

Evidence from Cllr Penny Matthews:

Her evidence was based on her involvement in the first Member Task and Finish Group meetings. The membership of the Task and Finish Group comprised former Councillor J Hague (Chair), former Councillor J Evans (Vice Chair), Councillor A C S Colburn, former Councillor R Smith and herself.

Key points:

- The process had been explained to Members, and Officers marked maps which detailed Council owned land. Officers had stated that they were looking for 10 to 12 pitches. The inference was that only Council owned land would be examined.
- The process went on for weeks. Meetings were held on an ad hoc basis and were often cancelled as work required to be undertaken by Officers had not been completed on time. She stated that she had raised her concerns with the Chair, former Councillor John Hague, regarding the lack of progress, and former Councillor J Hague also expressed concern that the process was taking too long. She also stated that the terms of reference of the Task & Finish Group were not clear.
- She asked Officers to look at sites which had been identified in the 1980's as the process would be a huge expense and looking at previously identified sites may short circuit the process.
- She had requested to offer 2 available pitches at the official site on Pant y Blawd Road to the families at the Park and Ride Site. But she got the impression that Officers appeared to be reluctant to do this. However, having checked with Officers at the following meeting she was told that the families had refused the offer.
- Meetings were led by Officers who had sifted through the original 19 sites identified to a shortlist of 5 sites. She stated that no-one could explain the rationale at arriving at 5 sites. Although a brief summary had been provided in respect of evidence in support of eliminating sites from the shortlist.
- She referred to land at Heol y Gors which had been used by travellers on many occasions over the years. She stated that this land had not been identified in the 19 sites and could not understand why this was the case. She stated that the Task and Finish Group unanimously agreed that the land at Heol y Gors should be examined as part of forthcoming site visits.
- The sites at Penlan and Llansamlet had been rejected by all 5 members on the Task and Finish Group. Site visits were organised and included the sites at Penlan and Llansamlet, despite members requesting that these be discounted from the shortlist. She stated that following discussion with the Chair, she engaged in a heated exchange with the Officer regarding the

inclusion of the Penlan and Llansamlet sites and the exclusion of the site at Heol y Gors.

- Reasons for the Task & Finish Group considering the Penlan and Llansamlet sites as not sound:
 - members discounted the Penlan site as it was located close to a housing complex in what was deemed to be a deprived area.
 - in respect of Llansamlet, a site was already situated there and the land identified was unsuitable for numerous reasons. She stated that officers had no provided adequate explanations in respect of why members' views were not valid.

- She provided a letter written to former Councillor John Hague from the former officer, Martin Saville (attached).

- The site visit had been rushed and members were told that a further meeting would be organised to discuss the findings of the site visits.

- Councillor Penny Matthews advised that, save the site at Heol y Gors, no further sites were suggested. She confirmed that no explanation or details of ranking of sites had been provided.

- She referred to the 1986 agreement and questioned why only 5 sites had been identified. She stated that Councillor Chris Holley, former Council Leader, had stated that a decision would be made by Council.

- She confirmed that she was aware of the issue of confidentiality of the Task & Finish Group, which had placed her in a difficult situation in so far as she could not discuss any issues.