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## Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

### Scrutiny Board (Environment and Housing) Working Group

Date: 15 November 2010

**Not for publication: Appendix E to this report is Exempt/Confidential under Access to Information Procedure Rules 10.4 (5)**

**Subject: : Inquiry into Gypsy and Travellers Site Provision within Leeds – Unauthorised Encampments and Permanent Provision**

<p><b>Electoral Wards Affected:</b></p>          <input type="checkbox"/> Ward Members consulted (referred to in report)	<p><b>Specific Implications For:</b></p> <p>Equality and Diversity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Community Cohesion <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Narrowing the Gap <input type="checkbox"/></p>
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## Executive Summary

This report has been prepared to provide information requested at the Scrutiny Board (Environment and Housing) Working Group on 20 October 2010 and at the Working Group on 1 November 2010.

Information has been provided on the following:

- the definition of a 'pitch';
- on the possibility of extending provision at Cottingley Springs;
- the cost of providing the permanent provision at Cottingley Springs;
- the estimated costs of providing additional pitches within Leeds;
- the numbers of travellers who have no permanent pitch within the city and who consider themselves to be residents of Leeds;
- information from other local authorities regarding pitch capacity and other details
- further information on patterns of unauthorised encampment within the city since 2007

## **1.0 Purpose Of This Report**

- 1.1 The report sets out the position with regard to the legal definition and available guidance concerning a 'pitch' in relation to Gypsy and Traveller sites.
- 1.2 In terms of the position in Leeds, the report provides information on the numbers of caravans/households who are predominately based in the Leeds area and the estimated costs of providing additional pitches.
- 1.3 The report also seeks to provide further information on the pattern of unauthorized encampments in the Leeds district over the past few years.
- 1.4 The report also seeks to provide further information from other local authorities on their approach to both site and pitch provision and dealing with unauthorised encampments.
- 1.5 Specific details of costs associated with the repairs at the Council's permanent site at Cottingley Springs site are included in appendix B.

## **2.0 Definition of a pitch**

- 2.1 There is no definition of a pitch in terms of minimum size, layout or volume set in legislation. However in May 2008 the Department for Communities and Local Government did publish a document entitled Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites – A Good Practice Guide (attached at appendix A). This document gives guidance to developing sites both by public bodies and private developers.
- 2.2 The guidance is set in the context of the Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3) which sets out the then Government's national planning policy framework for providing its housing objectives, and states that this applies equally to site accommodation provided for the Gypsy and Traveller communities.
- 2.3 Chapter 7 of the guidance considers individual pitches on permanent sites. It states that the layout of pitches will be dependent on the layout of the overall site and is clear that each pitch should have clear demarcation to make it entirely clear what each individual household may occupy in return for the fee paid.
- 2.4 The guidance states that each pitch must include a hard standing area constructed of concrete or similar which extends over the whole area to be occupied by trailer, touring caravan or other vehicle. (This is referred to as the slab by residents at Cottingley Springs).
- 2.5 In terms of size the guidance makes reference to the fact that some Gypsies and Travellers have larger than average families and are likely to live in an extended family setting. For this reason the guidance recommends that consideration is given to providing large pitches as smaller pitches will quickly become overcrowded.
- 2.6 The guidance states that there is no one-size-fits-all measurement of a pitch as this depends on the size of individual families and their needs. It is recommended that as a general rule an average family pitch must be capable of accommodating an amenity building (or 'shed'), a large trailer and touring caravan, drying space for clothes, a lockable storage unit, parking space for two vehicles and a small garden area.
- 2.7 Smaller pitches must be able to accommodate at least an amenity building, a large trailer, drying space for clothes and parking for at least one vehicle.

- 2.8 Parking spaces, the guidance states, should be a minimum of 2.4 x 4.8 meters (taken from Manual for Streets, Department for Transport 2007).
- 2.9 The guidance also covers amenity buildings (often referred to by Leeds travellers as sheds). It is stated that it is essential for a self-contained amenity building to be provided on each pitch and that the building must include, as a minimum: hot and cold water supply; electricity supply; a separate toilet and hand wash basin; a bath/shower room; a kitchen and dining area. The access to the toilet should be through a lobbied area or by separate access direct from the pitch.
- 2.10 The guidance continues to suggest that equally essential is the need for secure storage space for harmful substances/medicines; enclosed storage for food, brooms, washing and cleaning items; and space for connection of cooker, fridge/freezer and washing machine. It recommends that consideration is also given to providing a suitable day/living room.
- 2.11 As noted, this document contains guidance rather than legislative requirement around site and pitch development. However, while the status of the document is guidance, it is made clear that any future capital allocation to assist with site development would be influenced by the level of compliance with the recommendations around general site design, location and size; and pitch size. However, the current position with regard to funding is unclear as the funding pot to develop sites was withdrawn earlier this year.

