Pride in Place — Bentilee & Ubberley Neighbourhood Board

Meeting: Pride in Place, Bentilee & Ubberley Neighbourhood Board Meeting 4
Date: 17/09/26
Time: 4.00pm
Location: Discovery Academy, Discovery Drive, Bentilee
Co-Chairs: Amy Harris & Simon French
Minute Taker: Waqas Butt

Attendees

Board

Amy Harris – Co-Chair

Simon French – Co-Chair

Gareth Snell MP

Cllr Sarah Jane Colclough

Cllr Lynn Watkins

Sha Owusu

Mereoni Jegesa

Lee Jones Jr

Tracey Johnson

Andy Firman

Donna Firman

Others

Vicki Gwynne – Local Authority Accountable Body representative

Nicola Brown – Office of Gareth Snell MP

Cassie Weaver – Partnerships & Collaborations Lead, VAST

Waqas Butt – Pride in Place Coordinator

Engagement Meeting Attendees

Lauren Kinder – District Youth Commissioner

Matt Crowe – Transform Communities CIC

Karl Breen – (Stoke on Trent City Council) Community Safety Coordinator

Bev Lawton – The Bread and Butter Thing Lead Volunteer

Rachel Dodd – (Stoke on Trent City Council) Head of Service – Children and Family Services (Family Hub)

Lesley Richards (Thrive at 5)

Alex Pitula - Bentilee Volunteers

Julia Ledingham – Asst. Head The Discovery Academy

David Barrow (Chief Inspector)

Claire Tench (PCSO Bentilee)

Apologies

Louise Davies

Steve Adams

Summary of Decisions

D1 Minutes of meeting 3 approved as an accurate record subject to the above corrections.

D2 Board voted on the provision of a Youth Board. This is to be representative of small groups from schools around the area and Stoke-on-Trent College and St Peters. Each smaller group will be federated through a Youth Board who will meet around the beginning of December. Each institution will be given £500 worth of funding for engagement with their students. It was also voted hat Sha would be the representative from the Neighbourhood Board.

D3 Small grants of £1,000, £3,000 or £5,000 will be available for ideas that support the Plan's priorities. Applications will be made using the form developed by VAST, and each will be discussed and voted on by the Board.

D4 Engagement activities to be delivered via the community and VAST were voted on. This includes a Halloween Event at Bentilee Volunteers Youth Centre at The Pavillion, Cooking classes and groups via Food with a Friend, a stall at Bentilee Market every Tuesday upon delivery of the

Gazebo, a Forage Walk at Maple court, Winter Fayer on the first week of December.

D5 VAST has written PiP policies regarding Children and Adult Safeguarding, Code of Conduct, Complaints Handling Policy, Conflict of Interest Declaration and Policy, EEDI Policy 2026, Health and Safety Policy Template. Others to follow including Training for Board members, Use of public money and finance policies, Procurement, Grant funding policy – Cassie talk to community foundation.

Minutes from the last meeting and Matters Arising

Highlighted that the place in the shared folder where Board Members could find the meeting notes would be on via the Board Meetings Folder. The Minutes would be found in the corresponding folder i.e "Board Meeting 4" Access to be updated for Amy. Accounting of funds clarified as monthly.

Community Engagements Breakout Discussions

Amy's Room

Scouts

Lauren explained that the key members of the scouts are aged anywhere from 4-25 years old. Mostly boys meeting 2-3x per week. For engagement they'd be able to offer engagement activities for kids in exchange for reaching out to families who are not a part of the organisation.

Family Hub

Rachel discussed that The Family Hub run sessions Mon-Fri from their centre on Dawlish Dr. where they host charities, Families etc. They can offer out space and engagement with residents who use the Hub on a regular basis. She mentioned that there is a perception of the hub as a place only for those struggling however this is not the case.

Thrive at 5

Lesley outlined that Thrive at 5 helps over 100 children as an early years charity working in Bentilee, Stoke-on-Trent, to support families with children from pregnancy up to age five. The program partners with local schools and early years settings across the area to implement evidence-based communication frameworks like NELI, PEEP Learning Together, and Talking Time. They are able to

assist with engagement through spreading the message to families to ensure more voices are heard.

Alpha Academies

Alpha Academies runs two schools within the area, Maple Court and The Discovery Academy. They are running Personal Development Curriculum o instil British values in students and develop students with empathy and awareness of the community in which they live and the active role they play in shaping Bentilee. This allows students access to actively help with decision-making within Pride in Place. They are developing key World of Work skills with their students and by using Pride in Place as a vehicle and writing businesses idea and presentation lessons into the curriculum they actively develop Teamwork, Problem-solving, communication, time management, self-confidence and positivity.

