

Gypsy and Traveller Workshop

South Hams District Council

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Introduction

- Purpose of the workshop
- Aims
- Legal responsibilities
- Needs
- Terminology
- Outcomes

Description:

Gypsies and Travellers are very diverse groups of people who have a nomadic or semi nomadic heritage or a nomadic or semi nomadic lifestyle.

Can you name all the different groups which come under the umbrella term '**Gypsies and Travellers**'?

- Romany Gypsies
- Irish Travellers
- New Travellers
- Showmen
- Circus
- Roma
- Bargees
- Caravan Dwellers

Legal responsibilities

- Equality Act 2010: public sector equality duty
- Build positive relationships with and between local Gypsy and Traveller and settled communities and work effectively with them
- Understand Gypsy and Traveller cultures

- Crime and Disorder Act 1998: legal responsibility to work with other agencies to improve quality of life, create a safer living and working environment. Ensure effective partnership working between local authority and other related agencies to deliver services that improve health, education and well-being of Gypsy and Traveller communities.
- Understand high levels of social exclusion that Gypsies and Travellers experience

- Housing and Planning Act 2016: legal responsibility to provide accommodation: Addressing the accommodation needs of Gypsy/Travellers/Caravan dwellers in South Hams
- Understand existing provision, lack of provision and required provision of accommodation for this group.

Overview

Gypsy and Traveller/caravan dwellers vary in their needs

Some require permanent pitches for various reasons e.g. education, health but can travel for part of the year for economic purpose.

Others require transit pitches, those who travel into Devon during the travelling season:
April-October

What does/planning enforcement say?

- JLP context – DEV13
- Enforcement – Chris and Dave

Impact of Unauthorised Encampments

- Requirement on LAs and Police to manage tensions on all sides
- Pressure to take action
- High eviction costs – LAs and private landowners
- High clear up costs
- Negative impact on all our communities and primarily people

Impact of enforcement

- Cost to health and well being in terms of moving on. Move from one LA to another as limited provision in SH
- Education issues for children who are moved on
- Not a quick solution – process for notice and limitation equality act and reasonableness

What's Needed?

- Pitches; permanent and transit
- Interim solution: Negotiated stopping for highly mobile groups we see across the area in travelling season. Areas of land identified and used part of the year; working in partnership with County and all LAs across Devon to offer an alternative to those people turning up at unsuitable locations

Reality

- Gypsy Travellers make up less than 5% of the population in Devon
- Their health outcomes are very poor
- Similar to other communities; the few cause problems for the many
- Ultimately we need a clear protocol and process to promote to customers and communities

Housing Need

- Pitches both permanent and transit are needed
- Pitches are classed as affordable housing, occupants are required to pay rent and council tax and these can be claimed within the normal HB rules, pitches are eligible for the new homes bonus scheme
- Community Led Housing can also offer a way forward – more so in the South Hams due to the low pitch need identified in assessments

Accommodation surveys and assessments

- Gypsy, Travellers and caravan dwellers are members of your community
- Housing surveys need to include all needs to provide a true picture of need; Equality and Human Rights Commission Research Report 128. Sept 2019,
- Pitch provision reduces unauthorised encampments
- Update the needs assessment by opening up communication with those communities in your area. FORUM! Forum due to take place on 27th February.

Consultation

- ‘Strengthening Police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments’ (UEs)
- Criminalising the act of trespassing when setting up UEs
- Amend Police powers s61 and s62A, giving Police more powers to move people on quicker
- A power for Police to remove homes and vehicles

Possible outcomes from Consultation

- More stand off with Police, increasing community tension
- Doesn't address the root cause of unauthorised encampments
- People who have local ties, will be continually displaced.
- Impact on LAs budget and resource collectively

Reality check

- Not enough police to do the day job, will this be top of their priority list?
- Will enforcement just move the problem on to the next verge/carpark?
- Impact on temporary accommodation in terms of cost to LA and cost to Health & Wellbeing

Conclusion

- Engage with communities locally to assess the need
- Caravan dwellers and GTs who don't meet the definition still need to be assessed and their needs accounted for as part of that engagement
- 'Outside the box' thinking; Community Led initiatives be explored

Conclusion

- Interim solutions for highly mobile GTs who travel into area in the travelling season; negotiated stopping
- Any Questions?

Suggestions

- Have a clear work plan for officers - thoughts
- Create a clear message to communities
- Should a site be purchased – call for sites have ability to direct G/T/C dwellers to