

PLANNING & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 4 DECEMBER 2018

PRESENT: Councillors Richard Kellaway (Chairman), Maureen Hunt (Vice-Chairman), Malcolm Beer, Gerry Clark and Leo Walters

Also in attendance:

Officers:

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor L Evans.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

TRAVELLER LOCAL PLAN - ISSUES & OPTIONS

Jenifer Jackson, Head of Planning (RBWM) outlined the above titled report. The Panel were informed that the Local Development Scheme (LDS) committed the Council to producing a single issue Traveller Local Plan. The Plan would set out how the accommodation needs of Gypsy and Traveller groups would be met until 2033. The report sought approval to publish the Traveller Local Plan Issues and Options paper in January 2019 for public consultation. Members were told that the draft document would be used for the formal consultation and that the item would be considered by Cabinet.

Councillor Walters queried what the unmet need was estimated as and what the reported pitch number was in relation to the shortage. It was confirmed that there were 26 pitches identified and that Mark 4 Consultants had carried out the assessment of need. Councillor Hunt highlighted that there were no pitches currently at the land south of Halarion and that this be amended to reflect the current state of land. It was noted that the consultants who had carried out the assessment had visited the site one year ago and that the data was correct as of the time of the findings. At the time it had been reported that there were 7/8 pitches, of which one was authorised. Councillor Walters queried the total number of pitches which were authorised and unauthorised. Ian Motuel, Principal Planner (RBWM) informed the Panel that there were 29 authorised pitches and that it was difficult to assess the total number of sites due to the transient nature of the inhabitants. It was highlighted that there was a need for new sites and that there were some unauthorised sites with the additional need for 21-26 additional pitches. Members were informed that there had been temporary consent given to the land south of Halarion and that this had not time expired.

RECOMMENDED ACTION- That the table at paragraph 4.7 of the Traveller Local Plan Issues and Options Paper be amended and that reference is made to the fact that information was taken as of the time of the consultative study and that this is not representative of current pitches in use. Jenifer Jackson and Ian Motuel to action these changes.

Members discussed whether pitches could be developed within the green belt and it was stated that there was some guidance from national Government that in cases that were 'different and exceptional', that discretion could be applied. Councillor D Wilson queried whether a certificate of unlawful land use would be issued to individuals who had lived on land for many years or whether positive enforcement would be exercised to these individuals.

Jenifer Jackson, Head of Planning told the Panel that it was too early in the process to definitively say whether enforcement action would be taken and that there were plans to have conversations with landowners regarding this matter. Members were told that the GTAA provided the main framework for assessing need and that there was some difficulty in measuring actual numbers of traveling families due to their travelling. Members discussed the sensitivity surrounding frictions between different traveller origin groups and it was noted that this would be dealt with sensitively and fairly when pitches were allocated. Councillor Kellaway queried whether “new age travellers” were included in the wider groups of the GTAA assessment and it was confirmed that there was no defined need for this group of travellers as set out in the legislation.

Members discussed whether RBWM planned to implement transit sites as part of the delivery for the unmet need. It was confirmed that there was no current identified need for a transit site but that neighbouring authorities could be consulted with moving forward. It was noted that there were concerns that any transit site could be occupied by transitory travellers and that the site could be difficult to manage. Councillor Walters suggested that housing associations could carry out the management of the site and it was highlighted that this concept needed to be explored further. Councillor Sharpe queried whether the data had been based on the summer need or whether it reflected the overall need. It was noted that there was no simple answer to this, due to the transient nature of travellers and that there was a higher number of individuals over the summer months as they were reported as being more favourable months for travelling. It was noted that further engagement with the traveller community was needed along with agencies who supported the community to understand how engagement could be increased. Members commended officers on the content of the report and felt that the report had been presented well.

ACTION- That the closing consultation time be amended from Friday 5pm to the following Monday 8am to allow time for all to respond over the weekend period as necessary.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY; That Planning and Housing Overview & Scrutiny Panel considered and noted the recommendations as made to Cabinet;

(i) Approved the publication of the Traveller Local Plan Issues & Options paper for public consultation, along with necessary evidence base studies;

(ii) Gave the Head of Planning delegated authority to approve minor changes to the Issues & Options paper, in consultation with the Lead Member for Planning, prior to its publication.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted the following future meeting dates:

- 29th January 2019.

The meeting, which began at 6.00 pm, finished at 6.52 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....