Alpha have already engaged by giving a stand at the Open Evening side-by-side with this meeting, giving Pride in Place a meeting space, a stand at Y7 settling-in Evening and a Pride in Place launch event to all students' w/c 28/9/2026. They have developed a Potential Community Event Programme which was shared with all those in Amy's engagement room.

Staffordshire Police

They engage with a wide range of individuals and groups across the Bentilee community. This includes young people through our local schools, comprising two junior schools and one high school, as well as youth organisations such as the Girls Can Project, Top Park Youth Club, and Bentilee Neighbourhood Centre (BNC). They also support adults through regular engagement with St Stephen's Church, the Warm Space initiative, Jericho, and local food banks. Bentilee Volunteers, supporting initiatives such as the Elderly Lunch Club and Rainbow Club, and maintain a presence at the Family Hub. Most weeks a PCSO attends these locations to speak with residents, visitors, staff, and volunteers, offering reassurance, advice, support, and safeguarding opportunities.

PCSOs attend these groups and community locations as regularly as operational demands allow. We have established weekly community drop-in sessions and maintain a visible presence throughout the area. This regular engagement enables us to build positive relationships, identify emerging community concerns, and provide ongoing support to residents.

Local PCSOs play an active role in supporting the Bentilee community by attending community events, providing crime prevention advice, safeguarding guidance, and signposting residents to partner agencies and support services.

We distribute information and literature, conduct reassurance patrols, support vulnerable individuals, address anti-social behaviour concerns, engage with young people, and work closely with local organisations to help improve community safety and wellbeing. Our aim is not only to address issues when they arise but also to prevent problems through engagement, education, and partnership working. We also organise and facilitate Days of Action which are multi-agency events where not only enforcement takes place but also engagement events with the community, whether it be Meet the Councillor and Cuppa with a Copper, Ward Walks and Black Onyx 'Op Mindset' youth engagement sessions.

Making Great Places

In partnership with Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the local implementation of the UK Home Office's national Clear, Hold, Build neighbourhood policing and community regeneration strategy.

Clear, Hold, Build is a three-phase operational framework designed to reclaim and rebuild communities affected by serious and organised crime:

Clear: Police and partners use coordinated enforcement, arrests, warrants, and relentless disruption to remove organised crime groups and criminals from an area.

Hold: Visible neighbourhood patrols and ongoing police activity stabilise the location, maintaining a grip on the area to prevent other criminals from filling the vacuum.

Build: Whole-system, community-empowered interventions tackle the root drivers of crime, fix environmental issues, and build long-term resilience.

Sharing your survey feedback directly impacts the "Build" phase of the Making Great Places initiative. While the "Clear" and "Hold" phases rely heavily on police-led enforcement to remove criminals and stabilize an area, restoring pride in place requires a community-led blueprint. Collaboration means that both projects can coexist.

The Board noted that considerable work had taken place between meetings and that the programme had moved forward. Thanks were recorded to VAST for its contribution, with Board members noting the benefit of having the Secretariat in place.

Simon's Room

Ten Count

Informal community centre with baby groups, girls-only sessions, music studio, cinema in a Portakabin, SEN sensory room and youth clubs. Also they do outreach, work with alternative provision providers, and runs exercise/social sessions for older people's mobility. Coming up they are going to have a soft play, a BBQ/allotment area, and a flexible community group room/IT space. The space is open Mon–Fri, 06:00-22:00.

Some residents don't know it exists. The CIO needs wage support and wants to extend the youth club facility.

Bread & Butter

Registration online; 3 bags for £8.50, or £17 for a double. Around 80 bags a week. Tuesday drop-ins for those struggling. Surplus currently goes to animal feed, with a possible future link to the church. Bev has reconstituted Brookhouse Community Forum (trips, Xmas event in the Pavilion, chatty café). TBBT Holds a map of users' details and can share PiP details.

EPIC Housing

EPIC owns over 1000 houses in the area as a Housing Association. There's a Tenant Insight Group, with about 15 engagement events last year. Shifting to informal events because many are put off by formal ones. EPIC uses community channels, to create joint community events. They have visibility through estate and do walkabouts, bulb planting and litter picks.

