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CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA
DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE

Councillor June Burtonshaw
Cabinet Member for Place
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Our Ref
Ein Cyf:

SSC/2012/2

Your Ref
Eich Cyf:

Date
Dyddiad:

25 October 2012

Dear Councillor Burtonshaw,

Stronger & Safer Communities Scrutiny Board – 1st October 2012:
Work to Identify & Evaluate Potential Gypsy Traveller Sites

At our last Board meeting a discussion took place in relation to amending the Work Plan timetable and bringing forward a session to ask questions about the work to identify potential Gypsy Traveller Sites.

I raised some concern about this issue and felt the Board should ask questions to gain clarification about the process that is being followed by the Authority. The Board was, however, mindful of not duplicating work, and the appropriate timing to look at this issue. It was appreciated that things may still be at an early stage.

The Board decided that, for the time being, they did not wish to agenda an examination of this issue. However, it was agreed that we should instead write to you requesting clarification on the latest position in respect of work to identify potential Gypsy Traveller Sites. It is important that the Authority has a transparent and robust process, and that this matter is progressed without delay, with clear targets.

There are a number of important issues and questions that we would like bring to your attention, as follows:

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1. There has been widespread interest in the evaluation process currently being conducted by Newport City Council and it would be helpful if there could be some explanation as to why it has been deemed appropriate for Swansea to adopt such a different approach. Most importantly, it would be helpful if we could have an explanation of why there has been such secrecy as to the sites being shortlisted when this has been done in such a transparent manner in Newport.
2. Could we and the public have some indicative time table for a process that will lead, say, to the submission of a planning application for a site or sites?
3. At what point would the public consultation on any proposed sites commence and what would be the minimum likely period for such consultation? (The uncertainty relating to these matters is creating considerable alarm in some communities and is enabling some people to argue that, if they do not express their opposition now, it will be too late).
4. Does the Member Task & Finish Group (established by Cabinet on 5 July 2012) still exist and if so, what is its ongoing role? (A number of letters and press statements have given the impression that there is now a process involving council officers and some form of independent assessment. The lack of clarity leads to further unnecessary fear and suspicion).
5. Does the Cabinet expect to review any report from the Task & Finish Group, officers or independent assessors or will a recommendation go directly to full Council? (A number of members have gained the impression that it is intended that recommendations go to full council by the end of this year. If this were the case it clearly highlights the previous point about the need for some kind of timetable since it is difficult to see how there could be a full public consultation if that were the deadline).
6. There is also a belief that there is a deadline at the end of the current financial year which has to be met in order to qualify for some kind of grant aid. If this is the case, it is important that this should be made clear so that all interested parties understand the time pressure now influencing the process.
7. Finally, there is a much wider point about the scope of this process. Wherever a new site or sites are located, there is going to be inevitable community concern and resistance. (It is unarguably the case that for several years the main interest that politicians have shown in this matter is to resist sites being located in their own ward). Currently, there does not appear to be any work in preparation to maximise opportunities for community cohesion, tolerance and avoidance of unnecessary conflicts. It may be appropriate for the Equalities Committee, the Education Service and may be some other council departments to be preparing contingency plans and it may also be necessary to allocate funding, not only for the

eventual site preparation but for the community cohesion issues I have mentioned.

The Board would be grateful for your response to this letter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Uta Clay". The signature is written in a cursive style.

COUNCILLOR UTA CLAY

Chairman, Stronger & Safer Communities Scrutiny Board

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cc: Cllr Clive Lloyd, Vice-Chair
Reena Owen – Corporate Director (Environment)
Head of Public Protection – Martin Saville