

Appendix 1

**Mr Alan McCarthy
Chief Executive
Brighton & Hove City Council
King's House
Grand Avenue
Hove
BN3 2LS**

1st August 2008

Dear Alan,

Request for call-in of Cabinet decision and scrutiny by Environment & Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

As you are aware, a decision was taken at the Cabinet meeting of 31st July to approve proposals for the provision of a permanent Gypsy and Travellers site on the former BMX site off Wilson Avenue in the East Brighton ward.

I formally request that this decision by the Cabinet is called in for scrutiny by the Environment & Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee for the following reasons:

1. Lack of prior consultation with local Councillors, residents and travellers.

The three Labour Councillors for East Brighton first learned about these proposals by reading the Argus newspaper and after being approached by local residents who had spoken with surveyors on the BMX site who confirmed that it was the Council's intention to build 14 permanent traveller's pitches on the site. East Brighton Councillors were only provided with information by Council officers regarding these proposals after Councilor Gill Mitchell made a formal complaint to you about the fact that we were being denied access to information. I do not blame Council officers as it was quite apparent from their embarrassment that Conservative members had instructed them not to provide the elected ward members with detailed information.

The Council has made no effort to consult with either local residents or travellers themselves on the specific issue of the suitability of permanent traveller's pitches on the former BMX site.

Crucially, the Council has failed to publish sufficiently detailed information stating how it has conducted a thorough and impartial evaluation of potential sites and eliminated others sites on merit in order to recommend the former BMX site.

2. Insufficient information provided to the Cabinet on which to take a decision.

I do not believe that Cabinet members were provided with sufficiently detailed information from which to make an informed and impartial decision. In particular, Cabinet members were provided with little information showing the proximity of the BMX site to local housing and the waste site and the site decontamination report was not published. These are crucial items of information which should have informed the decision.

It was apparent from a meeting I attended between my fellow East Brighton colleagues and Council officers that, in making the recommendation to Cabinet, no real thought had been given to the social impact of permanent traveller's pitches on the settled community, particularly in terms of long-term community cohesion. Cabinet members should have been presented with this point to consider and related questions such as the impact on resources, ie; what levels of involvement are expected from the Traveller Liaison Team and Sussex Police in the future. Would additional resources have to be

provided by the Council and stakeholders such as Sussex Police in order to ensure that the rights and safety of both travellers and the settled community will be ensured?

I do not believe that Cabinet members have been provided with sufficient information on the potential health risks to travellers of living on the site of a former dump permanently. In addition to the concerns regarding methane gas, as far as I can ascertain from the information available to the Cabinet, there has been no serious consideration, analysis or research done regarding the potential carcinogenic properties of the waste buried in the soil. The decontamination report was not presented to the meeting and is not in the public domain. I am very concerned that Cabinet has made a decision to endorse the BMX site without having seen any independent scientific evidence that definitively states that the soil does not have carcinogenic properties that could be detrimental to the health of travellers who receive long term exposure. In fact, the Council's own Core Strategy states that "*Sites on or near to significantly contaminated land, should be avoided*".

3. Mishandling of the process.

The timing of the process has been ineptly handled. In addition to the points made previously regarding lack of cooperation, this item was pulled from the agendas of two previous Cabinet meetings and a 'special' meeting called as close to the Summer break as possible. It was then decided to deny residents who would be directly affected by the recommendation with the opportunity to ask questions or present letters or petitions. Finally, the timing of this 'special' meeting was then moved with very late notice the usual start time for Cabinet meetings to one six hours earlier. The timing of the Cabinet meeting was changed so frequently as to effectively deny local residents the opportunity to attend.

I should be grateful if you would copy Councillors Gill Mitchell and Warren Morgan into your reply to my request as I will be on holiday from 4th to 8th August.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Craig Turton
Labour Member for East Brighton Ward