



Report of the Chief Democratic Services Officer

Executive Board

Date: 11th February 2011

Subject: Scrutiny Board Recommendations

Electoral Wards Affected: All

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report provides details of an Inquiry undertaken by Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) which reviews the gypsies and travellers site provision within Leeds.
2. Responses to Scrutiny Board reports and recommendations are not required to be approved by Executive Board, unless recommendations are directed specifically at Executive Board. In this case recommendations 1, 2 and 4 of the Scrutiny Board's report are directed specifically for the consideration of the Executive Board. These are substantial recommendations and the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods and the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing are supportive of undertaking the further work required to review in more detail the recommendations and report back to the Executive Board
3. Attached as Appendix 1 is the full report of this inquiry undertaken by Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods). All the recommendations have been broadly agreed by the relevant Directors and Executive Board Members.
4. Executive Board is asked to consider recommendations 1, 2 and 4 and note recommendations 3 and 5 to 12 arising from Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) Inquiry which reviews the gypsies and travellers site provision within Leeds and the responses of the relevant Directors/Executive Board Members.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 This report provides details of the full inquiry undertaken by Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) which reviews the gypsies and travellers site provision within Leeds.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 Responses to Scrutiny Board reports and recommendations are not required to be approved by Executive Board, however, where there is a difference of opinion between Scrutiny and the Director/Executive Member, or where recommendations are directed specifically at Executive Board, a more detailed narrative will be given, which may include the full Inquiry report, and Executive Board will be asked to pronounce on the matter.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 Since the last Executive Board meeting responses have been received to the following Scrutiny Board report:

Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) - Inquiry which reviews the gypsies and travellers site provision within Leeds.

- 3.2 A copy of the Board's full report is attached as Annex 1 and the Executive Board is asked to consider recommendations 1, 2 and 4 which are set out below for ease of reference and note recommendations 3 and 5 to 12 in the report.

Recommendation 1

- (i) That the Executive Board consider providing negotiated stopping sites for gypsies and travellers in Leeds for very short term encampments and commission the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods to undertake further work with a view to introducing a pilot scheme and reporting back to the Executive Board.
- (ii) In any consideration by Executive Board those ward Members who are affected by proposals on this matter are consulted.

Recommendation 2

- (i) That the Executive Board consider the principle of providing an additional 25 permanent pitches for 25 caravans in the city to accommodate "Leeds families" of gypsies and travellers and request the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods to undertake further work based on national guidance to identify costs, and sources of funding and to develop a criteria for consulting and identifying suitable sites during operation of the pilot in recommendation 1.
- (ii) In any consideration by Executive Board those ward Members who are affected by proposals on this matter are consulted.

Recommendation 4

That irrespective of recommendations 1 and 2 the Executive Board commission a review of the Cottingley Springs site to ascertain whether better use of the site could be made that would allow the provision of additional pitches and identify how this could be funded by January 2012.

3.3 The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods and Executive Board Member broadly agree with the recommendations of the Scrutiny Board. However recommendation 1,2 and 4 are substantial recommendations and the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods and the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing are supportive of undertaking the further work required to review in more detail the recommendations and report back to the Executive Board. It will also require widespread consultation especially with Ward Members, with particular attention paid to the resource implications.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

4.1 The Scrutiny Board is of the view that the implementation of the recommendations will better meet our responsibilities to the Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers who both fall within an ethnic group and are covered by the Equality Act 2010.

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

5.1 The Scrutiny Board has identified that the Council spent in legal and departmental costs for the period 2003 to 2010 over £1,994,000 moving what are regarded as "Leeds" gypsies and travellers around the city from one unauthorised encampment to the next. These costs do not include those of the West Yorkshire Police which the Scrutiny Board believes will be substantial.

5.2 However, the Scrutiny Board also recognise that there will be significant costs of construction, management, enforcement and consultation in developing any new negotiated stopping sites or permanent pitches. Indeed the estimates the Board received to provide 14 additional pitches at the Cottingley Springs site alone was £1,299,000 or £92,800 per pitch. A further detailed cost benefit analysis would need to be undertaken if the Executive Board decides to proceed with any of the Scrutiny Board's proposals.

6.0 Risk Benefit Analysis and Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 A risk benefit analysis and equality impact assessment should also be undertaken if the Executive Board decides to proceed with recommendations 1, 2 and 4 of the Scrutiny Board's proposals.

6.2 Counsel's opinion is attached as Annex 2 to this report concerning the equality impact assessment.

7.0 Formal Response

7.1 In accordance with the Scrutiny Procedure Rules the formal response to the report and recommendations have now been submitted by the relevant Directors in conjunction with the relevant Executive Board Members and are set out in Annex 3.

8.0 Recommendations

8.1 That the Executive Board consider recommendations 1, 2 and 4 of the Scrutiny Board's report and notes recommendations 3 and 5 to 12 and the formal responses from the relevant Directors and Executive Board Members to its recommendations.

9.0 Background Papers

- 9.1 Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods)) - Final Inquiry Report - Review of Gypsies and Travellers site provision within Leeds.