

Report of: Gareth Self

Report to: Inner South Community Committee (Beeston & Holbeck, Hunslet & Riverside and Middleton Park)

Report author: Gareth Self

Date: 6th September 2023

To note

Gypsy Traveller Service

Purpose of report

1. To provide the Inner South Community Committee with an update on the work of the Gypsy Traveller Service

Main issues

Role of the Travellers Service Team

2. Our service forms part of the Communities, Housing and Environment Directorate and performs 3 core roles within the Leeds city boundaries:
 - Manage the Leeds City Council permanent caravan sites, Cottingley Springs and Kidacre Park.
 - Respond to unauthorised encampments city wide.
 - Liaise with and build links between the Gypsy and Traveller community and the wider community in Leeds, ensuring access to services is maximised.

Response to Roadside Encampment

3. Within Leeds we see approx. 100 roadside encampments each year. We have seen an increase this year and estimate 120+.
4. The majority of encampments occur in the East and South of the City

5. Many stopping places are re-used due to lack of land where previous sites have been sold and or developed.
6. Leeds has a negotiated stopping policy whereby we consider suitability for encampments to remain for a period of up to 28 days in situ or moved to an alternate site in a managed way.
7. In terms of cost to the local authority the annual spend is £230k - £250k. This figure incorporates legal fees, bailiff costs, cleaning and securing of sites.
8. Overview of Roadside Encampment Process:
 - New encampments reported and visited normally the same day or within 24 hours.
 - Visit takes place with GTS and Police to assess the encampments and carry out welfare checks.
 - Decision made whether to negotiate on site, evict through the court process or request police powers - Section 61
 - While in situ encampment is visited frequently as required and where practicable portable toilets and household waste management arranged.
 - The site continues to be monitored by GTS and a police log is set up to log incoming calls.
 - Either families move of own accord or court order granted and group will leave – site is then secured and cleaned, provisions removed.
 - Families will normally relocate to a new site.

Encampments in Inner South Area

Year	Total Encampments in Leeds	% Inner South Area	Use of Section 61 Police powers to evict - Instances	Negotiated Sites – Where decision not to immediately evict
2021	109	25%	2	10
2022	93	16%	3	1
2023 to date	79	15%	2	0

Need for Negotiated Stopping Sites

9. Over the last 3 years we have seen a shift in the location of encampments. Due to the development and target hardening of previous regular sites groups have used and re-used a decreasing number of locations. In the inner south area we have seen frequent encampments at the following sites:
 - Leeds Urban Bike Park
 - South Leeds Golf Course

- John Charles Sports Centre
- Middleton Leisure Centre
- St Georges / Wagon Road

10. In terms of Traveller group dynamics, we have 2 main groups consisting of 11 and 5 caravans. We will also see larger groups passing through the city during the spring/summer months. 2023 has been an extremely busy year for encampments across the city and the need for negotiated managed sites will greatly alleviate tensions between the settled community and Traveller encampments.
11. Having managed sites will also allow for more support work to address health, education, positive relationships with the community.
12. We have provided a list of potential sites within the LS10, LS11 area which have been put forward from the Asset Management team of LA owned void sites to be explored further.
13. We would welcome a joint visit with Ward Members, Leeds GATE and members of the roadside community. This has worked well with other wards and allows for an open and honest dialogue on each site in terms of suitability.
14. In terms of cost saving, we would reduce the number of evictions from a possible 3 encampments to 1 if there was a stay put option for 28 days.

What makes for a suitable Negotiated Stopping Site

- Suitable surfacing – hardstanding preferable although grass good for summer months.
- Good boundary with safe access
- Size – suitable for 5-12 caravans max
- Close to amenities – shops, GP/Hospital, schools
- Local area – not impacting on residential communities
- Amenities – ability to supply toilets and household waste removal

Potential Negotiated Stopping Sites to Explore LS10 - LS11

Site name	Post code
• Nestfield Centre	LS10 3LA
• Blenkinsop Clubhouse	LS10 4LF
• Wakefield/Pontefract Road	LS10
• Tulip Street	LS10 2BR
• Nestfield Centre	LS10 3LA
• Blenkinsop Clubhouse	LS10 4LF
• Wakefield/Pontefract Road	LS10
• Tulip Street	LS10 2BR
• Cravengate House	LS11 5NF

- Matthew Murray

LS110DJ

15. Please see list above of sites sent by asset management of void properties due for sale and or development. We would like to explore these further with a site visit including Ward Members, Leeds Gate advocates and a member of the roadside community for suitability.
16. This list is not exhaustive and would like to invite members to consider any other piece of land that they know of for negotiated stopping.

Recommendations

17. Elected Members are asked to note the contents of the report.