

# **DRAFT**

## **Meeting of Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) Gypsy and Traveller Working Group held at 10am on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2010**

### **Present:**

Councillor B Anderson (BA), Chair  
Councillor G Driver (GD)  
Councillor Lisa Mulherin (LM)  
Councillor R Grahame (RG)  
Councillor G Hyde (GH)  
Councillor P Ewens (PE)  
Councillor P Wadsworth (PW)

### **Others Present**

Councillor P Gruen (PG) Executive Board Member for  
Neighbourhoods and Housing  
Ms B Emery (BE), Head of Housing Strategy and Solutions  
Ms K Murray (KM), Travellers Service Manager  
Mr Gareth Self (GS) Liaison Officer  
Ms K Blackmore (KB) Legal Officer, General Litigation Team  
Mr R Mills (RM) Principal Scrutiny Adviser

### **Action**

#### **1.0 Introduction and Welcome**

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and briefly referred to the agenda and the issues before the Working Group today.

#### **2.0 Apologies**

- 2.1 Apologies were reported from Mr Ian Spafford, Head of Community Services & Litigation.

#### **3.0 Note of Last Meeting**

- 3.1 Members received the note of the meeting of the Working Group held on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2010.
- 3.2 Members received an extract from the minutes of the Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2010 when a number of witnesses gave evidence to the Board on this inquiry.
- 3.3 Members noted a letter from Councillor A Lowe regarding the offer from New Wortley Residents Association at the Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2010 to support any pilot that might be established to identify a small site in Armley for gypsies and travelers. The letter from Councillor Lowe made it clear that the offer was conditional upon sites in the North,

East and South of the city being identified first and that any agreement must be subject to thorough consultation with affected residents

#### **4.0 Matters Arising**

4.1 There were no matters arising that were not included on the meeting's agenda.

#### **5.0 Benefits**

5.1 Mr Steven Carey, Chief Revenues and Benefits Officer attended the meeting for this item and reported on the rules concerning the payment of housing benefit. In summary anyone is entitled to housing benefit in full if they receive a job seekers allowance or income support. The job seekers allowance and income support are determined and assessed by Job Seeker Plus. They undertake the means testing of applicants. The Council works closely with Job Seeker Plus and any allegations of individuals receiving benefits they are not entitled requires detailed documentary evidence and is considered by an independent assessor at Job Centre Plus.

5.2 Mr Carey confirmed that roadside gypsies make no claims for Council Tax or housing benefit.

5.3 He stated that any issues concerning earned income was the responsibility of HR revenues and customs.

#### **6.0 Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods**

6.1 Members considered a report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods on:

- Other local authorities who are proposing to develop additional gypsy and traveler provision within their authority.
- Information on a current unauthorised encampment on privately owned land within the city.
- Update on work being undertaken by officers in the Corporate Property management Service to estimate likely costs associated with increasing the number of pitches at Cottingley Springs.

6.2 Members noted the report.

#### **7.0 Draft Final Report and Recommendations**

7.1 Members identified in discussion with the Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing a number of recommendations to be included in the Scrutiny Board's final report and recommendations following conclusion of its inquiry on this matter.