

OSC Update: Traveller Site Provision

Background

The Traveller Scrutiny Panel shadowed the development of the Traveller Commissioning Strategy which was approved in 2012. The panel was chaired by Dr Aidan McGarry from the School of Applied Social Science at the University of Brighton, and other panel members were Councillors Littman; Simson and Robins.

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. The Panel made 23 recommendations, many of which were incorporated into the final version of the Traveller Commissioning Strategy and Action Plan.

Previous OSC Updates

The last update on the implementation of the Traveller Commissioning went to OSC on 27th January 2014. At that meeting the OSC members were updated as to the latest position with regards delivery of the permanent Traveller site. They also expressed a view on the importance of keeping pitches open on the transit site. This note outlines the latest position with regards to both of those issues.

Permanent Traveller Site: Steps Undertaken To Date

- **March 2012:** Adoption of the Traveller Commissioning Strategy.
- **March 2012:** Selection of Horsdean as the preferred location for the permanent Traveller site.
- **June 2012:** Public consultation on the design and integration of the Horsdean site.
- **September 2013:** Submission of a planning application to South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA).
- **February 2013:** Meeting of SDNPA Planning Committee is minded to grant consent.

Permanent Traveller Site: Latest Position

Following the meeting of the SDNPA Planning Committee, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government had issued a direction to the National Park instructing them not to issue the planning consent while he considered whether or not to call the application in to determine it himself.

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We heard on 23rd June 2014 that the application will not be called in. The SDNPA has therefore now issued the city council with the planning decision notice. This therefore means that the city council is now able to implement the planning consent and build the permanent Traveller site, subject to meeting the planning conditions imposed on the consent.

Permanent Traveller Site: Next Steps

Now that the planning consent has been issued officers can progress the detailed design of the site, the discharge of planning conditions and the tendering of the build contract. Officers are now updating the project timetable in light of the recent granting of consent, but an indicative timetable would be to expect 6 months for detailed design and discharge of planning conditions, with then up to one year on site.

Officers have met a number of times with residents in the Patcham & Hollingbury Conservation Association (PACHA), who are concerned about protection of drinking water. SDNPA have requested that PACHA are consulted on the detailed drainage proposals prior to them being submitted for approval by both the SDNPA and the Environment Agency. This is on-going work and engagement with PACHA will continue.

Transit Site: Capacity and Next Steps

Horsdean transit remains restricted to 10 available pitches because of previously mentioned drainage issues. Although at limited capacity, the site has enabled the Police to use their powers under S62a of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 in the management of unauthorised encampments in the city. This requires the Travellers to take up a pitch at Horsdean or leave the city for a period of 3 months. As a result, all 10 pitches on the site are currently occupied.

Following the decision by the Government not to call in the planning application for the permanent site, the council will be drawing up comprehensive building plans for the project. These will include connecting the site to the mains sewerage system, which will resolve the drainage issues on the transit site and bring it back in to full use.