

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

GYPSY/TRAVELLER SUB-COMMITTEE

WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN, 15 JUNE, 2016

Present: Councillors A Hendry (Chair), GW Carr, GJ Clark, IW Gray, JJ Latham, P Oddie, EA Robertson and D Stewart.

Officers: Brian Watson (Acting Head of Housing), Moyra Stephen (Development Officer, Housing), Jennifer MacRae (Development Officer, Housing), John Grant (Team Leader, Public Health, Protective Services and Waste Management) and Committee Officer (Karen McWilliam).

In Attendance: Councillors J Ingram and L Clark.

1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

The Chair asked members if they had any interests to declare, in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, and none were intimated.

2A. STATEMENT ON EQUALITIES

In making decisions on the following items of business, the Committee **agreed**, in terms of Section 149 of the Equality Act, 2010:-

- (1) to have due regard to the need to:-
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - (c) foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- (2) where an Equality Impact Assessment was provided, to consider its contents and take those into account when reaching their decision.

3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE OF 9 MARCH 2016.

There had been circulated and was **noted** the Minute of Meeting of the Sub-Committee of 9 March, 2016.

Members asked for clarity with regard to a previous two requests for officers to progress a report to be considered at a meeting of Aberdeenshire Council, requesting that a planning application be submitted for the development of a Gypsy/Traveller stopover site at Aikey Brae, Old Deer. Members were advised that if the report on increased Gypsy/Traveller site provision, on the agenda for the meeting, was approved, a report would then be prepared for a meeting of Aberdeenshire Council.

4. INCREASED GYPSY/TRAVELLER SITE PROVISION.

A report by the Director of Infrastructure Services was circulated advising members of the detailed steps taken to identify Gypsy/Traveller site provision and the subsequent recommended stopover site at Aikey Brae.

The Acting Head of Housing advised members of the process that had been undertaken to identify Council-owned land that might be suitable for developing Gypsy/Traveller sites, the private provision that should be taken cognisance of, and the proposal to seek to progress a planning application to develop Phase 1 of the seasonal Gypsy/Traveller stopover site at Aikey Brae, subject to securing funding to meet all the capital costs. The Sub-Committee was advised that there was an estimated shortfall of £66,000 to be met before Phase 1 of the Aikey Brae site could be progressed. This could be achieved through the Capital Plan but due process would need to be followed. Members were advised that detail, using a robust scoring matrix, had been assembled on sites at Ellon, Laurencekirk and Inverurie. This information was contained within the report. It had been previously agreed through the Gypsy/Traveller Site Provision Strategy, completed in March, 2015, that sites to cover North, Central and South Aberdeenshire would be required. A private site in the south had been approved by Aberdeenshire Council and was to be referred to Scottish Ministers. A further private site was the subject of a planning application in Central Aberdeenshire and, should that be approved, it would leave shortfall of provision in the North of Aberdeenshire.

Members sought to clarify what influence this Sub-Committee might have on proposals with the Capital Plan Group as that was made up of officers. Members were advised that the desire of elected members would be made clear when making a case for the proposal to the Capital Plan Group.

Members advised that the Laurencekirk Depot proposal had been rejected because the site was considered to be unsuitable rather than the subsequent provision offered at St Cyrus being adequate for Laurencekirk. It was further advised that the sites proposed at Ellon and Inverurie were also not suitable and that the only current consideration was the site at Aikey Brae.

Officers were asked if there was any update on sites that had been included in the Local Development Plan at Chapelton and Blackdog and were advised that these sites could take some time to come forward.

Members were then taken through the draft site management proposals and, after discussion, suggested that the following be considered:

1. Inclusion of fellow Gypsy/Travellers as referees,
2. Consider including Gypsy/Travellers in the management of the site,
3. Inclusion of further information with regards to dogs and the national requirement to have the animals chipped,
4. Ensure the monitoring and review of the management proposals are built in to ensure costs are appropriate and other arising issues managed,
5. Waste arrangements onsite would be the same as expected in any household and there would be no allowance for commercial waste onsite.

It was considered to be good practice to include representation from Gypsy/Travellers currently operating the St Cyrus site in discussions over other sites in Aberdeenshire and that in the future there may be further opportunity to enhance this practice, but currently this Sub-Committee was tasked with the provision of a short-term halting site, which was considered to be different to what was offered in St Cyrus.

The proposal for Aikey Brae was to develop and manage the site for a period of five years to allow a reasonable time period to evaluate the development. If, however, there was an issue, a review and report to the Sub-Committee would be assembled in advance of the five year time period proposed.

Members sought to clarify what intervention Police Scotland could offer with regard to unauthorised encampments and were advised that they can enforce the Trespass Act and would be in a position to offer contact information for stopover sites.

Members then **agreed** to:

1. A further report to be presented to Aberdeenshire Council requesting:
 - (a) Recognition of the steps that have been taken to identify Council-owned land that would be suitable for developing as Gypsy/ Traveller sites, as detailed in paragraph 2.7 of the report,
 - (b) When considering increased site provision in Aberdeenshire, private provision must be taken into account,
 - (c) An agreement to not defer developing suitable areas of Council land while investigations are ongoing elsewhere, and
 - (d) Based on the agreement of recommendation (c) above, agree to a planning application being submitted to develop Phase I of a seasonal Gypsy/Traveller stopover site at Aikey Brae, as detailed in paragraph 2.10 of the report.
2. Request a further presentation with regard to the methods used to demonstrate that the authority was getting it right for every child in terms of the GIRFEC legislation.
3. Request that officers arrange a joint meeting with the Gypsy/Traveller Sub-Committee and the Gypsy/Traveller Working Group, the date suggested was Thursday, 25 August, 2016.