



Minutes

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

Venue: Committee Room

Date: 21 November 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

9. Declarations of interest

None.

10. Minutes 7 November 2011

RESOLVED:

To receive and approve the minutes of the Policy Review Committee Working Group held on 7 November 2011 as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

11. PR/11/10 – Review of Working Group on Gypsy and Traveller Sites

The Chair thanked the Working Group for coming together for their final meeting and for the work that the Group had done on the matter.

The Deputy Chief Executive, Jonathan Lund, presented the report, in which he summarised how the Working Group had been established.

He outlined how the Working Group had first come together at a briefing session where various background papers had been made available and where Officers of the Council and Gypsy & Traveller Liaison Officers attended to provide as much information as possible for the Working Group to commence their task.

This was followed by two Working Group meetings on 24 October and 7 November where we had looked at the site selection methodology and undertook a call for sites, a result of which brought forward 2 new sites at Great Heck and Hillam and a further site at Bondgate. Those two sessions would be followed by a final meeting this evening.

The Working Group had compared the sites against the revised methodology and a number were discarded, at its meeting on 7 November the group agreed to undertake a visit of proposed sites and this took place on Friday 11 November

The Working Group site visit included:

- Bondgate
- Hillam
- Lumby
- Hillcrest
- Whitley (Poplar Farm)
- Burn (existing site)

Subsequently the Whitley site has now been withdrawn and the Bondgate site viewed as unsuitable.

The Working Group discovered that the HCA would be open to approach as landowners to pursue land at Burn Airfield adjacent to the existing site.

The Deputy Chief Executive moved to the recommendations the report puts before the Working Group.

The recommendations recognise the work done and how the reliance on the promotion of sites by landowners can leave the District Council vulnerable to manipulation and where sites that might meet the criteria are not inappropriate.

They further recognised the shortage of suitable sites and to commence discussions with HCA to pursue Burn Airfield as a new site or an extension to the existing site.

The Deputy Chief Executive suggested that those recommendations go forward to the Executive on behalf of the Working Group and Policy Review Committee.

The Working Group agreed that the matters had been discussed at length and that they had conducted a comprehensive study of sites especially

at the site visit. They recognised that some sites discount themselves with Bondgate being a good example.

RESOLVED

To note the work undertaken previously by the Executive and more recently by the Working Group to identify suitable sites for the provision of traveller accommodation.

To recognise, with regret, that reliance on the promotion of sites by landowners can leave the District Council vulnerable to manipulation and prompt the focus to fall on sites which might meet the agreed methodology but which are demonstrably inappropriate.

To pursue with the Homes and Communities Agency the possibility of providing a further site for traveller accommodation on land owned by the Agency at Burn Airfield and if those discussions are positive, to allocate an appropriate site at the location for such development.

To recognise the paucity of suitable alternative sites and acknowledge that there may be a need to consider land in the green belt if proposals at Burn Airfield do not progress.

To recommend that the Executive consider gathering further evidence to support the Council's identified current and future need for traveller accommodation.

The meeting closed at 6:30pm