

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 48

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Traveller Strategy Scrutiny Panel
Date of Meeting: 07 March 2012
Report of: The Strategic Director, Resources
Contact Officer: Name: Karen Amsden Tel: 29-1084
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Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 In July 2011 Cabinet agreed the Gypsy/Roma Action Plan for 2011/12. This plan included a commitment to review the 2008 Traveller Strategy – to be undertaken by the council's Housing Strategy team.
- 1.2 Separate requests for a Scrutiny Panel examining issues relating to council services and strategies for Travellers were also received from Cllr Geoffrey Theobald and Cllr Liz Wakefield. It was agreed with Cabinet that a Scrutiny Panel should be established to 'shadow' the process of devising a new Traveller Strategy, with the Panel taking evidence to support, but not duplicate, the development of the Strategy.
- 1.3 Throughout the Panel review process, scrutiny officers have liaised with officers from Housing Strategy to ensure that learning from the Panel process has been effectively and speedily communicated. This learning, plus the Panel's formal recommendations for the Strategy, are encapsulated in the attached report (**Appendix 1**). An informal version of these recommendations was shared with Housing Strategy in early February, in order to meet the deadline for consultation on the Strategy. Thus, all the Panel's recommendations have been communicated in a timely manner to those responsible for developing the Traveller Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 That members:

- (1) Endorse the attached report and its recommendations;
- (2) Agree to refer the report to Cabinet, requesting that Cabinet enacts the Panel recommendations.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 More information on Gypsies and Travellers is included in the Scrutiny Panel report (**Appendix 1**).

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 The Panel report is the result of an evidence-gathering process which has included representatives of the Traveller community, Traveller support groups, council officers, officers from East and West Sussex County Councils, officers from Fenland District Council, city MPs, the editor of the Argus, and local community groups.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

5.1 The financial implications of adopting the scrutiny panel's recommendations will be considered by the Council's Executive alongside the relevant budgets.

Legal Implications:

5.2 The Committee has the necessary power to agree the panel's recommendations. It then falls to the Executive and other bodies to whom the recommendations are directed to decide what action, if any, to take in response.

Lawyer Consulted: Simon Court, Senior Lawyer

Date: 29.02.12

Equalities Implications:

5.3 Traveller and Gypsy communities typically experience significant levels of discrimination, deprivation, health inequalities etc. An Equality Impact assessment has been undertaken as part of the development of

the Traveller Strategy, and the Scrutiny Panel report has been compiled after consultation with experts in Equalities issues.

Sustainability Implications:

5.4 The Scrutiny Panel report does not specifically addresses sustainability issues.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

5.5 The Scrutiny Panel report specifically addresses crime and disorder issues.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

5.6 The Traveller Strategy will be a key document, given the controversy created by Traveller-related issues, the costs associated with dealing with illegal encampments etc. The Scrutiny Panel report provides constructive, cross-party support to the development of this key strategy.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

5.7 The Traveller Strategy will aim to further key corporate objective, particularly in terms of the commitment to “tackle inequality”: ensuring that “children and young people have the best start in life”; that “vulnerable adults are supported to live healthy, independent lives”; that people are able to access “decent, affordable and healthy housing”; and that we build a “cohesive and safe society”.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. The Traveller Strategy Scrutiny Panel report

Documents in Members’ Rooms:

None

Background Documents:

None

