

Central Bedfordshire Council

**Sustainable Communities Overview and
Scrutiny Committee**

22 November 2018

Gypsy and Traveller Responsiveness

Report of: Cllr Ian Dalgarno,
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This report relates to a decision that is Key

Purpose of this presentation

1. The purpose of the presentation is to seek support from the committee for proposals for additional Council resources to support our response to Gypsy and Traveller matters in Central Bedfordshire.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

1. **Consider and discuss the information provided in the presentation**
2. **Support the recommendations set out in the presentation and recommends to Executive that the necessary funding should be included in the Council's current MTFP.**

Issues

The presentation sets out the proposed approach and the required resources for consideration.

Council Priorities

2. Developing the Councils response to Gypsy and Traveller matters supports the following priorities:
 - a. Enhancing Central Bedfordshire – the approach set out in the presentation will enable the Council to take a more proactive stance on a range of G&T issues that impact on the physical environment and will work towards developing improved community cohesion.
 - b. A more efficient and responsive Council – the approach will enable improved join up and will seek to drive out a more efficient response to dealing with Gypsy and Traveller matters in Central Bedfordshire by setting clear policy and procedure that will facilitate more efficient working and budget management.

Corporate Implications

Legal Implications

3. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Financial and Risk Implications

4. The G&T Unit will be funded from Community Safety reserve of £500k for two years and future funding will be managed through the MTFP process.
5. A capital Business Case and Project Initiation Document is being developed for the TSS. The capital funding, estimated at £450k, has been included as part of the current MTFP process.
6. Gypsy and Traveller issues are a key concern for communities in Central Bedfordshire and the Council is a key stakeholder in responding to them. The Council has responsibilities around planning applications, enforcement (planning breaches and unauthorised encampments), vulnerability, social care and community safety. There is significant risk to the Council reputationally if it fails to respond effectively to G&T matters. The work on Billington and ongoing concerns being raised from Parish Councils, residents and MP about the Councils failure to effectively manage future supply of G&T sites and breaches of planning permission reflect the challenge for the Council.
7. The costs of managing the level of outstanding breaches of permissions is not fully understood although it is anticipated that costs will be picked up through existing budgets in planning to address the breaches to the level required may need additional financial support. Discussions are underway with planning as to what, if any, financial support may be required. If it is, reserve funding will need to be identified and costs identified in the Executive report.

Equalities Implications

8. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
9. The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to treat someone less favourably because of a range of protected characteristics, including race, nationality or ethnic or national origins. The following of a nomadic lifestyle is lawful and is recognised and protected through legislation. Romany gypsies and Irish Travellers have been granted protection under the previous Race Relations Acts. The Public Sector Equality Duty places a duty on the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.
10. Gypsies and Travellers can sometimes find themselves in a cycle of 'enforced' nomadism, being continually moved on by the authorities because of the shortage of authorised sites. As a result, Gypsies and Travellers are often more disadvantaged than any other ethnic group in terms of access to healthcare and education. The lack of authorised public sites and the difficulties associated with getting planning permission for private sites, has meant that Gypsies and Travellers have set up home on land belonging to others or on their own land without permission.

Conclusion and next Steps

11. The presentation sets out some of the key challenges facing the Council needs to address regarding Gypsy and Traveller issues and sets out a recommended approach to support the work needed.
12. The next steps will involve:
 - a. Completing Project Implementation Document and Business Case for TSS for approval and prioritization.
 - b. Identifying suitable land for TSS
 - c. Complete job descriptions for evaluation and begin recruitment process
 - d. Subject to sign off initiate the TSS Project

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None

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