. Board members also discussed the balance to be struck in ensuring they help grow opportunities for people in Washington and always keeping a clear focus on this, while being mindful that these opportunities – particularly for young people - shouldn't be constrained to only being within Washington in isolation from the wider city and region or beyond.

B) Programme Management/Delivery Expenditure

Further work had been carried out since the discussion at the previous Board meeting on an appropriate allocation for programme management and administration costs which had originally been proposed at 4% in line with UK Shared Prosperity Fund but which the Board felt was too low for this programme. The Board was advised that, following review, the programme management and delivery costs were now estimated at 6% of the total programme expenditure for the first four years. This was based on approximately 7,848 hours of Council officer time and reflected the community-led nature of the programme and greater levels of support and engagement expected to be required. It was proposed that this funding would be met through the programme's capacity funding.

The functions covered included: -

- Secretariat and governance
- Programme delivery, monitoring and evaluation
- Investment grant management
- Communication and engagement
- Commissioning
- Grant monitoring and evaluation



It was also proposed that Board-related direct costs, estimated at up to £20,000 over four years, would be funded separately also from the capacity funding. These included estimated costs such as room hire, training, marketing, communications and resident engagement with a 10% contingency included.

During discussion, it was apparent that Board members unanimously felt that a 6% allocation was still too low and would impact negatively on the community-led nature of the programme as well as on the ability of the Board to manage effectively and be sustainable if a decision was taken in the future to move to a stand-alone body. Kim Hunter noted that 10% is the standard management fee in the VCSE sector and Board members agreed capping it at this level would be appropriate. It was therefore proposed that the allowance be set between 6-8% and reviewed regularly, with all costs incurred available for Board review on an open book basis.

Action points:

- **Programme management allowance be set between 6-8% and reviewed regularly, with all costs incurred available for Board review on an open book basis**
- **Provision for a maximum of 10% management fee moving forwards, reflecting standard VCSE approach, to be built into funding management and allocations to enable future sustainability.**

Programme Management Items

A) Approval of Programme Governance documentation

Board members were directed to the Final Assurance Framework and Risk Management Plan that had been circulated.

Members agreed the documents.

B) Approach for Evaluation

Members were reminded that the Board had emphasised from the outset the importance of ongoing evaluation throughout programme delivery. This would ensure the Board could clearly measure project outcomes and impact and remain well-informed in delivering against the vision for Washington and aligning future funding with PiPP aims and objectives.

Members were also informed of the following points to help support their thinking on evaluation: -

- Lessons learned from previous programmes would be taken into account;
- Evaluators would work directly with each grant-funded project;
- Each project would be required to share its findings in line with grant terms and conditions;
- Projects would provide presentations to the Board;
- UKSPF evaluation costs had totalled £35,000 over three years, providing a useful benchmark; and



- Further guidance from MHCLG regarding the overall evaluation framework was still awaited.

The Board agreed a Task Group would be established to develop evaluation recommendations for Board approval. It was noted that Graham Thrower and the Chair would give consideration to the evaluation approach for the programme with other Board members to advise if they would like to join the Task Group. It was noted that this needs to be handled appropriately in relation to potential conflicts of interest given the University's strengths in evaluation.

Action points:

- **Evaluation Task Group to be established**
- **All members to advise if they want to join the Evaluation Task Group**

Future Agenda Items

Two standing items would be

- Feedback with the Washington VCSE Network
- Community-led transition for the Washington Pride in Place Board.

Communications Update

Lucy Nicholson provided a brief update on communications. The Board welcomed the new Members, which would strengthen and ensure appropriate linkages across the programme. Work was progressing on a series of facilitated workshops with engagement leads from organisations to support openness and transparency, develop thinking around a programme identity that would resonate with Washington residents and help to shape wider understanding of the programme. The workshops would also start the creation of a communications and engagement plan for the Board. It was noted that the Young People Shadow Board may wish to help with this.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Williams about the most effective way to keep people informed about the Board's work and whether the website remained the best option, the Chair suggested it would be helpful to recirculate the communications pack, including scripts and details of the online engagement platform. Lucy agreed to refresh the Communications Pack for the Board and circulate and confirmed that information about the Washington Pride in Place programme was available on the Commonplace website, the Council's website and social media channels. Lucy also advised that the Spring newsletter for residents would include some information on all three of the city's Pride in Place programmes.

Action points:

- **2 new Board members to be included in Board communications group**
- **Transparency and authenticity to be built into the communications principles**
- **Ongoing engagement activity to be organised**
- **Programme identity to be explored**
- **Lucy Nicholson to refresh communications pack for the Board and recirculate, including how to sign up for programme updates via the Common place website**



Any Other Business

Helen Peverley advised that she had recently held a very positive call with MHCLG. The representatives who visited in November had expressed an interest in returning. It was suggested that they could potentially be invited to attend a future Washington Youth Board meeting.

Sharon Hodgson MP declared that she had recently been appointed as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Department of Health and Social Care. Advice was to be taken on whether this needed to be added to the Member Interest Form.

Action point:

- **HP to liaise with Governance services to feed back to SH related to her appointment as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Department of Health and Social Care**

Next steps

The following next steps were agreed: -

- March/April 2026 – MHCLG endorses Plan and provides Memo of Understanding
- April 2026 onwards – Board Launches Washington Pride in Place Investment Fund

Date and time of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was to be confirmed.

(Signed) R. WALKER
Chair