

Committee: Community & Housing Committee

Agenda Item

Date: June 18 2009

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Title: **GYPSY AND TRAVELLERS REPORT**

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Item for decision

Summary

1. This report asks Members of the Committee to endorse the Council's response to the RSS Gypsy and Traveller Review.

Recommendations

2. That Members endorse the response to the RSS Gypsy and Traveller Review in Appendix 1.

Background Papers

3. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.
 - Reports and Minutes to Environment Committee 2008
 - Correspondence from Go East
 - RSS Single Issue Review Report of the Panel
 - Fordham Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment

Impact

4.

Communication/Consultation	Eight weeks public consultation has been carried out by Go East. Consultation/research has been carried out with the gypsy and traveller community through the Fordham research
Community Safety	Needs to be assessed as options for sites are explored
Equalities	Adequate provisions for gypsy and traveller's needs is part of our equalities duty
Finance	Funding will need to be sought for future gypsy and traveller sites, unless these can be provided privately or as part of the element of affordable housing on suitable

	sites.
Human Rights	Part of our equalities duty
Legal implications	If the needs of gypsy and travellers are not met, it may be difficult to deal with unauthorised sites
Sustainability	A scheme would have to meet sustainability criteria
Ward-specific impacts	Yes, dependent on where future scheme/s are proposed.
Workforce/Workplace	Significant project for Housing strategy and planning policy team. Other Essex authorities have found the issue requires significant resources.

Situation

5. There are currently 17 socially rented pitches and 20 private pitches which are classed as authorised sites with planning permission. There are 2 caravans on sites on land not owned by gypsies but “tolerated” and 1 caravan “not tolerated” (Unauthorised Sites without planning permission) and 4 families live in Council accommodation.
6. In its Single Issue Review of the Regional Spatial Strategy, the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) recommended 15 additional pitches to be provided in Uttlesford and the Council accepted this recommendation at Environment Committee on 11th March 2008. Most Local Authorities were asked to provide 15 additional pitches at this time and this felt like a fair distribution across the Essex Districts.
7. The Report of the Panel into the Single Issue Review proposed that the pitch requirement for Uttlesford be increased by 10 to 25 (Recommendation 4.5). The reasons stated were to accommodate calculated local need and contribute to wider regional needs (1 pitch). The Panel felt the District is large with a substantial unconstrained area and a reasonable level of opportunity indicated by total housing development planned. It also felt that the District is well situated in relation to needs to be met in both Essex and Cambridge to accommodate slightly increased provision thereby reducing the concentration on areas of highest existing provision in the current virtual county distribution and achieving greater balance with housing potential. The Secretary of State accepted this recommendation in March 2009.
8. A Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment has recently been carried out by Fordham Research and this has shown a pitch requirement of 19.4 in

the District between 2008 – 13 with an additional need for 7 transit pitches and 1 pitch for travelling show people. The additional need is due to overcrowding on our existing authorised sites in the District.

9. It is felt that the Council has made provision for 37 pitches in the past and that an additional 15 pitches meets the housing needs of gypsy and travellers already resident in the District of Uttlesford rather than the wider housing needs of those living in elsewhere in Essex and in Cambridgeshire.
10. Therefore officers have responded to the Secretary of State that Uttlesford District Council rejects recommendation 4.5 that the pitch requirement for Uttlesford is increased by 10 to 25. The submitted representation is appended.
11. As part of the Local Development Framework, research will be carried out as to how and where we provide the new gypsy and traveller pitches. Further reports will be presented to the Committee when this work has been completed.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The proposed requirement for an additional 25 pitches would be imposed by the Secretary of State	4 In the absence of objections, the Secretary of State would be likely to confirm the proposal. Objections from other authorities may result in alternative proposals.	3 An increased requirement is likely to prove more difficult to accommodate	Ensure the Secretary of State is aware that the Council strongly objects to meeting the needs of other authorities

- 1 = Little or no risk or impact
- 2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.
- 3 = Significant risk or impact – action required
- 4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.

Appendix 1

Uttlesford District Council response to RSS Gypsy and Traveller Review

Uttlesford District Council's Environment Committee agreed at its meeting on 11th March 2008 that the proposal submitted by EERA to the Secretary of State for 15 additional pitches could be absorbed in the District. This proposed county distribution (draft policy H4) whereby most Districts were asked to provide 15 pitches felt like a fair distribution, balancing the distribution of need with capacity issues.

The Council has made provision for 37 pitches in the past and feels that an additional 15 pitches meets the housing needs of gypsy and travellers already resident in the District of Uttlesford. It strongly objects to the proposal that it should have a role in meeting the wider housing needs of those living in both elsewhere in Essex and in Cambridgeshire.

Therefore Uttlesford District Council objects the Secretary of State's proposed change 4.5 that the pitch requirement for Uttlesford is increased by 10 to 25.

This response is made at officer level at this stage because of Committee cycle dates but it is anticipated that this officer response will be endorsed by the Council's Environment Committee on June 16th.