

Subject:	Traveller Commissioning Strategy: One Year On		
Date of Meeting:	8 October 2013		
Report of:	Executive Director of Environment, Development & Housing		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Andy Staniford	Tel: 29-3159
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The Traveller Commissioning Strategy 2012 and Action Plan were approved by Full Council on 22 March 2012.
- 1.2 The development of this strategy was shadowed by an Environment & Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Traveller Scrutiny Panel.
- 1.3 The Response to the recommendations of the Traveller Scrutiny committed the Council to producing an annual monitoring report for the relevant Member Committee and this is the first of those updates.
- 1.4 Progress has been highlighted in this report and the full monitoring update is attached as Appendix 1.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee notes the progress made, achievements and challenges in delivering the strategy (Appendix 1).

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The Traveller Commissioning Strategy 2012 and Action Plan were approved by Full Council on 22 March 2012.
- 3.2 In addition to reaffirming our commitment to the permanent Traveller site, our new strategy offers a fresh and co-ordinated partnership approach to addressing the key issues facing the Traveller and settled communities. Progress has included:
 - A new dedicated officer recruited at Horsdean to improve site management

- A new waste management contract approved to improve our response to site clearances
 - A Traveller Health Needs Assessment with key actions included in the NHS Operating Plan for 2013/14
 - Celebration of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Month in June with Traveller pupils attending local schools winning national awards
 - Increased take up of nursery provision by Traveller families
 - New joint Police and the Council working policies which have resulted in the tactical PIER plan (Prevention, Intelligence, Enforcement & Reassurance) to help tackle unauthorised encampments
- 3.3 The development of this strategy was shadowed by an Environment & Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Traveller Scrutiny Panel.
- 3.4 The Traveller Scrutiny Panel was chaired by Dr. Aidan McGarry, School of Applied Social Science, University of Brighton. The other panel members were Councillors Littman, Simson and Robins.
- 3.5 The panel held capacity building and evidence gathering sessions where it heard from 31 witnesses representing Council services, other public sector bodies such as the Police and NHS Sussex, the Community & Voluntary Sector, resident groups, politicians and representatives from other authorities. The panel also visited the Horsdean Transit site to talk to Travellers living in Brighton & Hove.
- 3.6 The panel's final report has highlighted that:
- 'The panel welcomed the draft Strategy because it:*
- *Represented a significant step forward in describing the needs of the Traveller community and determining which outcomes a Traveller Strategy for this city wished to achieve*
 - *Contained a comprehensive set of high level goals about meeting the needs of Travellers and the settled community*
 - *Had addressed both the needs of Travellers and the settled community in those goals*
 - *Had been based on a two stage consultation process'*
- 3.7 The Response to the recommendations of the Traveller Scrutiny Panel were presented at Environment & Sustainability Cabinet Member Meeting on 15 March 2012 and committed the Council to producing an annual monitoring report for the relevant Member Committee.
- Who we define as Travellers:
- 3.8 Travellers' is a collective term used to describe different groups who have a nomadic lifestyle or tradition/heritage of nomadism. Romany Travellers, English, Irish, Welsh and Scottish Travellers are recognised in law as ethnic groups and are identified as having a shared culture, language and beliefs. Romany Gypsies have been in England for over 600 years and Irish Travellers have a long history of travelling and living in this country.
- 3.9 The term 'Travellers' also covers some groups not currently recognised as ethnic groups including 'New Travellers' who are non-traditional travellers (most of whom originate from the settled community, although some children have been

born into New Traveller communities) and Travelling showpeople. It also covers those who have stopped travelling due to ill health old age or young children.

Van Dwellers:

- 3.10 Brighton & Hove also has a population locally termed as Van Dwellers. Van Dwellers are usually found living in their vehicles on the roadside or on unauthorised encampments and are generally not nomadic. Van Dwellers are not considered to meet the definition of a Traveller in any national policy as collectively they are not a recognised ethnic group nor are they considered New Travellers as they are effectively permanently resident in the city, such as through work or education. This distinction between Travellers and Van Dwellers is often not recognised by local people who experience lived-in vehicles parked outside their homes, often for many days, which can further inflame tensions against Travellers. As lived-in vehicles are an issue for the city, a separate protocol for van dwellers is planned.

