

Evidence from Councillor Jennifer Raynor:

Cllr Raynor was formerly vice-chair of the second Member Gypsy Traveller Site Task & Finish Group for a short period. She attended to give views on the process and outline concerns about the role of the Task & Finish Group. She made reference to the Minutes of the Task and Finish Group held on 8 March 2012, 10 April 2012, 19 July 2012 and 27 September 2012, which were circulated to Committee Members. She also referred to a report and briefing note provided to the Group on 19 July 2012 (which she attended), and minutes of an informal meeting held on 7 September (which she also attended) between members, officers and representatives of the Gypsy & Traveller families to brief them on the ongoing assessment process, discuss potential site requirements, and seek the views of the gypsy and traveller community. These documents are attached.

Key points made by Councillor Raynor:

- Resigned from Member Task & Finish Group due to concerns about the process, including a lack clarity about the aim of the site search, the methodology used, the site selection, and consultation.
- Concern about lack of clarity about purpose of site search. The Terms of Reference of the Task & Finish Group were minimal and unclear – ‘complete a review of all Council owned land and Council land allocated for housing, and produce a report setting out options’. The purpose of the review was not clear and members were also not clear on what the options were. It was not clear whether it was a search for one site or sites, or whether this was about addressing a problem in a specific area. It was also not clear why the Terms of Reference had changed during 2010 - the March Cabinet report described that the purpose of an alternative site would be to accommodate the Gypsy and Traveller families presently occupying the unauthorised site at Swansea Vale, but the August Cabinet report (which established the Task & Finish Group) no longer mentioned this specific purpose. It could not be explained in July 2012 whether there had been a change in thinking during this time, though it still seemed that a solution for Swansea Vale was the primary concern for officers as the information / focus at the time was on the relocation of relevant families with pressure to enable access to the site for the Environment Agency in relation to the Morrision Flood Defence Scheme.
- There was confusion as to the decision-making process in the site selection process, and inter-relationship between the Task & Finish Group, Cabinet and Council. There were contradictory statements made, e.g. there was reference to the shortlisted sites being referred to Council, there was also reference to the Task & Finish Group making a report to Cabinet.

- She felt that there was inconsistent application of criteria during the site sieve process. For example, there was a selective use of information to describe sites when indicating distance from housing. There was the exclusion of Velindre on the basis of other intended uses but similar could be said for sites that went forward.
- The Task & Finish Group did not have sufficient time / resources to discuss and consider the information presented to it. It was also not satisfactory that members of the second Task & Finish Group (formed after the 2012 Council elections) were advised to visit the shortlisted sites in a personal capacity, and it was difficult for members to fully understand how the shortlist developed from 19 to 5 sites. As information about these 5 sites had found their way into the local media even before the council elections there were concerns raised by the public.
- Concerned that the housing needs assessment presented to the Task & Finish Group in March 2012 did not provide comprehensive picture of needs across the city as it only referred to needs at the official Ty Gwyn site, the 'tolerated' site and the encampments in Swansea Vale industrial park, and no reference of encampments elsewhere. It was not clear how up-to-date the needs assessment was and information about future demand.
- Concern about lack of wider consultation with the gypsy and traveller community save the 3 main gypsy and traveller families. She felt that consultation should have been carried out at an earlier stage, and given a greater degree of importance. The informal meeting held on 7 September revealed that the future housing needs of these families was greater than previously known. All 3 families expressed a willingness to share a suitable site but did not want to share with strangers on a joint transit permanent site. At the September meeting information about the shortlisted sites was shared with the three families, at a time when many councillors were denied information.
- She offered the following as learning points:
 - The governance arrangements / 'decision making' process needs to be transparent. Respective roles and responsibilities of members (including bodies such as Task & Finish Groups) and officers need to be very clear from the outset
 - The process should have a degree of flexibility with confidence to adjust things based on experience, with a clear audit trail back to the commissioning body.
 - A clear methodology and weighting should be clear from the start
 - For future public consultation exercises we must ensure the public is clear about what they are being consulted upon.