

Report of the Chair

Special Scrutiny Programme Committee – 26 November 2014

EVIDENCE SESSION: SCRUTINY OF GYPSY & TRAVELLER SITE SEARCH PROCESS

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| Purpose | The seventh evidence session will focus on discussion of: a. Gypsy & Traveller Consultation Process b. Impact of Economic Regeneration / Development Plans on Site Selection. |
| Content | The report provides a background / introduction to the evidence session. |
| Councillors are being asked to | Consider the information gathered as part of the committee's review of the process, and ask questions. |
| Lead Councillor(s) | Councillor Robert Smith, Vice-Chair of Scrutiny Programme Committee. |
| Lead Officer & Report Author | Brij Madahar, Scrutiny Coordinator Tel: 01792 637257 E-mail: brij.madahar@swansea.gov.uk |

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Since February 2014 a series of special meetings of the Scrutiny Programme Committee have been held to review the process adopted to date in the search for a second gypsy and traveller site.
- 1.2 The committee's role has been to consider whether the process, leading up to the report to Council on 21 October 2013, was robust. The committee is looking at the quality of that process, and may identify any learning points about the process, and recommend any changes for the future as appropriate.
- 1.3 At the last meeting in September the committee reflected on the evidence gathered so far and agreed next steps that will then lead to the committee drawing conclusions from this work.

2. Further Evidence Sessions

- 2.1 At the last meeting it was agreed that the committee needed to:
 - a) seek further information about the consultation that was undertaken with the local gypsy and traveller community and how it fed into the decision-making process;

- b) better understand that role of the Housing Needs Assessment in the process;
- c) explore consideration given to existing economic regeneration / development plans in the site selection process.

2.2 Arrangements have been made for 2 further sessions for the committee to discuss these issues with assistance from relevant officers.

2.3 To complete the evidence gathering a final session will then take place with the Chief Executive, Director – Place, and Head of Legal, Democratic Services and Procurement to address some of the key issues that have emerged during the review, and deal with any outstanding questions.

3. Evidence Session – 26 November

3.1 This session will enable the committee to discuss and better understand:

- a) the consultation that was undertaken with the local gypsy and traveller community and how it fed into the decision-making process;

The committee was particularly interested in the meeting with Gypsy & Traveller families that took place on 7 Sep 2012 but wanted to generally consider the purpose of consultation and the part it was intended to play, and actually played in the process.

The committee is unclear about the extent of consultation, how it was recorded, and whether there was a clear process for it. It is interested in what exchanges took place between the council and the gypsy and traveller community and when, for example what was said, what information was given or requested, whether any assurances / undertakings were given etc.

The following will be present to assist the committee for this discussion and any questions:

- Simon Malough (Traveller Liaison Officer)
- Emyr Jones (Principal Planner, Regeneration)

- b) consideration given to existing economic regeneration / development plans in the site selection process;

The committee sought clarification about cross-departmental working in the short listing process, particular how economic interests in relation to certain areas would have been raised and taken into account in the filtering process.

The committee was interested in arguments that have emerged that suggested conflict between economic regeneration plans / economic interests and the identification of certain sites, and how such issues

would have been considered and resolved during the site selection process.

The following will be present to assist the committee for this discussion and any questions:

- Phil Holmes (Head of Economic Regeneration & Planning)
- Emyr Jones (Principal Planner, Regeneration)

3.2 Those attending have been asked to indicate whether there are any specific documents which would benefit the committee so that consideration can be given to making copies available to committee members at the meeting.

4. Evidence Session – 8 December

4.1 This session will enable the committee to discuss and better understand:

a) the role of the Housing Needs Assessment in the process.

The committee was particularly interested how the needs assessment was developed and its influence on the site search process.

The committee is interested in the use of assessments as a basis for decision-making about the long term, how and when needs were calculated, and the value of the Housing Needs Assessment to the process.

The following will be present to assist the committee for this discussion and any questions:

- Lee Morgan (Head of Housing)
- Peter Williams (Strategic Planning & Enabling Manager)
- David Evans (Housing Business Manager)

5. Legal Implications

5.1 There are no specific legal implications raised by this report.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no specific financial implications raised by this report.

Date: 19 November 2014

Background Papers: None

Legal Officer: Nigel Havard

Finance Officer: Carl Billingsley