

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

GYPSY/TRAVELLER SUB-COMMITTEE

WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN, 12 OCTOBER, 2018

Present: Councillors A Stirling (Chair), A M Allan (attended by Skype), N Baillie, S Dickinson (as substitute for Cllr H Smith), M Ewenson, I W Taylor and S Wallace.

Apologies: Councillors D Robertson and H Smith.

Officers: Head of Service, Housing, Housing Manager (Strategy) (A Macleod), Strategic Housing Officer (L Hamilton), Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer (D Faithfull), 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.

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. EXEMPT INFORMATION

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 3, so as to avoid disclosure of exempt information of the classes described in paragraphs 2, 5 and 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

3. OPENING PERIOD FOR AIKEY BRAE

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Sub-Committee, of 21 February 2018 (item 6) when the Sub-Committee had agreed to the opening of the new site at Aikey Brae on a seasonal basis from April to September, there was circulated a report dated 5 October, 2018 by the Housing Manager (Strategy), informing Members that at the end of August and beginning of September 2018, seven traveller families had arrived and asked if they could stay

beyond the planned closing date as they wished their children to attend the local primary school and wanted to be off the road for winter, and by extending the opening period this would allow continuity of attendance at the local school and would lead to improved educational outcomes.

Members considered the various issues around the need to consider extending the opening dates of the Aikey Brae site in order to accommodate travellers who wished to remain beyond the current opening times, the changing trends in traveller movement, which is partly in line with economic and work trends, the potential for further unauthorised encampments should the opening of the existing site not be extended, the current facilities at Aikey Brae and potential need for further facilities in order to allow for longer term stays, potential options to close or mothball the site out of season if the current residents were to move on before the end of the winter, the potential for all year round opening, the availability of support staff to manage the site, the need for further measures for winter weather conditions and the benefits of having continuity of access to education and health services.

It was noted that Local Members had been consulted on the proposals and considered that the current facilities on site were inadequate for an all year round site and should be addressed before consideration is given to extending the period of operation to an all year round permanent site.

After consideration, the Sub-Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) in principle, to extend the opening period of the Aikey Brae site to 31 March, 2019, in order to continue to accommodate travellers who may otherwise present as homeless should the site close;
- (2) that a report be presented to the next Gypsy/Traveller Sub-Committee on 21 November, 2018 to review the provision onsite, further requirements and to explore options for extending the opening periods for Aikey Brae and Greenbanks in the future;
- (3) that the Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer should seek the views of the gypsy/traveller community with regard to giving consideration to designing the opening periods for gypsy/traveller sites around the school year periods;
- (4) that the Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer should inform the residents of the outcome of the meeting of the Sub-Committee; and
- (5) that Local Members and the Area Manager be kept apprised of developments.

The Sub-Committee further **agreed** that a report entitled 'Educational and Learning Provision for Children and Young People from Gypsy/Traveller Communities' which was presented to the Education and Children's Services Committee on 11 October 2018, should be circulated to Members of the Sub-Committee for their information.

