
TITLE: ASSET TRANSFER OF EARITH BRIDGE AND BURWELL TRAVELLER SITES

Committee: Asset Development Committee

Date: 27 March 2017

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[R232]

1.0 ISSUE

- 1.1 To consider the transfer of Earith Bridge and Burwell traveller site from Cambridgeshire County Council to the District Council.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 Members are requested to agree to the Council taking on 125 year leases of Earith and Burwell Traveller sites for an annual rent of £1.

3.0 BACKGROUND/OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Council manage three gypsy and traveller sites within the district;
Wentworth – owned by ECDC
Earith Bridge – owned by CCC
Burwell – owned by CCC
- 3.2 The statutory responsibility for Gypsy and Travellers rest with the District Councils, however the County Council owns a number of sites, which are managed by the district councils on an agency basis.
- 3.3 A Memorandum of Understanding relating to the ten County Council sites within Cambridgeshire was signed between the County Council and District Councils in 2000, relating to the management of the sites. This was in order to achieve a level of consistency and co-ordination in the management of the sites throughout Cambridgeshire.
- 3.4 During the interim period between submission of the application and approval the Burwell site has been temporarily shut due to the murder of a traveller near to the site on New Years Day 2015. Extensive damage has been carried out to the site, large amounts of rubbish have been dumped which has resulted in a vermin infestation. The county have agreed to pay for and arranged for the site to be cleared of rubbish. The Council has placed concrete blocks at the entrance.

3.5 There are a number of options available to the Council:

1. Continue to manage the sites for the County;
2. Agree to lease of the Burwell (closed) and Earith Sites from the County for £1.

The table below list the Pro's and Con's for each option

Option 1 – we continue to manage sites for County

Pro's	Con's
Still have responsibility for managing the sites and control over residents (Earith)	No control over future of these sites (especially Burwell), County Council could choose to put sites on open market
	Potential loss of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation if the County Council decided to close sites.
	County Council could offer to Parish Councils to develop as a community open space
	Problems with complying with identified present and future Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs
	We don't make any income from the sites.

Option 2 – Agree to lease Burwell and Earith from County

Pro's	Con's
Protecting the future of provision and full control of sites in our district	Income will be needed to cover maintenance of sites.
Potential for increased income (long term)	Sufficient resources to manage the sites
Potential access to funding for improvements to sites	Protection of Burwell site until decision made regarding future.
Explore opportunities to extend sites to fulfil future needs (increase income)	

4.0 ARGUMENTS/CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 There is a statutory requirement for local authorities to make provision for gypsy and traveller accommodation. The Cambridge Sub-Regional gypsy and traveller accommodation assessment identifies a need for an additional 38 gypsy and traveller pitches to be provided within East Cambridgeshire between 2011 and 2031. The loss of any traveller pitches already available will impact on the delivery of the allocation within the local plan.
- 4.2 The County Council Cabinet have agreed to lease the traveller sites, with local authorities being given the first opportunity to purchase.
- 4.3 At present the Council manage three traveller sites there are nine pitches available on Wentworth site, owned by East Cambridgeshire DC, 11 pitches at Earith with a potential to increase to 12 pitches and 9 pitches at the Burwell site.
- 4.4 The Burwell site is temporarily closed due to the site being abandoned and vandalised following the incident on New Years Day 2015 near to the site. The Council need to consider the options available to them to ensure that the present number of pitches is not reduced, as this would increase the pressure on the planning department when planning permission was requested for traveller pitches within the district.
- 4.5 The Council needs to protect the future of Burwell traveller site, until consideration has been given to alternative provision to replace it. Taking a long term lease (£1 annually) will provide the Council with an opportunity to consider what if any options are available. Any lease agreement the Council enter into with the County will have a clause which allows the Council to hand the site back without any financial penalties.
- 4.6 Earith Traveller Site currently brings in a revenue of approximately £49,150 per annum rent versus an average yearly maintenance figure of approximately £6,000. Therefore, to take the leases on would provide an approximate financial surplus of approximately £43,150 per annum to the Council.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 It will generate an additional £43,150 per annum to the Council.
- 5.2 It is recognised that a Traveller Liaison Officer will be required to manage and maintain the sites. This post is on the establishment but is currently vacant.
- 5.3 Recruitment for the Traveller Liaison Officer will be undertaken if these recommendations are approved.

5.4 A recommendation has been made to Regulatory & Support Services Committee to increase the rents at Earith from £75 per week to £85 per week.

5.5 Equality Impact Assessment (INRA) not required.

Background Documents

(List any background documents used in preparation of report not attached as appendices, or state 'none')

Email from Cambridge County Council confirming the peppercorn rent of £1

Location

Room
(Location: i.e. The Grange,) Ely

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