

## **Emergency Stopping Places for Gypsies and Travellers**

**Update for Environment Select Committee meeting, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2018**

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### **1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1. Environment Select Committee requested an update on this item which will be considered by Cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2018.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1. In September 2017, Cabinet approved the Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS) 2017. As part of this, Cabinet agreed that a strategy for emergency stopping places would be developed to manage unauthorised encampments, consistent with the approved Wiltshire Traveller Strategy which was developed by the cross-departmental Traveller Reference Group.

### **3. Main Consideration for the Council**

- 3.1. In Wiltshire, there are no emergency stopping places which can provide safe short term stay to meet gypsies and traveller's temporary accommodation needs. One consequence of this is that travellers encamp on public and private land in Wiltshire.
- 3.2. Dealing with unauthorised encampments is a continuing issue for Wiltshire Council Highways Enforcement and Wiltshire and Swindon Police. Where they occur, encampments can be a nuisance to landowners and the public. The ongoing occurrence of unauthorised encampments has implications for the Council in terms of clean- up costs and reputational costs.
- 3.3. The Council's only transit site is currently closed pending a decision on its future, alongside other council-owned traveller sites. Cabinet will also consider this matter at the 3<sup>rd</sup> July meeting.
- 3.4. The Council and Police therefore cannot move travellers from unauthorised encampments onto a dedicated site within the local authority boundary. Stakeholders on the Traveller Reference Group have confirmed that this reduces the ability to deal with encampments effectively using existing enforcement powers.
- 3.5. Practice from elsewhere suggests that emergency stopping places ('ESPs') can be relatively basic compared to a fully developed transit site and providing these can aid in reducing the number of unauthorised encampments over time.

- 3.6. In order to deliver on the proposed approach in the LDS, Cabinet at its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2018 will consider a report into the development of an Emergency Stopping Places ('ESP') Strategy.
- 3.7. The ESP Strategy sets out:
- Current national and local policy in relation to providing transit accommodation for travellers,
  - Reviews the occurrence of unauthorised encampments in Wiltshire
  - Identifies minimum ESP requirements
  - Sets out a methodology for finding suitable sites to deliver the Strategy
  - Covers implementation and management of ESPs
- 3.8. The methodology for site selection has been derived from Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy 47 which applies to both permanent and transit sites and develops the approach first discussed at Cabinet Capital Assets Committee in 2014 in relation to permanent Traveller accommodation.

#### **4. Proposal**

- 4.1. For the Environment Select Committee to endorse Wiltshire Council establishing an Emergency Stopping Places Strategy and to submit their comments to Cabinet, ahead of Cabinet's consideration of the proposed Emergency Stopping Places Strategy on 3 July 2018.

#### **5. Next Steps**

- 5.1. Subject to Cabinet's consideration of the proposed ESP Strategy and proposed sites, the next steps relate to site identification and delivery. This will involve developing a more detailed understanding of
- a. availability of suitable sites
  - b. the costs of securing planning permission,
  - c. necessary remedial or aesthetic works such as engineering works, providing hardstanding, fencing, landscaping or improved access and
  - d. practical management of the sites by the Council's Highway Enforcement team, and
  - e. maintenance costs.
- 5.2. A report will then be prepared for Cabinet's consideration on Strategy implementation, including site proposals and assessments of delivery and maintenance costs. It is anticipated that this will be in late Autumn 2018.

### **Appendices**

#### **Appendix 1 – Proposed ESP Strategy**