

CABINET

9 November 2011

FINAL REPORT OF THE ALLOCATION OF GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITES
INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP – RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CABINET

REPORT OF HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

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RECENT REFERENCES:

Final Report of the Allocation of Gypsy and Traveller Sites Informal Scrutiny Group – 17 October 2011 (Report [OS21](#) refers)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At its meeting held on 17 October 2011, The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the recommendations of the Allocation of Gypsy and Traveller Sites Informal Scrutiny Group (Report OS21 refers). The Committee agreed to refer the recommendations to Cabinet for implementation and these are as set out below.

Report OS21 is attached as Appendix 1 to this report and Cabinet should refer to its content as background to its consideration of the recommendations of the Group.

Cabinet should also refer to the relevant extract of the minutes of the meeting of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 October 2011 which is set out in Appendix 2 and supports the recommendations of the ISG.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Cabinet implement the following recommendations of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. That a commitment to undertake a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) and a Travelling Showmen Accommodation Assessment (TSAA) be set out in a Core Strategy policy. The policy should include criteria for allocating sites and assessing planning applications.

2. That the above GTAA and TSAA should be carried out, working with neighbouring authorities.

3. That the principle of making suitable provision for gypsies and travellers (including permanent and transit sites) and travelling showmen, based on the assessed need, be supported, including:

- a) Sites should be spread around the District with no over-concentration in any one location and be of a scale commensurate with the size of the settlement to avoid dominating the settled community or overloading services.
- b) Sites should be located at an appropriate distance from the settled community which still allows access to services.
- c) Sites should be suitably screened.
- d) Sites must provide appropriate site facilities such as sanitation, services and waste management and room for storing equipment for Travelling Showmen.

4. That temporary planning permissions should be reviewed against the policy criteria: if sites meet the criteria, permissions may be extended or made permanent but if they are found not suitable, enforcement action should be prioritised (which should also help prevent new unauthorised sites becoming established).

5. That the enforcement process at Carousel Park, Micheldever be continued to make this site available for travelling showmen again.

6. That the Council should proactively work with travelling showmen to identify suitable sites for allocation where needed.

7. That further investigations and negotiations be undertaken with a view to possibly taking over Tynfield from Hampshire County Council and managing this site to improve its occupancy/capacity.

8. That Members of the ISG be invited to attend and make representations to the Cabinet (Local Development Framework) Committee when it considers the allocation of site(s) in detail, to share expertise acquired throughout the Review.

9. That the funding available for both revenue and capital costs of providing sites be investigated to establish the likely ongoing cost of site provision.

10. That Parish Councils be given the opportunity to be involved in identifying potential sites.

11. Guidance be sought from the Council's equalities consultant/group on ways to increase cultural awareness of gypsies and travellers with Members, Parish Councils and the wider community.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:1 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CHANGE PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

- 1.1 The Community Strategy and Active Communities Change Plan promote the development of adequate housing to meet a range of needs and seek to protect people from discrimination and harassment. Implementation of the ISG's recommendations would contribute to this aim.

2 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 2.1 The ISG's report includes a section on 'funding sources' and acknowledges that there may be costs associated with its recommendations. It is likely that Government grants could cover the capital costs of site provision and layout, but these would not cover the ongoing revenue costs of management. Conversely, failure to make adequate provision for gypsies and travellers also has costs, both financial and social, in terms of clearing up unauthorised encampments, enforcing against unauthorised sites and increased tension between travellers and settled communities.
- 2.2 The report does not recommend a specific financial commitment regarding site provision and management, but that further work is needed to establish the potential costs, including negotiations with the County Council regarding the extent to which these may be covered as part of a package through which the City Council may take over the management of Tynefield.

3 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 3.1 The ISG's report includes sections on the potential risks of its recommendations.

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 - *is attached for Cabinet Members and Group Leaders only, with a copy available in the Members' Library and on-line via the following link:*

[OS21 – Allocation of Gypsy and Traveller Sites ISG – Final Report](#)

Appendix 2 - Relevant extract of the minutes of the meeting of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 October 2011

Extract of the minutes of the meeting of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 October 2011

1. **ALLOCATION OF GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITES INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP (ISG) – FINAL REPORT**
(Report OS21 Refers)

The Head of Strategic Planning introduced the Report and explained that the ISG had recommended that an accommodation assessment be undertaken. Whilst the results of this assessment were unlikely to be completed before the publication of the Core Strategy, it would form part of the evidence base for the Council's future planning policies on Gypsy and Traveller needs and, ultimately, assist in the identification of sites.

During discussion, the Committee noted the number of existing temporary planning permissions that were due to expire in the near future, the role of caravan and mobile home sites and the importance of working with neighbouring local authorities.

At the conclusion of debate, the Committee welcomed the Report and thanked those involved in its production and the Leader explained the importance Cabinet would place in carefully considering its recommendations.

RECOMMENDED:

That the following be recommended to Cabinet:

12. That a commitment to undertake a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) and a Travelling Showmen Accommodation Assessment (TSAA) be set out in a Core Strategy policy. The policy should include criteria for allocating sites and assessing planning applications.

13. That the above GTAA and TSAA should be carried out, working with neighbouring authorities.

14. That the principle of making suitable provision for gypsies and travellers (including permanent and transit sites) and travelling showmen, based on the assessed need, be supported, including:

- **Sites should be spread around the District with no over-concentration in any one location and be of a scale commensurate with the size of the settlement to avoid dominating the settled community or overloading services.**
- **Sites should be located at an appropriate distance from the settled community which still allows access to services.**
- **Sites should be suitably screened.**
- **Sites must provide appropriate site facilities such as sanitation, services and waste management and room for storing equipment for Travelling Showmen.**

15. That temporary planning permissions should be reviewed against the policy criteria: if sites meet the criteria, permissions may be extended or made permanent but if they are found not suitable, enforcement action should be prioritised (which should also help prevent new unauthorised sites becoming established).

16. That the enforcement process at Carousel Park, Micheldever be continued to make this site available for travelling showmen again.

17. That the Council should proactively work with travelling showmen to identify suitable sites for allocation where needed.

18. That further investigations and negotiations be undertaken with a view to possibly taking over Tynefield from Hampshire County Council and managing this site to improve its occupancy/capacity.

19. That Members of the ISG be invited to attend and make representations to the Cabinet (Local Development Framework) Committee when it considers the allocation of site(s) in detail, to share expertise acquired throughout the Review.

20. That the funding available for both revenue and capital costs of providing sites be investigated to establish the likely ongoing cost of site provision.

21. That Parish Councils be given the opportunity to be involved in identifying potential sites.

22. Guidance be sought from the Council's equalities consultant/group on ways to increase cultural awareness of gypsies and travellers with Members, Parish Councils and the wider community.

RESOLVED:

That the action taken on the ISG's recommendations be reviewed in one year.