Traveller Inequality:

- 3.11 The report 'Inequalities experienced by Gypsy and Traveller Communities: A Review' by the Equality & Human Rights Commission in 2009 shows that Traveller communities experience extensive inequalities, such as:
- Travellers die earlier than the rest of the population
 - They experience worse health, yet are less likely to receive effective, continuous healthcare
 - Children 's educational achievements are worse, and declining still further
 - Participation in secondary education is extremely low
 - Employment rates are low, and poverty high
 - Insecure lifestyles associated with repeated evictions can have a negative psychological impact upon children
 - There is an increasing problem of substance abuse among unemployed and disaffected young people
 - There are high suicide rates among the communities
 - Travellers who live in bricks and mortar housing can experience racist hostility from neighbours and isolation from their communities
 - There is a lack of access to culturally appropriate support services for people in the most vulnerable situations, such as women experiencing domestic violence
- 3.12 The EHRC report highlights that lack of suitable secure accommodation underpins many of the inequalities that Traveller communities experience.

Resident Concerns:

- 3.13 Responses to this consultation, resident complaints, recent public events and articles in the local press have highlighted a number of resident concerns which are almost exclusively focussed on unauthorised Traveller encampments in local communities, and include problems such as:
- the loss of public space
 - anti-social behaviour, crime and nuisance
 - rubbish and fly tipping
 - damage to the environment
 - cost of site clearance and legal action

4. Our Strategy, Progress and Challenges

- 4.1 In response to the needs of Traveller communities and concerns of local people, the Traveller Commissioning Strategy 2012 has been focussed on 4 key outcomes and has a vision of:

Balancing the needs of Traveller communities and the City's settled communities to reduce inequality and improve community relations

- 4.2 Our strategy has been divided into 4 main outcomes with a summary of our progress and challenges outlined below:

- Outcome 1: Improve site availability
- Outcome 2: Improve health, safety and wellbeing
- Outcome 3: Improve education outcomes
- Outcome 4: Improve community cohesion

Outcome 1: Improve site availability

- 4.3 An appropriate supply of properly managed pitches will help to reduce the level of unauthorised encampments which will not only reduce conflict and tension between communities but it will help Travellers access health and education services.
- 4.4 At the Council's Cabinet meeting in March 2012 Members endorsed Horsdean as the preferred location for the new permanent Traveller site. This new site, providing 12 permanent pitches, will be an extension of the existing transit site. Over the past months the Council has continued to work with the South Downs National Park Authority to take forward the planning application which has now been submitted. As the site falls within the National park it is important that the design of the site not only meets the needs of Travellers but does not spoil the natural beauty of landscape.
- 4.5 Overall there were 55 unauthorised encampments in 2012/13, an increase on 2011/12 although one reason for this is that we have been moving encampments on more quickly which leads to more encampments as groups fragment to other parts of the city. The last 3 years we have seen an increase in the number of encampments during the Spring and Autumn months with a decrease in Travellers visiting during the Summer and Winter months. A new waste contract helps to ensure refuse does not become a nuisance and that sites are effectively and swiftly cleared once.
- 4.6 A Site Warden has been appointed at the Horsdean Transit site. Their presence on the site has greatly improved the management and income collection, and has provided support for those residents on site and enabled access to other services.

Outcome 2: Improve health, safety and wellbeing

- 4.7 Travellers have a much poorer health and a significantly lower life expectancy than the general population. As with all sections of society, ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of the Traveller communities not only raises the quality of life for one of our most disadvantaged communities, it also reduces long terms costs public health costs.

