

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

GYPSY/TRAVELLER SUB-COMMITTEE

WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN, 21 FEBRUARY, 2018

Present: Councillors A Stirling (Chair), A M Allan, M A Ford (as a substitute for Councillor H Smith), D Robertson, A Ross (as substitute for M Ewenson), I W Taylor and S Wallace.

Apologies: Councillors N Baillie, M Ewenson and H Smith.

Officers: Education Support Officer (Systems & Ops), Strategic Housing Officer, Team Leader (Affordable Housing), Inspector C Taylor, Police Scotland, Principal Solicitor (Governance) and Committee Officer (Mrs S Rawlins).

John Tomlinson and Dave Black (GREC)

1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

The Chair asked Members if they had any interests to declare in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct. No interests were declared.

2A. STATEMENT ON EQUALITIES

In taking decisions on the undernoted items of business, the Sub-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) to consider, where an equality impact assessment has been provided, its contents and to take those into consideration when reaching a decision.

2B. RESOLUTION

The Committee **agreed**, in terms of Section 50A (4) and (5) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of Item 7, so as to avoid disclosure of exempt information of the class described in Paragraph 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE OF 22 NOVEMBER, 2017

There was circulated, **noted** and **approved** as appropriate, the Minute of Meeting of 22 November, 2017.

4. GRAMPIAN GYPSY/TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2017

There had been circulated a report dated 9 February, 2018, by the Housing Manager (Strategy) on the Grampian Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment 2017.

There was a presentation given by Mr Dave Black and Mr John Tomlinson from Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC), which gave an overview of the research project, looked at the recommendations in more detail and explored how the recommendations could be taken forward in the Aberdeenshire context.

Following the presentation members discussed the lack of progress that has been made in tackling prejudice, how the barriers could be broken down, joint working with members of the communities that we are seeking to support, the change in willingness to take decisions based on planning rules rather than on prejudice and the lack of richness of data available.

Following discussion, the Sub-Committee **agreed**:

- (1) to review the site provision strategy to take account of the findings related to accommodation. Specifically, to agree to a review of the approach of including the provision of Gypsy/Traveller sites as part of wider housing/accommodation developments; and to explore how Gypsy/Traveller communities can realise aspirations around private site development,
- (2) continue to identify initiatives to improve relations between Gypsy/Traveller communities and settled communities in support of the action plan, and
- (3) to instruct the Director of Infrastructure Services to work with the Gypsy/Traveller Officer Group to incorporate the recommendations into the Action Plan for the Gypsy/Traveller Sub-Committee and report back to the Sub-Committee with a revised Action Plan in due course.

5. ACTION PLAN FOR THE GYPSY/TRAVELLER SUB-COMMITTEE

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Sub-Committee of 6 September, 2017 (Item 4), there was circulated a report dated 12 January, 2018, by the Housing Manager (Strategy) on the Action Plan for the Gypsy/Traveller Sub-Committee.

The report reminded members that the Aberdeenshire Local Housing Strategy 2018 to 2023 identified minority ethnic communities as one of its priorities. For each of the priorities in the Local Housing Strategy there was an action plan and performance management framework. Within the Minority Ethnic Communities' Priority there was a Gypsy/Traveller Officer Group which monitored and delivered an action plan across partner agencies. Whilst much of this work was shared with the Gypsy/Traveller Sub-Committee, it was agreed at the meeting of the Sub-Committee on 6 September, 2017 to formalise this approach by creating an action plan for members to review at each meeting.

In this regard the Action Plan was included as an appendix to the report. It had been formed by actions from previous meetings of the Sub-Committee, including the wide ranging information session held on 21 June, 2017 about meeting the needs of Gypsy/Travellers.

Thereafter, the Sub-Committee discussed the Action Plan and **agreed** to:

- (1) continue to monitor it at future meetings, and
- (2) an additional recommendation, to review the site provision strategy.

6. MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS FOR GYPSY/TRAVELLER STOPOVER SITE

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Sub-Committee of 23 November, 2016 (Item 5), there was circulated a report dated 6 February, 2018, by the Housing Manager (Strategy) on the Management Proposals for Gypsy/Traveller Stopover Site.

The report reminded members of the three different management proposals that had been reviewed; (1) the site owned by Aberdeenshire Council and managed by the Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer based on site; (2) the site owned by Aberdeenshire Council and managed by a Gypsy/Traveller resident on site; (3) the site leased or sold with conditions to a Gypsy/Traveller and managed by a Gypsy/Traveller; and that the Sub-Committee had agreed the first option.

The report went on to explain that Aberdeenshire Council granted planning permission for a stopover site at Aikey Brae in April 2017 and that development of the site had taken place over the winter months and was expected to conclude in the coming weeks.

