

**STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS**

**PROFORMA**

Cabinet Meeting .....25th October 2007

1. Title of Item/Report

Travellers Transit Site - Site Selection

2. Record of the Decision

Members were reminded that on 6 October 2005 Cabinet made the policy decision to establish a travellers transit site. This decision was based on the availability of grant funding, a marked increase in traveller activity within the Borough, and the costs to the Council of managing without dedicated facilities.

Cabinet noted that records of the numbers of unauthorised traveller sites on Council land dealt with by the Council's Security Services team showed a continued need for an official transit site, i.e.

2004/05 - 56

2005/06 - 48

2006/07 - 11

2007/08 to end of September - 12 (i.e. half year only)

It was considered that the provision of a purpose built site would have the following advantages:

- improvement in the health and welfare of travellers (including provision of proper sanitation).
- a substantial reduction in the impact of unauthorised sites on permanent residents.
- a reduction in the costs of enforcement action and cleaning up after fly tipping following unauthorised use of Council land.
- a substantial reduction in the impact of unauthorised sites on local businesses and other non-Council landowners.

It was noted that the Council was required to carry out a Gypsy and Traveller Assessment (GTAA details of which were provided to Members. The sub-regional study for the Tees Valley had drawn on local evidence, including the numbers set out above, and it was very unlikely that it would not recommend an increase in transit site provision.

The availability of proper transit provision would considerably strengthen

the Council's scope for action in its role as planning authority. An assessment of the current situation was provided to Members. Cabinet was informed that the Government had invited bids against a new round of the Gypsy and Traveller Site Grant by 31 October 2007, and a bid was being prepared, based on a possible site at Belasis Avenue / Leven Street, Haverton Hill which was in close proximity to the site identified as the leading option in the October 2005 Cabinet Report. A planning application for this site was submitted in August 2007, based on an earlier version of the scheme, but was subsequently withdrawn following a meeting with representatives of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) who suggested a number of changes to the proposed approach, primarily:

- an upgrade from the provision of communal amenities (toilets and showers) to include provision for each pitch;
- a subsequent reduction in the number of pitches (now planned as twelve);
- a new layout for vehicle entry and exit, to allow for more effective site control
- a significant increase in the overall budget, based on DCLG expectations of average site costs.

Work would now take place to revise the scheme and submit the bid. To assist in this it was suggested that Executive Scrutiny Committee be requested to include an additional piece of scrutiny work within the Scrutiny Work Programme to advise Cabinet on a preferred site by 14 February 2008.

Cabinet supported this process and suggested that, as far as possible, the scrutiny Committee/working group should be politically and geographically representative. It was also suggested that the review should take account of the Terms of Reference described in the report and also receive input from the Area Partnership Boards. Cabinet agreed that it was important that any site identified was sustainable.

Members noted that the application for planning permission would be put on hold. If a new preferred site was identified as a result of the proposed process, then discussion would take place with DCLG about the scope for switching any grant approved to the new preferred site. It was not anticipated that this would prove to be a stumbling block, because the DCLG main interests were in securing provision, quality of facilities and overall cost, rather than in the choice of site, which was a matter for local determination.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive Scrutiny Committee be requested to include an additional piece of scrutiny work within the Scrutiny Work

Programme to advise on the preferred site for a travellers transit site, in accordance with the terms of reference set out in the report and taking account of the comments made by Cabinet.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To establish as broad a consensus as possible about the preferred site.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

None

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

By no later than midnight on Friday 2nd November 2007

Proper Officer  
29 October 2007