

**EXTRACT FROM THE DRAFT MINUTES OF ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 7 MARCH 2012**

Present: Councillors Morgan (Chair); Sykes (Deputy Chair), Cobb, Gilbey, Hawtree, Janio, Jones and Littman

PART ONE**48 REPORT OF THE TRAVELLER STRATEGY SCRUTINY PANEL - FOR AGREEMENT**

- 48.1 Chair of the Scrutiny Panel Dr Aidan McGarry of Brighton University School of Applied Social Science, introduced the report of the Traveller Strategy Scrutiny Panel as set out in his Foreword. He particularly thanked Councillors Littman, Robins and Simson who had served on the Panel, also everyone who had provided evidence to the review, plus the Housing Strategy Team and the Scrutiny Team.
- 48.2 Dr McGarry said the Travellers Strategy 2012 was a significant step forward in balancing the needs of the settled and travelling communities.
- 48.3 Together with Karen Amsden Scrutiny Officer and Nick Hibberd Head of Housing and Social Inclusion, Dr McGarry answered questions.
- 48.4 On the role of the press, it was encouraging that recently there had been more positive reporting by the Argus on Traveller issues. The 'Planning Made Plain' Guide for Gypsies and Travellers from Clearwater Gypsies, was helpful as a basis to provide local advice to Travellers. It was pleasing that experience with Van Dwellers elsewhere such as in Bristol, was being investigated potentially for inclusion in the 2012/2013 protocol.
- 48.5 The Traveller lifestyle might be regarded by some people in the settled community as a romantic ideal, however travelling is in their blood and Travellers can suffer from living in bricks and mortar. Primary and Secondary Schools do work with Traveller groups, inviting speakers to talk about Traveller lifestyles; this raises awareness and helps to limit discrimination and bullying.
- 48.6 As regards benchmarking, local authorities could not be directly compared, especially between rural and urban areas. However some, such as Fenland and Bristol were being pro-active; in the latter case, costs had been shown to be significantly reduced over 5 years by listening to the local needs of local Travellers and the settled community.
- 48.7 On transient Travellers, Dr McGarry said short-term visitors (not only Travellers) without links to the area, would not necessarily have any commitment to fostering relations with others. Education was of paramount importance, as in Belfast where projects focussing on children were helping to overcome the effects of segregation.

- 48.8 Site selection was a separate process and not a part of the scrutiny review. However the Panel had heard some good ideas for criteria, for inclusion in the Strategy. At present a single site seemed more practicable.
- 48.9 Regarding the different roles of Traveller support and enforcement, (that in some areas such as East Sussex and West Sussex were carried out by separate teams) the Panel were impressed with the work of Brighton & Hove Traveller Liaison Team officers, who combined both aspects well sometimes under difficult circumstances.
- 48.10 Members discussed at length what both the settled community and Traveller community can do, to improve relations between Gypsies and Travellers and mainstream society. The Committee Chair Councillor Warren Morgan summarised this; that the Council has a key role in ensuring that barriers between the settled and Traveller communities are broken down.
- 48.11 The Head of Scrutiny Tom Hook pointed out that a detailed Action Plan (not reported here) would be attached to the Traveller Strategy.
- 48.12 Councillor Littman, a Panel Member, thanked Dr McGarry, fellow councillors and the 'extraordinary' officers for a very positive scrutiny which he hoped would continue in the new governance arrangements.
- 48.13 The Chair Councillor Warren Morgan, a Member of the constitution working group, said he was keen that Scrutiny Panels would be able to continue producing similar constructive work in future.
- 48.14 Councillor Morgan thanked Dr McGarry and the Panel for their positive work on this scrutiny review.

48.15 RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report be endorsed;
- (2) That the report be referred to Cabinet with the request that Cabinet enacts the recommendations;
- (3) That the key role of the Council in ensuring that barriers between the settled and Traveller communities are broken down, be noted; and
- (4) That the draft minutes of ECSOSC be reported to Cabinet.