

Report

Scrutiny Committee - 4 December 2006

Body:	Cabinet
Date:	13 th December 2006
Subject:	East Sussex County Traveller Strategy
Report Of:	Director of Housing, Health & Community Services
Ward(s)	All
Purpose	To consider and adopt the draft East Sussex Gypsy & Traveller Strategy.
Decision Type:	Key
Recommendation	Cabinet is recommended to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To adopt the draft East Sussex Gypsy & Traveller Strategy and Action Plan.
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1.0 Background

- 1.1 Gypsies and Travellers are ethnic groups recognised by the Race Relations Amendment Act. They have a right to equal access to services such as education, health and accommodation and to protection from discrimination and harassment.
- 1.2 Since October 2003, officers from the County, District and Borough Councils in East Sussex have been working in partnership to consider a number of Traveller related issues. These include the development of a County-wide Traveller Strategy that has been co-ordinated by the East Sussex Traveller Liaison Officer.
- 1.3 This Council contributes towards the cost of this post, which is based

at East Sussex County Council. The post holder is responsible for all traveller issues including the co-ordination and sharing of information and maintaining a database of traveller movements across the County.

2.0 Overview of the Strategy

2.1 A draft East Sussex Traveller Strategy (2006 – 2009) was adopted by East Sussex County Council Cabinet in August 2006 (attached at Appendix A).

2.2 The first part explains the background and context of the Strategy and includes the following key messages:

2.3 **The Vision** to provide an integrated local framework to promote community cohesion, to protect the rights and needs of both the settled and travelling communities and to creating and sustain strong community cohesion providing benefits for both the Traveller and the settled communities

Communication and consultation enabling and promoting participation, joint working and public advice and information

Cultural awareness of the history, traditions and ways of life of the different major groups of Gypsies and Travellers

Current provision of sites in Robertsbridge, Maresfield, Hailsham Polegate and Lewes

Unauthorised encampments and the need to provide adequate transit sites to ensure the needs and well being of both Travellers and the surrounding community are addressed

Health and education considerations and the interventions required to ensure equal access to services

2.4 Part 2, the Action Plan, is still evolving. The action plan will be overseen by the East Sussex Traveller Officers Group, on which Eastbourne is represented.

2.5 The Appendices include the key messages and proposals for future action. These include:

Legislative framework, including analysis of the Human Rights Act, relevant Housing and Planning law and the links to the LDF

Proposals for future development of new sites, including mapping of supply and needs

National and local policies, including various government guidance and the relevance of local homelessness strategies and other plans e.g. the Children and Young People's Plan

2.6 The appendix also includes an Action Plan that sets out the tasks required in order to achieve the strategic vision.

2.7 This includes targets to ensure:

- Clear leadership
- Effective joint working
- The provision of new Emergency Stopping Places within the county
- The future provision of permanent sites across the county, in line with recommendations of the countywide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment
- The submission of grant bids to fund the provision of new sites
- Effective ongoing assessment of site provision
- Effective ongoing management of sites
- Improving health and education provision for Travellers
- Positive influencing of the media
- Effective communication, consultation and advice
- Drawing on best practice from other areas

2.8 The County Gypsy and Traveller Forum has examined the initial drafts of the strategy prior to adoption of the final draft by the County Council Cabinet.

3.0 Implications and opportunities for Eastbourne

3.1 The draft strategy has significant importance for Eastbourne. It relates to the overall approach to providing services/support, ongoing work in respect of providing suitable accommodation within the County and the management of unauthorised encampments. This is a working document and provides a crucial strategic base on which East Sussex local authorities and other relevant agencies can build on to properly respond to the needs of the gypsy and travelling communities.

3.2 Under the Housing Act 2004 housing authorities are required to carry out an assessment of the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers. East Sussex District/Borough's and Brighton & Hove City Council completed an Accommodation Needs Assessment (ANA) in October 2006. The ANA indicates an unmet need across the sub regional area (East Sussex and Brighton & Hove) for transit and permanent site provision of an additional 80 pitches over the next five years.

3.3 The ANA provides an indication that there is a need for a small site in

Eastbourne consisting of no more than 8-10 pitches. Such provision will ensure that the predicted needs of Travellers are met on an appropriate and well managed site. It will also minimise the incidence of future unauthorised encampments by providing suitable alternative facilities.

3.4 The Government has made £10 million available within the south east region between 2006 - 2008 to provide local authorities with grants to fund 100% of the cost of providing Gypsy and Traveller sites.

3.5 Eastbourne is working in partnership with East Sussex County Council and the other local authorities within the county to consider how best to meet the needs identified. An important part of the bid process is to show proven need and strategic direction for the proposed sites. It is therefore important that the Traveller Strategy is adopted throughout the county to demonstrate not only need but also commitment to meet the needs of the community.

4.0 Consultation

4.1 The Gypsy and Traveller Forum have been fully involved in the preparation of this Strategy. The Forum is widely attended by officers from East Sussex Local Authorities, Health, Police, Members and members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 Financial implications arising out of the adoption of the Strategy will be fully considered as the action plan is further developed.

6.0 Other Implications - Environmental, Human Rights, Community Safety

6.1 The policy supports the aims of the Community Strategy in relation to encouraging an inclusive community.

6.2 The aim of the Strategy is also to ensure the protection of the environment whilst acknowledging the legal and human rights of Travellers.

7.0 Conclusion

7.1 Members are recommended to:

- a) To adopt the draft East Sussex Gypsy & Traveller Strategy and Action Plan.

Ian Fitzpatrick
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Background Papers:

Draft report of the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Gypsy and Traveller
Accommodation Needs Assessment

To inspect or obtain copies of background papers please refer to the contact
officer listed above.

2006 - December.4 - E.Sx G&T Strategy.doc