

REPORT TO CABINET

19.01.16

Cabinet Member: Councillors Ioan Thomas / Dafydd Meurig

Subject: Accommodation Needs Assessment of Gypsies and Travellers in Gwynedd and Ynys Môn

Contact Officer: Arwel Owen, Senior Housing Manager , Adults and Welfare Dept.

Decision sought

To approve the recommendations made in the Anglesey and Gwynedd Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Needs Assessment 2016 paying particular attention to recommendations made for Gwynedd which are included in the Recommendations and Implication table, 1-7 below.

Opinion of local member

The permanent site for Gypsy and Traveller is located within the Cabinet Members ward for Planning and any provision to extent the site or additional pitches, be they permanent or temporary, would be part of the planning process

Introduction

In accordance with Welsh Government guidelines state that the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers are identified, understood and addressed similarly to other groups within the Community.

The guidelines state that Local Authorities are required to carry out an assessment every 5 years due to the transient nature of this population.

The aim of the assessment is to identify the current housing need as well as the need arising in the next five years for:

- **Residential sites-** a permanent site which is provided by the local authority or private provision.

- **Temporary stopping sites**-sites where it is possible to relocate inappropriately located encampments on a temporary basis in Gwynedd and Ynys Môn (which includes the Snowdonia National Park.

By undertaking this study and complying with legislation, Gwynedd and Ynys Môn Council will utilise the information for consideration within the Local Development Plan- Gwynedd and Ynys Môn. Equally, it will assist the National Park with their review of their adopted Local Plan. Refer to Appendix A for a full copy of the Assessment.

Reasons for recommending the decision

Following completion of the study the Strategic Housing Unit and Joint Planning Policy Unit recommend that:

1. Safeguard existing residential provision in the Study Area;
2. Allocating an extension to the existing Gypsy Llandygai site in Bangor in the Joint Local Development Plan (JLDP) to meet the Gwynedd residential need.
3. That the Councils seek funding from the Welsh Government Gypsy & Traveller Site Grants to develop the identified residential sites.
4. Allocating a temporary stopping place in the Caernarfon area
5. On the premise that the majority of illegal encampments in the Bala and Criccieth area have been for 1 visit continue to apply the tolerated protocol for these type of visits in these areas.
6. That the councils commit funds towards facilitating temporary stopping places as identified within this study.
7. That the Project Steering Group continues to meet on a quarterly basis to ensure that ongoing monitoring will be maintained and to identify whether further residential or temporary stopping places should be delivered to meet any further identified need.
8. Project Steering group to develop a joint action plan including any outstanding issues from the 2013 Gypsy and Traveller

Accommodation Needs Assessment along with the recommendations identified in 2015 study.

Based on the above recommendations the Cabinet should consider the table below and the implications for the Council:

	RECOMMENDATION	IMPLICATION
1.	Safeguard existing residential provision in the Study Area	None; other than maintain the site within Departmental budget
2.	Allocating an extension to the existing Gypsy Llandygai site in Bangor in the Joint Local Development Plan (JLDP) to meet the Gwynedd residential need	Provision with the Joint Local Development Plan to identify sites which will then financial requirements (see recommendation 3)
3.	That the Councils seek funding from the Welsh Government Gypsy & Traveller Site Grants to develop the identified residential sites	Welsh Government has a grant provision; which offer 100% of the development cost on the premise that a site is identified. Our ability to implement will be conditional to receiving a grant contribution towards the scheme
4.	Allocating a temporary stopping place in the Caernarfon area	We are currently identifying areas and the matter is being discussed with both Cabinet members. 3 areas are currently being considered. It could mean formalising a historic stopping place or a new provision. The expectation is that we affirm a site whereby tolerated short stay (3 days) would be tolerated. This would assist us should we need to take legal action.
5.	Tolerate illegal encampments by following approved protocol	No implication, protocol in place to deal with illegal encampments and the provision of a temporary stopping place (recommendation 4) would offer a solution in such a case
6.	Commit funds towards facilitating temporary stopping place	No implication, included within Departmental budget
7.	Project Steering Group continues to meet and oversee the action plan (Recommendation 7 and 8)	No implication, resources from staff and Cabinet Members required to ensure that progress is monitored

Relevant considerations

It is expected by WG that each Council will respond to the need that has been identified.

Financial

The Council can make a financial application to WG for an extension to the current residential site at Llandygai which would cover the capital costs. The revenue costs would be part of the Housing Services budget. There is no financial support from WG for financing a temporary stopping site, current Department budget would need to cover this provision.

Equality Impact Assessment

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 an equality impact assessment has been carried out, which can be found in appendix B. This assessment highlights the possible impact and response which will be put in place. The assessment concludes the following possible impact:

Response positively to the General Duty of the Equality Act and the protected characteristics as the survey identifies the need for pitches in the next 5 years as identified by the respondents.

The assessment addresses these by identifying the need to increase the capacity of the permanent site and to create a temporary stopping which will provide facilities which will address the need identified.

Consultation

The Council has undertaken the consultation with Gypsy and Travellers which have been identified to ascertain their views. The report is based on their responses which were received via questionnaires. An equalities impact assessment is appended in Appendix B.

Next steps and timetable

Following approval by the Cabinet members the Assessment of Accommodation Needs for Gypsy and Travellers in Gwynedd and Ynys Môn it will be presented to Welsh Government by 26 February for approval.

The Gypsy and Traveller Steering Group will convene twice a year to implement the recommendations by means of an action plan.

Opinion of statutory officers

Chief Executives:

The report explains the need to undertake this review and the implications of the recommendations are highlighted in the report. I have nothing else to add.

Monitoring Officer:

There is a statutory duty on the Council to prepare a Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Needs Assessment within its area. The Assessment is subject to approval by Welsh Ministers. Also, the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 will place an obligation on the Council to satisfy the identified needs within the assessment. There is a need therefore to ensure that the findings of the Assessment are robust as there are legal obligations which follow from the Assessment.

In relation to the recommendations within the report to satisfy the recognised identified needs, specific processes will need to be followed for them to be achieved. Further clarity, and specific legal advice, is required when formulating guidance/policy in relation to temporary stopping places.

Head of Finance:

The report recommends expanding the present provision of the gypsy and travellers' site at Llandygai. As the report notes, it would be necessary to apply to the Welsh Government to fund the capital (100%) in order to expand the site. In recent years, there has been a proper procedure in the running of the site, with the residents paying rent and contributing to the costs of their electricity and water usage. If this continues, then it would be possible to cope with the additional running costs within the existing budget.

The report also states that a 'temporary stopping point' should be identified within the Caernarfon area. When gypsies and travellers settle in unauthorized sites, the costs involved can be high. For this reason, the service has been contributing over the years to an Unauthorized Sites Fund in order to cope with the costs of unauthorized sites as they arise. Since there has been little in recent years, by the end of 2015/16 it is likely that there will probably be £35k available in the fund. This fund can be made available to fund one-off costs when establishing a 'temporary stopping point'.

Appendixes

*Appendix A – Anglesey and Gwynedd Gypsy and Travellers
Accommodation needs Assessment 2016.
Appendix B- Equality Impact Assessment*