
TITLE: UNAUTHORISED ENCAMPMENT GYPSY AND TRAVELLER POLICY

Committee: Regulatory and Support Services Committee

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[Q162]

1.0 ISSUE

- 1.1 The Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure the health and wellbeing of unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller encampments. Currently there is no policy in place to deal with unauthorised encampments.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Members are requested to:

(i) Approve the Council's Unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller Policy

3.0 BACKGROUND/OPTIONS

- 3.1 Gypsies and Travellers have been part of the UK community since at least the 16th Century. Gypsy and Travelling communities in the UK have often been marginalised and have lived on the peripheries of society, without access to mainstream services and with a shortage of places to stay.
- 3.2 Changes in government legislation have necessitated a revision to policies concerning Gypsy and Travellers.
- 3.3 The Equality Act 2010 is the primary legislation which deals with discrimination and aims to achieve equal opportunities in the workplace and in wider society. The Act replaced previous anti-discrimination laws including the Race Relations Act 2000.
- 3.4 The Housing Act 2004 introduced the statutory duty to undertake Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessments, as well as changes to the definition of 'Gypsies and Travellers'.
- 3.5 The Council needs to manage unauthorised encampments in its District to ensure that accommodation needs and other welfare issues are addressed. Whilst unauthorised encampments are rare within East Cambridgeshire they do occur. Members will remember the recent Christian Event by a recent Land owner which was attended by 200 plus Travellers.

- 3.6 Housing Officers have also been notified of individual caravans camped in fields and/or on the side of the road. In both cases the Council has a statutory responsibility to ensure that the health, welfare and needs of the Travellers are met alongside allaying any concerns from residents.
- 3.7 This policy sets out how Officers would deal with unauthorised encampments on Council and County Council land. The policy provides clear guidelines on the Councils' position including its relationship with key voluntary and statutory partners and residents situated in or near the unauthorised encampment whilst ensuring that the needs of the travelling community are met, and that they have proper access to services.
- 3.8 The policy will ensure that Officers are aware of the procedure to follow so that any illegal encampments can be dealt with swiftly and efficiently, including taking legal action where appropriate.

4.0 ARGUMENTS/CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The Council needs to fulfil its statutory requirements to Travellers who wish to live within the District even if that is for a temporary period. It is therefore prudent that the Council adopts a clear policy framework which Officers can work within to deal with unauthorised encampments.
- 4.2 This Policy follows the controlled path Officers took at the recent Witchford Christian event. As Members will know the co ordination and action taken by Officers at East Cambridgeshire District Council was widely applauded.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 There are no financial implications
- 5.2 Equality Impact Assessment (INRA) not required

6.0 APPENDICES

- 6.1 Appendix 1 – Draft Gypsy and Traveller Unauthorised Encampments Policy

Background Documents

Draft Gypsy and Traveller
Unauthorised
Encampments Policy

Location

Room 102

Contact Officer

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