

Wiltshire Council

Environment Select Committee

13 September 2016

Subject: Wiltshire Gypsy and Traveller Strategy Refresh - 2016

Cabinet member: Councillor Toby Sturgis - Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Development Management, Strategic Housing, Operational Property and Waste.

Key Decision: No

Background

1. Wiltshire Council brings together a wide range of services and responsibilities that engage with Gypsy and Traveller communities and saw the publication of a Wiltshire Gypsy and Traveller Strategy in 2010. We now need to take the opportunity to refresh this strategy, to reignite partnerships between services, and put in place a new action plan to provide an integrated and supportive approach to engaging with Traveller communities to help them live safer, healthier, active and high-quality lives. In line with Wiltshire Council's Business plan, this strategy aims to create strong resilient communities, with the needs of these communities balanced against the needs of settled populations.
2. Wiltshire Council provides services to all people, regardless of their lifestyle and, at the moment, traveller communities do not have equal outcomes and life chances with settled communities. Services across the public sector then need to work together to empower and support both Gypsy and Traveller and settled communities to live together and form resilient communities.
3. This strategy is the starting point for the Council to provide low cost, customer focused services that support the creation of resilient communities, whilst balancing the needs of both traveller and settled communities.
4. There are two sections to this refreshed strategy; the document sets out the current situation for traveller communities, and an action plan (see appendix 1).

Main considerations for the Council

Who are Travellers?

5. There are several definitions of 'Travellers' used in different legal and

policy documents. According to the Race Relations Act 1976, the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000, and the Human Rights Act 1998 Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers are recognised as having ethnic status.

6. For the purposes of this document, Travellers are defined as *“persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family’s or dependants’ educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling show-people or circus people travelling together as such.”*
7. Travelling showpeople are defined as *“Members of a group organised for the purposes of holding fairs, circuses or shows (whether or not travelling together as such). This includes such persons who on the grounds of their own or their family’s or dependants’ more localised pattern of trading, educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily, but excludes Gypsies and Travellers as defined above.”*
8. Boaters or Boat Dwellers (referred to as ‘Bargees’ in the original strategy) have several definitions which were collated in the Bath and North East Somerset Council task and finish group review on Boat Dwellers and River Travellers¹⁵. The document identifies several organisations which have varying definitions but with the following commonalities: boat dwellers live on boats, whether or not they have a permanent residential mooring or are travelling inland waterways. Boaters are described as nomadic people.
9. The precise number of Travellers in England and Wiltshire is unclear. The latest ONS analysis released in 2014 using 2011 Census data recorded 58,000 who identified themselves as a Gypsy or Irish Traveller (this doesn’t include those who identify themselves as Roma) in England and Wales. This suggests that this is the smallest ethnic group and accounts for 0.1% of the population. According to the 2011 Census, 757 people in Wiltshire identified themselves as being of Gypsy or Irish Traveller ethnicity; this is 0.2% of our population.

Wiltshire’s Traveller Strategy

10. Building on the excellent progress made since 2010, the overall aim of the Traveller Strategy is that by 2020, engagement with traveller communities will be strengthened, coordinated and in line with our aims to create strong and resilient communities, with the needs of those communities balanced against the needs of the settled population.
11. The strategic aims are:
 - a) That service provision and engagement is co-ordinated throughout the Council and involves consultation with traveller communities.
 - b) Services and facilities are improved to empower traveller communities, through joint working, participation and involvement.

- c) The needs of traveller communities and settled communities are recognised and addressed in partnership, in line with our aim to create strong and resilient communities with residents that are living healthy, active lives.
- d) All council officers understand their role in regard to the safeguarding of adults and children in traveller communities.

12. By 2020 the strategy aspires to achieve:

a) Better accommodation

- Clear pathways to providing appropriate sites for Travellers, with standards of accommodation on local authority sites being equitable to that of the settled population.

b) Better intelligence

- Better utilisation of data, information and knowledge to help in analysing the needs of traveller communities and inform the delivery of and access to services.

c) Better community engagement and involvement

- Regular engagement with traveller communities, (and local settled communities) in order to enable needs to be identified and more targeted services provided in order to more effectively meet those needs.
- Increased partnership working with traveller communities wherever possible, to try to increase the resilience and empowerment of these communities.

d) Better health and education

- To understand the needs of traveller communities for health and wellbeing, education and safer communities, particularly the identification of existing inequalities and disadvantage; which has disproportional and adverse impacts on the quality of life for this community.
- To implement better planning and appropriate targeting of services to enable all partners to effectively meet the needs of traveller communities in relation to health, education and safer communities.
- To encourage greater health and education service take up by ensuring that these are accessible for traveller communities.

13. The strategy is supported by a 23-point action plan (see appendix 1).

Proposal

14. The purpose of this paper is to present the refreshed strategy to the Environment Select Committee for formal approval.
15. Implementation and monitoring of the strategy will remain with the authors of the strategy – the Traveller Reference Group (TRG), who will be accountable to the Environment Select Committee.
16. The governance of this refreshed strategy was initially discussed within the TRG and then with Cllr Sturgis and Cllr Wayman – all agreeing that the Environment Select Committee was the most appropriate group to govern the strategy.
17. Updating the strategy was led by public health but had contribution from wider colleagues and TRG members including: planning, housing, education and health.
18. The refreshed strategy has already been approved by the TRG for submission to the Environment Select Committee.

Reason for Proposal

19. The original Gypsy and Traveller Strategy (2010) was ratified by the Environment Select Committee and has formed the basis of the work of the multi-partnered TRG. The original strategy and its actions were managed and monitored via this group on a quarterly basis.

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Background Papers

The following documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report:

- Refreshed Traveller Strategy 2016 – Final Draft

Appendix 1

- Refreshed Traveller Strategy 2016 – Final Draft