

**Meeting of Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods)
Gypsy and Travellers Working Group held at 10am
on Wednesday 29th September 2010**

Present:

Councillor B Anderson, Chair
Councillor R Grahame
Councillor G Hyde
Councillor P Ewens

Others Present:

Mr N Evans, Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods
Ms B Emery, Head of Housing Strategy and Solutions
Mr I Spafford, Head of Community Service & Litigation
Ms K Blackmore, Team Leader, General Litigation Team
Mr R Mills, Principal Scrutiny Adviser

1.0 Welcome & Introduction

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and briefly outlined the reasons for this inquiry into gypsy and travellers site provision within Leeds.

2.0 Terms of Reference

- 2.1 Members of the Working Group considered draft terms of reference for this inquiry and made the following amendments and additions:

- Paragraph 1.2 delete the words “ acting to enforce camping restrictions” and replace with the words “ applying to the County Court for possession in respect of Council owned land which has been unlawfully occupied by travelers dealing with the legal and practical consequences of such unlawful occupation.”
- Add an additional bullet point under 5.1 with the words “Relevant housing, planning and equality legislation.”
- Add under 7.1 an additional witness from the City Development Department with responsibility for planning issues and the Regional Spatial Strategy.
- Clarify that under 7.1 Member witnesses refer to the party spokesperson for this issue from each political party.

- 2.2 Subject to the amendments referred to in paragraph 2.1 above the Working Group agreed to recommend to Scrutiny Board (Environment & Neighbourhoods) on 11th October that the terms of reference be approved.

3.0 Issues Arising

- 3.1 Reference was made to a number of issues to be addressed including
- obtaining information on any private gypsy and travelers sites in the UK.
 - planning considerations.
 - what other local authorities are doing including Cheshire, Bristol and Wakefield.
 - City Region and whether an holistic approach to this issue might be appropriate.
 - sensitivity of some the information that will be presented to the Working Group.
 - education and health issues.

4.0 Working Group Meetings

4.1 The Chair agreed to circulate possible dates for future meetings of this Working Group later today so that dates can be confirmed quickly with everyone involved by the end of this week.

4.2 Members agreed that the next meeting of the Working Group will consider a joint report from Legal Services and the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods and will cover:

- The current legal position
- What the government is proposing, if anything, including financial support for sites and the possibility of criminalisation of this issue?
- What is the scale and volume of the problem?
- What other local authorities are doing?
- Whether a distinction can be made between transient and settled gypsy and travellers families who stay in Leeds?

5.0 Circulars

5.1 The Chair referred to the following documents and it was agreed that these be circulated to all Members of the Working Group and the Scrutiny Board (Environment & Neighbourhoods).

- Report of the Local Government Association Gypsy and Traveller Task Group.
- Community and Local Government – “The Road Ahead” first report of the independent task group on site provision and enforcement for gypsies and travellers.
- Equality and Human Rights Commission “Gypsy and Travellers Simple Solutions for Living Together.”