- 4.8 As a result of the Traveller Commissioning Strategy the former Primary Care Trust commissioned research into the health needs of local Travellers. The resulting report informed the Clinical Commissioners Group (CCG) and City Council of priority areas for addressing Traveller needs and its findings are being incorporated into the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.
- 4.9 In addition the Brighton & Hove CCG Annual Operation Plan 2013/14 outlines the CCG's commitment to work with partners to implement the recommendations covering a range of service areas including improvements to:
- Outreach health services
 - GP services
 - Specialist health services
 - Communication and record keeping
 - Public and patient engagement
 - Improve ethnic monitoring
- 4.10 To support strategic coordination and improved outcomes for Gypsies and Travellers experiencing domestic violence the Community Safety Team held a partnership conference that brought together stakeholders from a range of agencies to raise awareness of the need for coordinated action as well as identify practical solutions. Following on from the conference, the development of the new Strategy to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls will incorporate actions to deliver a package of support for Travellers.

Outcome 3: Improve education outcomes

- 4.11 Nationally, Traveller children are the lowest achieving group in our schools. This has been and remains a long standing issue. We want to help embed the value of education throughout the family and make sure that children and young people from Travelling communities are able to access suitable education and training that enables them to attain educational standards that raises economic and employment opportunity.
- 4.12 Following an early years outreach play at the Horsdean transit site a number of families expressed an interest in nursery provision. The Traveller Education Early Years teacher arranged accompanied visits to One World Nursery and supported form filling. Staff received training to ensure successful inclusion in setting. Families who left Horsdean transit site have independently contacted the nursery on their return to city to re-admit children. It is hoped that families will continue to remain confident and independent participants in pre school provision.
- 4.13 Held in June, the Gypsy Roma Traveller History month was a joint initiative between the East Sussex Traveller Education Team in consortium with Brighton & Hove City Council and Friends, Families and Travellers. Highlights included:
- Presentation on "Traveller Roots around the City" by Janet Keet-Black, who is a Romany and local historian highlighting the evidence of long standing historical associations with the city.
 - Following on from last year's performance of "Crystal's Vardo" by Suzanna King presented by Friends, Families and Travellers at the Pavilion Theatre, the play has subsequently been performed in three schools and highlights the effect bullying can have on Traveller children and how raising cultural awareness can reduce discrimination.

- For the 5th consecutive year, Traveller pupils attending schools in the city were awarded prizes in the Gypsy Roma Traveller History month national schools competition. Seven local schools celebrated GRT History month and participated in the competition.

Outcome 4: Improve community cohesion

- 4.14 Both Travelling and settled communities would like to see an end to unauthorised encampments but unfortunately until there are more stopping places for Travellers then unauthorised encampments will continue to impact on the lives of both the Travelling and settled communities. However, effective community cohesion is about more than unauthorised encampments, it is about helping the city's diverse communities understand one another to get past the common myths, prejudices and stereotypes and to ensure that all those who have a stake in the city are able to get involved in decisions about the services that affect them. This outcome also seeks to reduce fear of crime, domestic and sexual violence, anti-social behaviour, racism, sexism and homophobia and ensure community cohesion is improved across all of our communities.
- 4.15 The council's Traveller Liaison Team continues to manage unauthorised encampments in line with government guidance and following the procedures outlined in the strategy. The Traveller Team are developing closer working ties with their colleagues in Waste Enforcement and the Team works closely with Traveller Education and Health professionals to improve services.
- 4.16 Following successes of Operation Monza last year, the number of officers involved has been increased. Regular meetings are held between the Police and the Council to develop joint working policies which has resulted in a tactical PIER plan (Prevention, Intelligence, Enforcement & Reassurance) being delivered in 2013.
- 4.17 In the last year no hate incidents have been directly reported by Travellers to the Community Safety Casework Team. Low levels of trust in the statutory sector are considered a barrier in reporting from Traveller communities. The Friends, Families and Travellers continue to be a reporting centre to increase access to reporting and support. Encouraging reporting from travellers via visits to the Horsdean site and linking in with the Friends, Families and Travellers reporting centre continues. We will look to implement joint actions from the Sussex Police plan to address under-reporting of hate incidents in future.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 5.1 In keeping with the Community Engagement Framework, consultation with Travellers, partner agencies and support groups (such as Friends, Families and Travellers) and the settled community has been essential to ensure that the Travellers Commissioning Strategy meets needs in an effective way.
- 5.2 In addition, the Traveller Scrutiny Panel held capacity building and evidence gathering sessions where it heard from 31 witnesses representing Council services, other public sector bodies such as the Police and NHS Sussex, the Community & Voluntary Sector, resident groups, politicians and representatives

from other authorities. The panel also visited the Horsdean Transit site to talk to Travellers living in Brighton & Hove.

6. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 6.1 The Council's 2013/14 net revenue budget for Travellers is £0.521m.

The costs arising through the implementation of the action plan associated with this strategy are being met through current resources of both the Council and partners and any potential budget pressures reported as part of the monthly budget monitoring process.

Finance Officer Consulted: Neil Smith

Date: 03/09/13

Legal Implications:

- 6.2 The Traveller Commissioning Strategy is informed by the Council's responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. The Strategy is aimed at reducing inequality and improving community cohesion.

In August 2013 the Government issued Guidance to Local Authorities entitled "Dealing with Unauthorised Encampments". This summarised the powers that are in place for authorities to use in cases of unauthorised encampments as well as offering advice on practical steps. Council officers will prepare a briefing for Members summarising the guidance and explaining how the Council's strategy aligns with it.

As this is a report for noting there are no other issues to be taken in to account.

Lawyer Consulted: Simon Court

Date: 29/08/13

Lawyer Consulted: Hilary Woodward

Date: 05/09/13

Lawyer Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert

Date: 19/09/13

Equalities Implications:

- 6.3 Travellers are an often marginalised group with a way of life that the authority seeks to protect whilst at the same time considering the needs of local residents. Gypsies, Roma and Travellers as a group suffer a high level of inequality, particularly around life expectancy, health and education issues, and suffer from discrimination and racial hatred.
- 6.4 Gypsies and Irish Travellers were recognised as distinct racial groups under the Race Relations Act 1976 and continue to be recognised as such under the Equality Act 2010.
- 6.5 The whole Strategy, its vision, outcomes and goals are focussed on reducing inequality and improving community cohesion between Travelling and settled communities. Alongside improving health and education outcomes specific goals are also focussed on inclusion, including:
- Goal 13: Improve further the awareness in schools about Traveller History and Culture
 - Goal 14: Increasing awareness of different cultures

- Goal 15: Involve Travellers in service design and delivery

6.6 An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out as part of the development of the Traveller Strategy to help shape our strategic outcomes, goals and actions.

Sustainability Implications:

6.7 The repeated evictions of travelling groups from the city's parks, historic and otherwise important sites only to see them again camp on a similar site is causing distress to travelling groups, local people and the environment.

6.8 In focussing protection measures on locations most unsuitable for encampments and allowing toleration in limited circumstances the report seeks to minimise the impact on residents and Travellers and also prevent further damage to the city's important open spaces.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

6.9 If we are successful in achieving Objective 1: Improve site availability this will have an immediate impact on community cohesion by minimising the unauthorised encampments that inflame community tensions.

6.10 To address crime, anti-social behaviour and nuisance the Strategy has been developed through close working with Sussex Police and the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership with related goals and actions in the strategy:

- Goal 9: Tackle domestic and sexual violence
- Goal 16: Effective management of unauthorised encampments
- Goal 18: Tackling crime, anti-social behaviour and nuisance
- Goal 19: Tackling racism, sexism and homophobia

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

6.11 With a national shortage of stopping places for Traveller and limited resources available in the city there are a number of risks associated with the Traveller strategy which will be closely monitored:

- **Obtaining planning permission for the permanent site** as the preferred location is in the South Downs National Park. Officers have been working closely with their counterparts and Members of the National Park Authority to ensure they approve of our methodology and approach to the site selection process.
- **It is not possible to prevent unauthorised encampments and determined incursion past security measures** however the strategy seeks to proactively minimise the potential for this and take robust action when it does occur. In addition, the recruitment of a dedicated manager for the Horsdean Transit site with ongoing occupancy reviews will help us make best use of our transit pitches.
- **Community cohesion may continue to be damaged if there are more high profile encampments.** A coordinated approach involving politicians, the local authority, the Police and the media will be critical in reassuring all communities and tackling nuisance. If Operation Monza is implemented by the Police it would receive additional support from local authority staff.
- **Toleration could cause environmental damage** to sites. Guidance for officers on toleration has been developed. Toleration will only be allowed in limited circumstances and carefully monitored.

