

Re 19/7/12

Task and Finish Group

BRIEFING NOTE

GYPSY TRAVELLERS

1.0 Legislative Background

- out of date
annually?*
- 1.1 The Council has a legal requirement to undertake a Housing Needs Assessment as part of the development of its Housing Strategy. This was undertaken in 2007/8 and prior to adoption of the Council's current Housing Strategy and identified the need for the provision of additional Gypsy Traveller sites within Swansea. Welsh Government guidance also specifically identifies the need for Councils to consider the provision of permanent and transit sites and emergency stopping places for Gypsy Travellers (GT).

2.0 Gypsy Travellers in Swansea

- 2.1 For over 10 years, there have been three extended G.T families living in and around Swansea.

2.1.1

This extended family lives on the official Ty Gwyn site which has provision for seven plots (14 caravans) and is fully occupied. The site is limited in area, and not regarded as capable of being extended to any significant degree. It is also on a flood plain which means it would not receive favourable planning consent now.

2.1.2

- 2.1.2.1 This extended family has lived in and around the Enterprise Park for many years and their children attend local schools. Following a series of evictions over a period of years, the family encamped upon the Park & Ride site. Subsequently, following a high profile court case, the court directed that the family should be tolerated to remain on the site until an official alternative site was made available. The Council did apply for temporary planning permission for this site but this was refused on the basis that the site is on a flood plain. More recently, the Children's Commissioner for Wales has effectively directed the Council to provide temporary toilet and washing facilities for the children and they have been provided in a portacabin on the site.

- 2.1.2.2 A further complication is that this family will have to be relocated away from the entrance of the Park and Ride site to allow the Environment Agency to prepare and undertake the Morrison flood defence scheme. This hopefully will be by agreement with the family. Officers are currently investigating the issues associated with the relocation of the family further southwards onto the fringe of the Park and Ride

site. If the Environment Agency's contractors cannot have free control of the site by December 2012, the scheme will not go ahead and several million pounds worth of grant funding may be lost.

2.13

This family whilst basing themselves in Swansea for a lot of the time, have from time to time left to visit other parts of the U.K etc. While in Swansea, they have generally encamped in and around the Enterprise Park and their children have attended local schools. Whilst the family were party to the original court case when encamped alongside the , they have subsequently left and therefore have no continued temporary rights of possession . More recently the have returned to Swansea and encamped again on various parts of the Enterprise Park and given rise to much complaint from neighbouring businesses.

Evictions have seen the in the last few months move from the Park & Ride site, to Millstream Way and to Mallard Way (where they resided until last week). There have also been threats of legal action being commenced against the Council by businesses on the Enterprise Park for failure to remove the family from outside of their premises.

3.0 Member Task & Finish Group

3.1 In August 2010, Cabinet agreed to set a Member Task & Finish Group to identify suitable additional site(s) for GTs in Swansea. The terms of reference of the group and membership was agreed by Cabinet (see Appendix A). Since this time the group has met at regular intervals and viewed over 1000 Council owned parcels of land across the City & County of Swansea against an agreed set of criteria (Appendix B). By applying the criteria, the list of suitable sites has been refined firstly to a long list of 19 sites and subsequently to a shorter list of 5 potential locations, which were the subject of recent site visits by the Task Group.

not included.

3.2 Prior to putting forward sites to Cabinet, the next step identified as "key" in the process is the consultation with the GT families in accordance with Welsh Government Guidance.

4.0 Conclusion

4.1 There is no doubt that both the and the have local connections with Swansea and have identified housing needs that are not met by the current Gypsy Traveller site provision within the County.

- 4.2 The current housing provision for both families is unsatisfactory and does not meet the current guidance. There are particular concerns with regard to the timing of the flood remediation works which create a pressure to move the . Further, the pressure of local businesses complaints with regard to the encampments by the is escalating.
- 4.3 Therefore it is important that the Task Group is re-established at an early stage so that the work can be completed and preferred sites identified and agreed to be put forward by Cabinet for planning permission.

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