

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19 November 2012

PROGRESS UPDATE - ALLOCATION OF GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITES
INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP

REPORT OF HEAD OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

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RECENT REFERENCES:

OS21 - Allocation of Gypsy and Traveller Sites Informal Scrutiny Group - Final Report – 17 October 2011

CAB2242 - Final Report of the Allocation of Gypsy and Traveller Sites Informal Scrutiny Group – Recommendations for Cabinet – 9 November 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report summarises the progress that has been made against the recommendations, as endorsed by Cabinet on 9 November 2011, of the Allocation of Gypsy and Traveller Sites Informal Scrutiny Group.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Committee note the progress achieved to date in implementing the recommendations of the Allocation of Gypsy and Traveller Sites Informal Scrutiny Group as set out as an appendix to this Report.

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DETAIL:

1. The Allocation of Gypsy and Traveller Sites Informal Scrutiny Group - Final Report (Report OS21 refers) was considered and endorsed at the meeting of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee held 17 October 2011.
 - 1.1 The Informal Scrutiny Group's recommendations were then referred by the Committee to Cabinet and were approved at its meeting held 9 November 2011 (Report CAB2242 refers)
 - 1.2 This report provides a 12 month update on progress towards delivering these recommendations. This update is set out as an appendix.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

2 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CHANGE PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

- 2.1 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.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 3.1 There are no additional resource implications to those originally set out in Report OS21.

4 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 4.1 None directly arising from the monitoring of the implementation of the ISG's recommendations.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

APPENDICES:

Progress achieved to date in implementing the recommendations of the Allocation of Gypsy and Traveller Sites Informal Scrutiny Group

APPENDIX

Progress achieved to date in implementing the recommendations of the Allocation of Gypsy and Traveller Sites Informal Scrutiny Group, as shown in **bold** below:

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.

Achieved – see Policy CP5 of Local Plan Part 1.

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

Achieved – WCC has commissioned an accommodation assessment on behalf of 11 Hampshire authorities, which is nearing completion.

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.

Achieved – these aims are incorporated, so far as appropriate, in Policy CP5 of Local Plan Part 1.

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).

To be considered as part of the process of allocating appropriate sites in Local Plan Part 2.

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

Achieved – but subsequent appeal allowed. Enforcement action was taken against the alleged occupation of the Micheldever Travelling Showpeople site by persons who were not considered to be travelling showpeople, however, an appeal against the notice was allowed on a technical matter concerning the way in which the original planning permission was framed. The Council does not agree with the Inspectors conclusions and after having taking legal advice launched a legal challenge in the High Court against the appeal decision. Papers have been served, but there have been delays in setting a court date. The latest date that we have been given is 25 January 2013.

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

To be considered as part of the process of allocating appropriate sites in Local Plan Part 2.

7. 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.

Negotiations underway, waiting for the County Council to provide information on occupancy levels and site running costs to enable a viability appraisal to be carried out.

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.

To be addressed when allocating appropriate sites in Local Plan Part 2.

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.

Bids for funding to construct Gypsy and Traveller sites are still being accepted by the Homes and Community Agency for schemes that will be completed by March 2015. Beyond this date there is no commitment that capital funding will be available. There are no offers of revenue funding to support the on-going management of sites.

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

To be addressed when allocating appropriate sites in Local Plan Part 2.

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.

A training/awareness raising event was held on 26 July 2012 for Parishes, Members and officers, which was well attended.