

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

GYPSY/TRAVELLER SUB-COMMITTEE

WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN, 5 SEPTEMBER, 2018

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

Apologies: Councillors M Ewenson and D Robertson.

Officers: Housing Manager (Strategy) (A Macleod), Strategic Housing Officer (L Hamilton), Education Support Officer (S Sutherland), Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer (D Faithfull), Inspector C Taylor (Police Scotland), Principal Solicitor (Democratic Services) (R O'Hare), and Committee Officer (A McLeod).

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.

2. 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.

3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE OF 20 JUNE, 2018

There had been circulated and was **approved** as a correct record, the Minute of Meeting of 20 June, 2018.

4. 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 22 August, 2018, by the Housing Manager (Strategy) on the Action Plan for the Gypsy/Traveller Sub-Committee.

The Housing Manager (Strategy) introduced the report and as there was only one substantive item on the agenda, the Sub-Committee agreed to work through the Action Plan in detail, and

noted that following the meeting there would be a workshop session to identify measures to monitor the Action Plan.

Issues raised –

Outcome	Update
1	A number of opportunities had been identified by officers across services in ensuring that all services take into account the needs of the Gypsy/Traveller community when developing policies and procedures, and this would be discussed further in the workshop session, and would be followed up with a further report to the Sub-Committee.
2	Noted that the development of an information sharing protocol had been held up partly due to the introduction of GDPR guidelines. Agreed that Principal Solicitor would arrange for submission of updated template to Police Scotland by target date of end September 2018 for review by Police Scotland legal officers, and a target date for agreement by both parties by end December 2018, and thereafter a report back to Communities Committee.
3	<p>In relation to increasing Gypsy/Traveller site provision, it was noted that the Aikey Brae site had opened over the summer and was operating well. A report providing a review of the first season of operation would be taken to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee. Agreed that a visit by Elected Members should be undertaken during the closed season to see progress with previous issues raised.</p> <p>Officers were also in discussion with a number of private site owners to identify potential new sites.</p> <p>With regard to North Esk, discussions were ongoing following Council's decision to allow an additional six months of engagement and dialogue, and a report would be taken to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee.</p> <p>Housing officers were currently working with Local Development Plan team to identify potential new sites for inclusion in new LDP. Suggested that officers from LDP team be invited to a future meeting of Sub-Committee.</p>
4	<p>Strategic Housing Officer and Education Support Officer had visited Macduff Primary and offered resources and support for families of children attending the school from Gypsy/Traveller site at Banff.</p> <p>Noted there were currently a few private sites with no issues arising. Pupil numbers from the Gypsy/Traveller community were picked up through an annual pupil needs analysis.</p> <p>Noted there was currently no identified demand from Gypsy/Traveller community to build any private sites within Aberdeenshire.</p>
5	<p>In relation to numbers of encampments, noted that it had been a quiet season across the North-East, possibly due to economic situation and lack of work opportunities in the area. Numbers of unauthorised encampments was significantly lower than in previous years.</p> <p>Elected Members welcomed continuation of regular email updates from Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer, which could be reduced from weekly to monthly during closed season, unless any issues arose which should be reported.</p>

6	<p>Officers currently exploring idea of informal pre-identified stopping places for Gypsy/Travellers, such sites would involve negotiation between landowners and Officers. Further information being sought and a report would be brought to the Sub-Committee.</p> <p>Inspector Taylor highlighted the difference between 'negotiated stopping' and permanent sites for temporary travellers.</p> <p>Strategic Housing Officer to circulate relevant current policies for encampments to members of Sub-Committee.</p> <p>Housing Manager (Strategy) to seek a report on learning and experiences of other areas from COSLA and report back to Sub-committee.</p>
7	<p>Two families currently being assisted in process of applying for housing and one family in temporary accommodation.</p>
8	<p>Funding being sought from Capital Plan Working Group for future provision at Greenbanks, Banff. Report to be taken to Area Committee and a meeting being arranged with local residents to provide update.</p>
9	<p>Discussed LDP issue under action 3.</p>
10 and 11	<p>Re development of learning provision and partnership working to support young people from travelling culture, samples of Learning packs were available for Sub-Committee members to view and noted that these were about to go to print and would be distributed thereafter.</p>
12	<p>Action Plan for health and wellbeing being progressed for inclusion in Action Plan and a further report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee in November 2018.</p> <p>New funding announced by Scottish Government for mental health officers in schools. Efforts should be made to identify services available to gypsy/traveller community as well as their needs and aspirations.</p>
13	<p>Noted that a lot of work had taken place over summer in developing relationships and combatting prejudices. A cultural awareness DVD had been produced and suggested that it could be provided to Community Councils.</p> <p>Noted that an additional teacher was spending one day a week at Kinellar School to support pupils from the Clinterty Gypsy/Traveller site and this work was being fed into the Community, Learning and Development service. Considered that this type of support could be rolled out across Aberdeenshire, taking account of the needs and wishes of the gypsy/traveller community.</p> <p>Agreed officers should explore ways to promote the good work that is being done in this area in order to promote a positive message and to continue to raise awareness.</p>
14	<p>Further report on taking forward Race Equality Action Plan and associated framework to be reported to next meeting of Sub-Committee.</p>
15	<p>Cross agency media coverage and joint responses to press enquiries ongoing and noted that an officer from Comms sits on gypsy/traveller officer group.</p>

16	Interagency group working on Council's Prejudice and Discrimination reporting process. Process to report a prejudice has changed and has to be reported at a Police or Council office. Noted that Strategic Housing Officer and Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer would receive training on third party reporting. Need for staff at Council Service Points to be equipped and trained, to ensure process in place for third party reporting. Assistance in this available from Police Scotland's Crime Reduction Officer. Housing Manager (Strategy) to liaise with Inspector C Taylor to progress.
17	Specific issues regarding Code of Conduct on Unauthorised Encampments reported through weekly bulletin to Elected Members. Noted that each encampment is monitored as they occur. No clear picture of reasons for travel to Aberdeenshire, but feedback suggests that gypsy/traveller community do not feel under threat in Aberdeenshire, and tend to travel for work and/or family reasons.
18	Support provided by CLD officers for 'Year of Young People' in relation to young Gypsy/Travellers. Hope that this will be developed further. Recent guidance issued to support young people from travelling communities and funding to be made available for projects to look at best practice. Recommend that a report be presented to Education and Children's Services Committee and Communities Committee to raise awareness of work being undertaken with Gypsy/Traveller community. Timescale for this action in Action Plan to be changed to 'ongoing'.
19	This action duplicates discussion in action 13.

The Sub-Committee **agreed** to continue to monitor the Action Plan at future meetings.

The Chair referred to the impending retirement of Sandra Sutherland, Education Support Officer and the departure of Inspector Taylor as Police Scotland representative on the Sub-Committee and thanked both for their significant contribution to the role of the Sub-Committee in developing an interagency approach to address the needs of the Gypsy/Traveller community in Aberdeenshire. On behalf of the Committee she wished Sandra a very happy and long retirement and wished Inspector Taylor well in his new role with Police Scotland. It was confirmed that his successor would be Inspector Sheila McDermott, who was moving from the Kincardine and Mearns division.