- **A possible honey pot effect** with the permanent site attracting more Travellers to the area. This will be monitored closely with rigorous action on unauthorised encampments particularly as the permanent site will free up space on the transit site to help us address encampments. In addition, the allocations policy for the permanent site is likely to include criteria around local connection and welfare need.
- **The city's need for Traveller pitches has only been identified up to 2016** (which will be partially met by the provision of the permanent site with 12 pitches). It is possible that more pitches may be required beyond this date. Pitch needs will be reviewed during the lifetime of the strategy.
- **Van Dweller encampments** can increase tensions against Travellers. A separate protocol is being developed for van dwellers.

Public Health Implications:

- 6.12 Research has shown that Traveller health is far worse than the population as a whole, particularly around life expectancy, infant mortality and maternal mortality, mental health and suicide. These health inequalities are attributed to a combination of factors including lack of stable accommodation to promote effective service engagement, educational disadvantage, environmental hardship, social exclusion and cultural attitudes.
- 6.13 The Traveller Commissioning Strategy 2012 has been developed in partnership with Public Health and NHS Sussex (Brighton & Hove), which authored the chapter on Traveller Health & Wellbeing Needs and which has led to Outcome 2: Improve health, safety and wellbeing of the Strategy and its associated goals.
- 6.14 The success of our health objective is heavily dependent on Objective 1: Improve site availability which will help Travelling communities and professional build the trust and relationships essential for effective health, care and support services.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 6.15 Traveller inequality not only impacts on the quality of life of Travellers but has an impact on public services and the public purse. By improving site provision for Travellers we will improve service engagement which will in turn help to improve Traveller health, education and employment opportunities.
- 6.16 Effective action to minimise and manage unauthorised encampments is essential to support local residents, the Traveller community and to protect the city's open spaces. An ineffective approach is likely to exacerbate the number of encampments with additional associated community tensions and costs.
- 6.17 The Traveller Commissioning Strategy has not been developed in isolation but has been led by the Housing as part of a wider partnership throughout the Council that includes Public Health, the Learning & Partnerships, Communities & Equalities, City Infrastructure, Planning & Public Protection.
- 6.18 This partnership approach has also extended beyond the Council to include NHS Brighton & Hove, Sussex Police and the Education Welfare Service provided by East Sussex County Council.

7. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 7.1 The previous approach resulted in a cycle where travellers were moving from high profile site to high profile site as their preferred locations were no longer available. This resulted in increased costs and community tensions to the detriment of Travellers and the settled community alike.
- 7.2 An alternative approach to increase enforcement and eviction action merely accelerated the cycle of Travellers moving from high profile site to high profile site as moving the encampments quicker caused them to fragment into a larger number of smaller encampments with associated impacts on community cohesion and Traveller welfare.
- 7.3 To completely resolve the issues around unauthorised encampments and facilitate a stable pitch for all Travellers would require a national approach to site provision together with changes in the law which are beyond our remit.

8. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The Response to the recommendations of the Traveller Scrutiny Panel were presented at Environment & Sustainability Cabinet Member Meeting on 15 March 2012 and committed the Council to producing an annual monitoring report for the relevant Member Committee. Appendix 1 is the first annual monitoring report.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. One Year On: the Traveller Commissioning Strategy in Action

Documents in Members' Rooms:

None

Background Documents:

1. Traveller Commissioning Strategy 2012, Full Council, 22 March 2012
2. Response to the recommendations of the Environment & Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Traveller Scrutiny Panel shadowing the development of the new Traveller Commissioning Strategy 2012, Environment & Sustainability Cabinet Member Meeting, 15 March 2012