### **3.0 Extending Cottingley Springs**

- 3.1 Cottingley Springs site was redesigned and pitches redefined as part of a programme to improve management in the site. The site currently has 41 pitches across Site A and Site B.
- 3.2 There is some land adjacent to the site known within the service as the compound. This land could be developed to accommodate some additional pitches. It is estimated that on the basis of current pitch size at Cottingley Springs, this land could accommodate between three to four pitches.
- 3.3 No work has been undertaken to date in terms of any further redevelopment of the site and therefore it is not possible to estimate with any great accuracy how much additional space might be made available through such development. However, as a broad estimate it might be possible to accommodate a further two or three pitches on the current site, and therefore a potential 7 further pitches might be achievable at Cottingley Springs.
- 3.4 It should be noted that this is an estimate of officers working within the service and not a professional assessment by surveyors/planning experts. If this option was to be proposed detailed work would need to be undertaken to understand how to maximise space available while ensuring that the site continued to meet health and safety considerations.

### **4.0 Cost of Cottingley Springs**

- 4.1 The cost of providing the site at Cottingley Springs is attached at Appendix B. This information includes the budgeted cost of repairs and maintenance carried out by Corporate Property Management at Cottingley Springs on an annual basis. The premises costs includes this year's estimated CPM cost at £99,380. This includes reactive repairs along with planned maintenance and works.

## **5.0 Cost of new pitch development**

- 5.1 It is difficult to accurately estimate the cost of developing new pitches. However appendix C gives details of recent pitch development nationally. Those developments of pitches geographically nearest Leeds are highlighted. This shows a wide variation in capital allocation from Government per pitch. Where new sites were developed the cost in Yorkshire & Humberside and the North East ranged from £22,000 per pitch to £116,000. The development of new pitches on additional sites was less costly, ranging between £42,000 and £60,000. The refurbishment of pitches on the one development in our area cost £74,000 per pitch.
- 5.2 Members should note that these figures should be treated with caution as they give no detail of the sites in terms of locations but the grants for new developments was given at 100% of cost.
- 5.3 In terms of revenue, estimates of the cost of providing 10 new pitches and 50 new pitches are included at appendix D. These show that, based on current costs at Cottingley Springs and assuming that housing benefit changes do not adversely affect receipts on sites, the Council would make a surplus of £470 per year on providing 10 additional sites and £2,349 on a 50 pitch development.
- 5.4 **Leeds families**
- 5.5 As outlined in an earlier report to the Working Group, there are a number of families who are roadside and who are known to the service to be normally travelling within the Leeds boundary. These families consider themselves to be 'Leeds' people and have expressed a desire to be able to live on authorised encampments within the Leeds district.
- 5.6 These groups of families are distinct from Gypsies and Travellers who travel through Leeds normally in the summer and often because of horse fairs and family events such as weddings and funerals. Some of these families come to Leeds more than once a year but they often have pitches and in some cases houses in other parts of the county and are travelling through as part of their traditional lifestyle.
- 5.7 The Leeds families and those from outside Leeds often 'share' unauthorised encampments but do not express a wish to be allowed to continue to live in a shared environment.
- 5.8 The information provided at appendix E shows that there are a total of 20 Leeds families with 27 caravans who have no pitch and who are either travelling within Leeds occupying unauthorised encampments or who are insecurely living at Cottingley Springs. This last group of 8 families are doubling up on the permanent site but can be asked to leave by their relatives/friends at any time.
- 5.9 Members will recall that the Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment (published in May 2008) identified the need to provide 48 additional pitches in Leeds by 2015. Ryan Powell, one of the authors of the GTAA, will be able to give more information on how that figure was arrived at during the working group meeting on 15 November.

## **6.0 Other Local Authorities**

- 6.1 Appendix F details information given by local authorities regarding number of pitch provision and caravan capacity, policy/practice around unauthorised encampments and plans for any new site/pitches within their area.

**7.0 Unauthorised encampments in Leeds.**

7.1 Maps shown in appendix G provide details on encampments within Leeds since 2007. Included is detail on both the 'Leeds' families and those unknown families and the numbers of caravans involved.

**8.0 Recommendations**

9.0 That Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) Working Group note the contents of the report.