

GYPSY AND TRAVELLER PROJECT BOARD UPDATE

Environment Select Committee. 11th JANUARY 2011

I've been on a tour of sites within the south of the county which proved to be immensely interesting; not only did we visit authorised sites but also the transit site, illegal site and potential 'at risk' sites.

I've had a quick update with a Senior Liaison Officer who was able to tell me that Officers are quite robust in asking for ID from those families passing through the county which has meant that they are more respectful to the site as previously it has meant a great deal of cleaning and tidying up after they leave. {I have observed that the transit site is not used very much}.

Currently there has been no investment to improve the living conditions of residents. The outside buildings often used for washing and bathing were very basic and the general 'plot' surface treatment was poor. One site has had a clean up operation which has revealed space to accommodate extra plots.

Regarding the structure of the G&T strategy an approved working arrangement has been identified which means the Traveller Liaison Officers will be going into the Housing Department, which makes good sense as often the left hand wasn't aware of what the right hand was doing! I believe there are changes with regard the enforcement and management of the sites across the whole county.

Regarding the consultation, I'm sure Members saw the display boards at the Area Boards and elsewhere. It ran from April 6th until June 4th 2010 and the purpose of the consultation was 3 fold...

1. To discuss the issues.
2. Develop a methodology for good locations.
3. Invite land to be put forward.

CDN Planning are/were the consultants to collate the responses and update the 'Issues and General Approach Report'.

In summary, some of the responses raised revolved around the definition of Gypsy, Traveller, New Age Travellers and Boaters, the identified number of plots required across Wiltshire, that G&T's should be treated in the same way as everyone else looking for a home and that consideration should be borne in mind to sites close to the county borders.

Since the Secretary of State revoked the Regional Spatial Strategy on July 6th the target identified for G&T pitch provision no longer carries any significant weight. Instead LA's will be responsible for determining the right level of site provision, reflecting local need and historic demand.

On the 29th August 2010 the Government announced it's intention to revoke circulars 0/20006. [Planning for G&T caravan sites and 04/2007 [Planning for Travelling Showpeople] to be replaced with light touch guidance outlining Council's statutory obligations.

A revised programme is being developed which will allow time to review the level of provision appropriate in Wiltshire and the implications of the aforementioned circulars will be considered. The Localism Bill/Act means a probable revised programme being drawn up.

The website will/does reflect the latest position

Author: Cllr Jose Green.