



Minutes

Policy Review Committee – Research Working Group on Gipsy & Traveller Sites

Venue: Committee Room

Date: 24 October 2011

Present: Councillor R Musgrave (Chair), Councillor Mrs M Davis and Councillor I Reynolds

Apologies for Absence: None

Officers Present: Jonathan Lund, Deputy Chief Executive; Eileen Scothern, Business Manager; Andrew McMillan, Policy Officer and Richard Besley, Democratic Services

1. Chair's Address to the Working Group

Cllr Musgrave explained how the Working Group had been set up by the Council following proposals on the SADPD by the Policy Review Committee. The group consisted of Cllr Musgrave as Chair together with Cllrs Mrs Davis and Reynolds.

The Chair introduced those present at this first meeting and thanked them for their participation. He reminded working group members and officers of the tight time constraint on the group and welcomed the opportunity to submit recommendations to Council

2. Declarations of interest

The Chair notified those present that he had been contacted by Mr S Humphrey, the chair of Whitley Parish Council prior to the meeting. Whitley is a community where one of the sites is located.

3. Terms of Reference

The Deputy Chief Executive introduced the draft Terms of Reference and re-emphasised the Chair's introduction to the group that this was a time limited piece of work. And it was important to recognise that there is a fixed end date.

RESOLVED:

To receive and note the Terms of Reference.

4. Review of Sites

4.1 To Confirm the Site Selection Methodology

The Chair asked for clarification on a question that rose at the working group briefing if sites within land identified for permitted development could be considered or whether it contradicted national planning policy?

Councillor Reynolds felt the policy was contradictory and felt that land identified for housing development would carry a high cost and be too expensive to develop for gypsy and traveller accommodation.

Chair asked for a definitive answer.

Action: Officers to respond to Chair's question by next meeting

The Chair had also asked at the briefing whether if authorisation was given to illegal or unauthorised sites would they count towards the shortfall which the Council was seeking to remedy?

Initial views were that it wasn't but that had been challenged by the Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officer. Officers were currently working to provide a definitive answer

Councillor Reynolds proposed a further change to the revised methodology at item (b) moving consideration of land located 10km not 5km of identified road junctions.

On studying the map of the district he felt that the move to 10km did not really help in anyway and that, in hindsight, it may be better reverting to 5km.

The Chair seconded the proposal to revert to 5km and after a vote the proposal was carried.

Resolved

To amend the distance in (b) of the methodology relating to land “located within a 10km drive of one of the main road junctions”, to 5km.

The Chair identified that the sequential site selection methodology used for gypsy and traveller site allocation appeared to be less clear than the methodology used in other parts of the SADPD and he wondered if a common description would improve clarity.

Action: For Officers to consider a unified and consistent approach to recording the methodology

4.2 To review and consider sites against the site selection methodology

The Chair notified the group that with Andrew McMillan, Policy Officer he had written to various parties to enquire about other sites as part of the renewed call for sites.

So far there has been some contact, with some parties renewing interest, though to date nothing formal has arisen.

It was confirmed that landowners had been made aware of the tight timescale.

While sites are coming forward the Deputy Chief Executive sought and received confirmation that the next step would be to consider the existing sites put forward by landowners, and any other sites that come forward in the meantime, against the revised methodology to produce a shortlist for the next meeting.

4.3 To make a provisional recommendation and consider a site visit or visits

It was agreed that no provisional recommendation would be made at this meeting while some matters remained to be clarified.

Councillor Davis welcomed the possibility of site visit(s) so that any recommendation(s) made by the group is made with as much knowledge as able.

The Deputy Chief Executive asked the group if it was happy for Officers to arrange a co-ordinated visit for all participants as soon as possible after the next meeting on Monday 7th November.

RESOLVED:

To arrange a co-ordinated visit for all participants as soon as possible after the next meeting on Monday 7th November.

The meeting closed at 6:50pm