

Agenda Item No. 7

Title: **Future timescales in respect of gypsy and traveler sites**

Reporting Member: **Cllr Michael Mounde**

Reporting Officer: **Jim Sherry, Planning Policy and Conservation Services Manager**

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the Scrutiny Committee with the future timescales in respect of gypsy and traveller sites.

Background

Following the Housing Act 2004, on 2 February 2006 the Officer of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) issued Circular 01/2006 on Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites. Two of the main intentions of the circular were:

- to increase significantly the number of gypsy and traveller sites in appropriate locations with planning permission in order to address under provision
- to identify and make provision for the resultant land and accommodation requirements

The circular sets out that the planning process should begin by local authorities assessing gypsy and traveller accommodation needs as part of the gypsy and traveller accommodation assessment process. This gypsy and traveller assessment is a key component in the overall assessment of need for housing and affordable housing provision in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). This in turn informs the preparation of the Development Plan Document in which the identified provision is translated into specific site allocations.

Key issues

The Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West, currently in draft following proposed changes made by the Secretary of State, is expected to be finalised in or about May 2009.

The RSS has set out the requirements for West Wiltshire of 14 residential pitches and 5 transit pitches, or 85 and 27, respectively, across the whole of Wiltshire, excluding Swindon, together with the provision of 5 plots for travelling showpeople across Wiltshire.

In the light of the reorganisation of local government in Wiltshire, the new Council intends to plan for this provision on a County-wide basis. In the Wiltshire Local Development Scheme (effectively the planning work programme for the new Council), which was approved by the Secretary of State on 27 January 2009, the new Council is committed to the preparation of a Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD), which will indicate where the new provision is to be made. Work is due commence on the DPD shortly, and the document is expected to be adopted in December 2010, following public consultation and public examination by an independent Planning Inspector.

Effect on strategies and codes

The Regional Spatial Strategy and Development Plan Document are two important county-wide strategies currently under development.

Finance and performance implications

The drafting of the Development Plan Document will be resource intensive and will require a coordinated approach across the County.

Risk management implications

The Development Plan Document is subject to public consultation and public examination by an independent Planning Inspector prior to adoption. The Government has the power to intervene where local authorities do not take timely action to meet a clear and pressing need for gypsy and traveller accommodation.

Legal and human rights implications

Local authorities are required to assess the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers, and to incorporate sites in local development plan documents where a need is demonstrated.

There is a clear duty for gypsies and travellers to be dealt with equitably on the basis of human rights, race equality and social inclusion.

Next Steps

This work is being taken forward in the new Wiltshire Council by the Director of Economy and Enterprise Alistair Cunningham. The Regional Spatial Strategy is expected to be finalised in May 2009 and work will begin shortly on the Development Plan with adoption expected in December 2010.

Recommendations

The Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and note the information contained within this report.

Background papers

ODPM Circular 01/2006 Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Sites

CLG Response to the Final Report of the Independent Task Group on Site Provision and Enforcement for Gypsies and Travellers