

Purpose

1. To provide an update to the Environment Select Committee on the progress of the Traveller Reference Group and Traveller Strategy.

Background

2. Wiltshire Council brings together a wide range of services and responsibilities that engage with Gypsy and Traveller communities and saw the publication of a refreshed Traveller Strategy in September 2016. The refresh of the strategy contributed to reigniting 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 previous Business plan, the strategy aimed to create strong and resilient communities.
3. 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 Traveller and settled communities to live together.
4. 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. For the purposes of this document, and in line with the strategy, 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."*
5. 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."* 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 Travellers. 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.
6. 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. Further

information about the traveller population is available in the 2014 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment¹.

Traveller Reference Group (TRG)

7. The TRG aims to improve the health and wellbeing of the traveller population of Wiltshire in line with the strategic objectives of Wiltshire Council to create stronger and more resilient communities and ensure those from traveller communities have healthy, high-quality lives.
8. The TRG oversees and supports the implementation of the Traveller Strategy and is made of a range of council and non-council partners. Council departments represented include housing, communications, commissioning, planning, early help, enforcement, public health, community engagement and councillor representation. External partners include NHS and primary care, fire services, and police service.
9. The group is coordinated by public health, meets four times a year, and has recently introduced a 'rolling chair.' The group oversees the implementation plan linked to the Traveller strategy as well as tackling other relevant issues related to traveller communities.

Wiltshire's Traveller strategy

10. There is a 23-point action plan that supports the strategy, which supports: (a) better accommodation; (b) better intelligence; (c) better community engagement and involvement; and (d) better health and education. A summary of progress to date on the actions by theme below:

(a) Better Accommodation

What we said we would do	Progress to date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action 1: All new public and private sites should be in the locations which meet the particular needs of Traveller communities. People from across communities (travelling and settled) will be consulted to help identify and allocate future sites in the most effective locations in accordance with national policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delays with DPD and core strategy refresh. A new Local Development Scheme is under preparation which will set out the programme of work • Issues with site plans and identifying new locations • Emergency stopping site strategy currently being drafted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action 2: Continue to gather intelligence on preferred travelling routes and locations of unauthorised encampments over time to understand the repeating patterns of accommodation needed to reduce unauthorised encampments in Wiltshire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 unauthorised sites identified at last count (Jan 2017) • Emergency stopping site strategy currently being drafted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action 3: Alternative ways to provide sites should be researched and taken forward, for example considering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper outlining options for undeveloped council owned sites has been completed, with additional

¹ <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wiltshire-gtaa-final-report.pdf>

shared ownership schemes or RSL development management of sites (including transit sites)	options for transit site being included for discussion with CLT and member briefing currently being produced
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 5: Encourage Traveller communities to begin discussions about potential sites or pieces of land early in the planning process. This should include the provision of information, support, and pre-application advice on planning issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relates to action 1 above No consultation is currently planned but will include traveller communities when appropriate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 20: To make the process as consistent as possible, agencies will share information about unauthorised encampments and new residents arriving on sites as quickly as possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good practice principles on data sharing amongst council departments in place Spatial planning has shared the addresses of private traveller sites with health visiting to expand the healthcare offer

(b) Better Intelligence

What we said we would do	Progress to date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 9: Intelligence gathered about the health and wellbeing needs of Traveller communities will be fed in to the Joint Needs Assessment (JSNA) and all held in one place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action complete Most up to date intelligence is reflected in the 2016 strategy and is reflected in the JSNA refreshes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 24: To gain intelligence and develop a better understanding of the cross-border boater community and issues in conjunction with neighbouring Local Authorities in order to inform Council policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-border work is currently underway with BANES, Reading and Hampshire Proposed boater survey is now live (August 2017) and an update will be provided in the autumn

(c) Better community engagement and involvement

What we said we would do	Progress to date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 4: A cultural awareness training programme will be run for Councillors in order to support them with knowledge and information about the needs of Traveller communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Councillor development group felt there was no appetite for councillor specific training Wider council workforce training currently in development in-house
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 6: Source, develop and disseminate clear and easy to read information in accessible formats to support Traveller communities in understanding how to access complex planning systems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No update
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 7: Source, develop and disseminate easy to read guides on enforcement policy will be made available to Traveller communities, along with general advice on what all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gypsy and Traveller Planning guide (2013) already in place

