

REPORT TO GYPSY TRAVELLER SUB-COMMITTEE – 21 NOVEMBER 2018

Review of Aikey Brae Travellers Site, Old Deer

1 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 Review the feedback from users of Aikey Brae Travellers Site since opening in May 2018.**
- 1.2 Agree to receive a further report to the next meeting of the committee to take account of comments from the committee in response to the feedback received by site users.**

2 Background

- 2.1 At its meeting on 21 February 2018, the Committee agreed that officers would report back to the Committee once Aikey Brae had been in operation for its first season. Further to this, it was agreed at the 12 October Committee that a report be presented to the next Committee on 21 November to review the provision onsite, further requirements and to explore options for extending the opening periods for Aikey Brae and Greenbanks in the future.
- 2.2 The site was opened on 8 May 2018, on the basis of a maximum stay of two weeks, unless otherwise agreed. After a slow start to the season, the site became well used and there was demand to extend the opening period. In a number of cases, it became apparent that the Travellers' preference was to remain on site for longer periods of time. This could be facilitated as supply of pitches was higher than demand.
- 2.3 The Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer carried out surveys with the residents on site and, as part of the feedback, they suggested that it would be preferable, if the facilities could be upgraded to make the site more attractive to Gypsy/Travellers which would contribute to improved health outcomes for the families on site.

3. Feedback on management arrangements and facilities at Aikey Brae

- 3.1 Feedback from the surveys was as follows:
 - The majority of Travellers would be willing to pay higher rent for improved facilities
 - The majority of Travellers indicated that they would like the length on site to be ongoing and not restricted to a specific time period
 - The majority of Travellers indicated that they would utilise the site throughout the year, although summer was also noted as a preferred time to visit

- The majority of Travellers indicated that they would be happy to return to Aikey Brae as it was secure, well managed, quiet and close to the school

3.2 In response to questions about the facilities on Aikey Brae, the feedback was as follows:

- All respondents expressed a wish for improved facilities such as toilets, showers, laundry facilities, access to internet, for children's homework and access to television (particularly for the children) .

3.3 Some of this feedback echoes the views expressed by local members for the committee meeting on 12 October 2018.

3.4 In the light of this feedback, officers have been working with Property services to investigate various options. This is ongoing and officers will report back to the next meeting of the committee to assess the viability of proposed facility upgrades.

3.5 Further engagement will take place with representatives from Gypsy/Travellers and with local members with regards to extending opening periods for local authority provision in Aberdeenshire. This will be reported back to the next sub-committee.

3.6 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

4. Scheme of Governance

4.1 This Committee is able to consider this item because it relates to a function of the Committee to consider and approve arrangements regarding the provision of Gypsy/Traveller accommodation.

5 Implications and Risk

5.1 An equality impact assessment was previously carried out on the management proposals at Aikey Brae. A further impact assessment will be carried out on any proposed change of management arrangements or facilities.

5.2 Any resource implications arising from these recommendations will be reported to the sub-committee accordingly.

5.3 The following risks apply:

- ACORP009 – Operational Risk Management. This will be mitigated through adherence to health and safety policy and close management on site.
- BSSR001 – Balancing the Books. There continues to be funding pressures on capital and revenue budgets. Any proposals coming forward should aim to be self-funding.

- BSSR006 – Digital Innovation. Support from residents for wi-fi internet access will contribute to reducing digital isolation. This will be further investigated as part of the recommendations above.

5.4 A Town Centre First Impact Assessment is not required because this site does not have an impact on town centres.

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Report prepared by Liz Hamilton, Strategic Housing Officer, and Ally Macleod, Housing Manager. 24 October 2018