The report continued with the management proposals that the site would be open on a seasonal basis from April to September and during this period the site would be open Monday to Friday 9.30am to 12.30pm. That the number of authorised encampments, levels of need and occupancy rates would be reviewed in late 2018 and reported back to the Sub-Committee. That the allocations to the 10 pitches on the site would be on a first come, first served basis and that a reference would be required to be provided. That the officer on site would be expected to maintain a waiting list for Gypsy/Travellers who wish to access the site. That the minimum payment to stay on site would be £20 per week. Portable toilet hire would also be £20 and could be paid for in advance along with the pitch payment. Each pitch would have a meter for electricity cards and the cards can be purchased in shops which have a Paypoint or Payzone sign. The maximum stay allowed would be two weeks, but this could be extended in certain circumstances, such as ill health. Each applicant would be assessed on their own merit and residents that remained beyond two weeks, without agreement, would have their occupancy terminated.

The report concluded by explaining that the Gypsy/Travellers using the site must adhere to the Council's Code of Conduct and would be responsible for all activities on their pitch and for visitors to their pitch. Gypsy/Travellers would also be responsible for the behaviour of their personal visitors as well as the safety and well-being of staff or agents of the Council on the pitch or site. The site would comply with health and safety and fire regulations and guidance. A number of exclusions would apply to the site, the number of vehicles per pitch would be restricted, working on site would be strictly forbidden and that a speed limit of 5mph would apply for all vehicles and that there would be CCTV on site. On the site, dogs and other animals must be properly controlled and that dangerous dogs, within the definition of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, are not allowed on site. Likewise, horses are not permitted on site and that the officer would inform SSPCA or the appropriate animal agency if they were concerned with the welfare of any animals on site.

During discussion, members commented on the opening times, carrying out a site visit once the site is ready to open, taking a pragmatic view on extensions, particularly if there is no waiting list, sign posting to local facilities for horses, how we manage the officer on site, the arrangements in place to ensure other organisations and services are available to the site, the information pack that will be made available to all residents and the formats it will be available in and the official opening and maybe involving the MSP for the area.

Following discussion, the Sub-Committee **agreed** to:

- (1) the management proposals for the stopover site at Aikey Brae,

- (2) develop appropriate alternative ways to provide the information that is required by residents, and
- (3) review the management proposals in twelve months' time.

7. EDUCATIONAL PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM GYPSY/TRAVELLER COMMUNITIES

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Sub-Committee of 6 September, 2017 (Item 6), there was circulated a report dated 6 February, 2018, by the Director of Education and Children's Services which provided an update on the educational provision for children and young people from Gypsy/Traveller communities.

The report explained that Educational provision within Aberdeenshire for children and young people from Gypsy/Traveller Communities was based on a mixed model of delivery. The report further detailed the priorities for North, Central and South Aberdeenshire as being capacity building and training for school staff would take place in advance of the opening of the new seasonal site at Aikey Brae, to investigate the capacity to increase the use of community facilities, dependent on the number of encampments and to continue with the development and delivery on flexible on-site education, respectively.

The report went on to explain that across Aberdeenshire, learning packs were currently being developed for use when children and young people are travelling, that additional support for Learning/Gypsy/Traveller network would be developed, and that colleagues from Education and CLD would continue to work together to develop appropriate provision for children and young people from Gypsy/Traveller communities.

The report further went on to explain that the outcomes to be achieved within the short-medium term were that staff from Education and Children's Services (ECS) would further develop positive relationships with families from Gypsy/Traveller communities, that flexible learning would be developed and delivered on site, as appropriate, as part of meeting learning needs for children and young people, that learning packs which could be self-supporting would be developed as integral to a mixed model of learning provision, that staff confidence and expertise at local schools would be developed through the delivery of staff training as part of Career Long Professional learning (CLPL), that staff from Educations and Children's Services would continue to build on and develop partnership working to support families, e.g. with the Gypsy Traveller Liaison officer and appropriate working groups and that digital learning options would be explored in order to support digital inclusion.

The report continued to explain the aims for the 2017/18 session as being to further develop learning provision for children and young people from the travelling Culture within Aberdeenshire on a mixed model of delivery and to further develop partnership working to support families, children and young people from the travelling Culture within Aberdeenshire. The report went on to give details of the work being carried out to achieve the aims.

The report concluded by explaining that progress was being made regarding professional support for schools, such as: the refreshed Children Missing from Education (CME) guidance contained specific information relating to children from Gypsy/Traveller communities; guidance regarding school registration and attendance was being developed with colleagues from Management Information Support System and that the Scottish Government was due to publish national guidance on "Improving educational outcomes for children and young people from travelling Cultures", and that once this was published, a short life working group would be set up to complete Aberdeenshire's "Getting it right for children and young people from the Gypsy/Traveller Community" guidance.

Following discussion, the Sub-Committee **agreed** to acknowledge the improvement that had taken place on the educational provision for children and young people from the Gypsy/Traveller communities.