<p>communities can expect during an unauthorised development.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 8: All council services providing support to the traveller community should pro-actively engage with Traveller communities to ensure their views are represented and inform council policy and procedure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions underway between public health and communications on how to take this action forward. No update.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 10: A system for customer feedback will be designed and implemented to assess the satisfaction of Traveller communities on all types of sites to ensure satisfaction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions to begin with Customer Services. No update.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 13: Training will be provided for frontline staff across the public sector on cultural awareness, and information and advice on how to interact and communicate with Traveller communities. Particular focuses should include verbal explanation of information and ensuring that any written information provided is appropriate and accessible in easy read formats. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See action 4 Wider workforce training currently being developed for delivery in September 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 14: Public sector agencies will endeavour to work together to share information on a regular basis, and as issues emerge through the formation of a new travellers forum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No update
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 15: A communications protocol will be developed and put in place to ensure that where possible, any community services frontline worker visiting a local authority site speaks with a member of the Traveller Services team to ensure that services are as coordinated as possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 21: Officers, Members and frontline staff will be supported in liaising with members of settled communities to provide reassurance and to tackle prejudices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action merged with Action 14 (above)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 22: Engagement with Area Boards will also take place where traveller related issues have been identified to communicate with Members and the general public. This will include appreciating the issues raised by both settled and Traveller communities, as well as providing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DPD work will be subsumed into the Core Strategy review but evidence on council-owned sites over the past year or so will inform the basis for site assessments

support to communities to understand each other better.	
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(d) Better health and education

What we said we would do	Progress to date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 11: To develop and disseminate a local area information pack about the local area, and how to access local services (including health and educational services) for travellers moving onto new sites or are new to the county. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions between public health and primary care are taking place with a view to duplicating the refugee 'welcome to Wiltshire' literature pack tailoring it for traveller use.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 12: A checklist will be produced for unauthorised developments and encampments to provide information to support Travellers to stay safe whilst in the county. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action complete
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 16: Undertake some community-led health promotional events to provide Information and advice to communities to raise awareness about particular health conditions that are prevalent for Traveller communities, in order to increase take-up of preventative services and access to primary care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health trainer programme in place and working directly with traveller communities Wider interest from public health and primary care colleagues to work closer with traveller communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 17: Under 'making every contact count' frontline staff will receive access to behaviour change training in order support healthier lifestyles and effectively signposting to appropriate health services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action merged with action 14. 'MECC' training is available and is currently being cascaded throughout the health and social care system.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 18: Training will be offered to senior leadership teams in schools to increase the support available for Traveller children. Also, the barriers to accessing educational funding and other forms of education, for example vocational training, should be identified and assessed to understand the reasons for higher and further education not being accessed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of a new training pack suitable for delivery at schools and potentially to social work staff is currently being explored in partnership with the EMAS Project Officer.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 19: Adult literacy services should be assessed and targeted information should be provided to Traveller 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Years' service is for school based learning of primary school aged traveller children

<p>communities in order to increase their take-up.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently there is no direct support for adult literacy in the county
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action 23: All Council officers who work with Traveller communities to understand their roles and responsibilities in the safeguarding of vulnerable adults and children within these communities and to understand the safeguarding processes and be able to action them as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original 'safe guarding' member of the TRG has left, currently looking to find a new member.

Conclusion

11. Wiltshire Council brings together a wide range of services and responsibilities that engage with Traveller communities and saw the publication of a refreshed Traveller Strategy in September 2016. This report demonstrates the work undertaken by the Traveller Reference Group over the past 12 months to support implementation of the strategy. This report has reflected that that service provision and engagement is already well co-ordinated throughout the Council and wider partners but needs to work harder to engage better with Traveller communities.
12. The TRG recognises the need for services and facilities are improved to empower Traveller communities, through joint working, participation and involvement and this is reflected through the excellent partnership working of the members of the TRG. The group understands the needs of Traveller communities and settled communities in line with our aim to create strong and resilient communities with residents that are living healthy, active lives. As a council, we need to become stronger in getting the workforce that has regular contact with traveller communities to get a better understand of the diversity in cultures in a bid to dispel stigma and prejudice and reduce inequality.
13. Although the TRG have made good progress with regard to the traveller strategy action plan, further is required to drive the strategy forward across the remaining 3 years of the strategy.