Across Bentilee with partners. Estate walks, quarterly Community Voice, monthly BNC, own meeting rooms, tenant outreach and newsletter. Themed campaigns such as back-to-school support.

They struggle with reaching out to young people, working-age residents (trying more evening and weekend activities), and non-EPIC residents.

Bentilee Volunteers

They have their own building on the estate where they hold events for, Rainbow Club for adults with learning difficulties, with weekly trips and 1 staff member.

Seniors Lunch Club, all fresh food, running 18 years. It relies on a minibus at £3 return and reaches Werrington and Hanley. The minibus licence is costly.

Youth club at Park Pavilion, Mon–Thu, 3 staff, 15–25 kids a night.

The Shed, which repurposes, resells or gives away items, A volunteer-led charity shop (clothing £1, homeware), Digital Spark IT suite for job search, PIP support and similar. Volunteers are down from 30 to 12 since Covid. Only 1 bus, which limits them to one person for 6 hours; growing numbers would need more transport and staff hours. Promotes via flyer drops and social media. Open 10–3 weekdays, affordable to all.

Gaps include Men 25–50 (they'd like to set up a breakfast club). Some residents still don't know about BV. High anxiety keeps some people from coming. No weekend offer.

Conclusion

From the breakout sessions we learned that all Community stakeholders need to communicate together to ensure collaboration for the benefit of the community.

Youth Board Proposal

Board voted on the provision of a Youth Board. This is to be representative of small groups from schools around the area and Stoke-on-Trent College and St Peters. Each smaller group will be federated through a Youth Board who will meet around the beginning of December. Each institution will be given £500 worth of funding for engagement with their students. It was also voted hat Sha would be the representative from the Neighbourhood Board. Other institutions in the area need to be consulted i.e Eaton Park, St Maria Goeretti. Councillor Colclough advised that there needs to be a route to those young people who are into in schools but still have access to education

Policy Update and Engagement

VAST has written PiP policies regarding Children and Adult Safeguarding, Code of Conduct, Complaints Handling Policy, Conflict of Interest Declaration and Policy, EEDI Policy 2026, Health and Safety Policy Template. Others to follow including Training for Board members, Use of public money and finance policies, Procurement, Grant funding policy – Cassie talk to community foundation.

Quick Wins

Small grants of £1,000, £3,000 or £5,000 will be available for ideas that support the Plan's priorities. Applications will be made using the form developed by VAST, and each will be discussed and voted on by the Board. All quick wins will go through this form.

Community Engagement & Comms

Amy's letter layout was reviewed by the board; this is currently with the printers and includes a link and paper copy of the survey. Residents will have the option to drop paper surveys off at 4 locations. Twigg St Fish n Chip Shop, The Neighbourhood Centre, St Steven's and Bugsy's Convenience Store. The board had a chance to view the "Our Bentilee Our Future" project logo approved by Amy. The website presentation has been pushed back due to time restrictions.

Engagement Calander

Waqas mentioned engagement events consisting of delivery via the community and VAST were voted on. This includes a Halloween Event at Bentilee Volunteers Youth Centre at The Pavillion, Cooking classes and groups via Food with a Friend, a stall at Bentilee Market every Tuesday when we receive the delivery of the Gazebo, a Forage Walk at Maple court, Winter Fayer on the first week of December.

AOB

Nothing further mentioned

Meeting Date	Action	Owner	Progress
17/09/26	Submit quick win suggestions via small grants form. Process TBD	VAST	Discussion next meeting
17/09/26	Prepare a costed menu of quick win projects — title, description, rationale and evidence, cost, timescale and intended impact — for decision.	Cassie Weaver / Waqas Butt	For next meeting
17/09/26	Present new Our Bentilee Our Future Website.	Sven from Alpha	Approved; approx. 6 weeks
17/09/26	Publish draft and formal minutes on the VAST website when approved.	VAST	Ongoing requirement

Meeting Date	Action	Owner	Progress
17/09/26	Confirmation of Amy's Letter submission to residents	Amy Harris / VAST Communications	Update next week
17/09/26	Survey Findings / Engagements update	Waqas Butt	Update next week
17/09/26	Youth board catch up Nov and Dec Meeting location to be confirmed	Waqas / Nicola B	To action
17/09/26	Arrange IT set-up 20 minutes ahead of the next meeting for all presenters.	VAST / Discovery Academy	Ongoing

Date of Next Meeting

Date: Thursday 1st October

Time: 1pm

Venue: Discovery Academy — The Discovery Suite