

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES of A meeting of the Gypsy and Traveller Advisory Board held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 2 September 2008.

PRESENT: Mrs A D Allen (Chairman), Mr R B Burgess, Mr M J Fittock, Mr M J Harrison, Mr I T N Jones, DL, Mr S J G Koowaree and Mr F Wood-Brignall

ALSO PRESENT: Mr M J Angell, Lead Member for Adult Social Services

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr W Forrester (Head of Gypsy & Traveller Unit), Miss C Highwood (Director - Resources), Ms J Robson (Head of Language & Traveller Achievement Service), Mr A Casson (Operations Manager) and Mrs C Mellors (Advisor Refugee & Traveller Achievement)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Membership –
(Item. 1)

The Board noted that Mr M J Harrison had replaced Mr J B O Fullarton.

2. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman
(Item. 3)

Election of Chairman

Mr R B Burgess proposed and Mr F Wood-Brignall seconded that Mrs A D Allen be appointed Chairman, carried unanimously.

(Mrs Allen there upon took the Chair)

Election of Vice-Chairman

Mrs A D Allen proposed and Mr SJ Koowaree seconded that Mr A H Bowles be elected Vice Chairman, carried unanimously .

3. Minutes - 22 April 2008
(Item. 5)

- (1) RESOLVED that the Minutes held on 22 April 2008 were correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.
- (2) Mrs Allen asked if any further information or updates had been produced for paragraph **2, 4b** of the minutes. Mr Forrester said that the issue of security of tenure would be covered within this meeting however a further consultation paper had not yet been produced by Government.

- (3) Mrs Allen asked if there was further information on paragraph **3, section 4** of the minutes regarding the progress of the introduction of a Gypsy and Traveller Health Passport. Mr Forrester said that this issue was being looked at by NHS but he was not aware of any further progress.

4. Update: National Strategies: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Achievement Programme
(Item. 6)

Report by Managing Director (Children, Families & Education)

(1) This report updated Members on the National Strategies of the Gypsy Roma and Traveller Achievement Programme and Kent Local Authorities contributions as a pilot authority.

(2) Jenny Robson said that the County Council had joined in the second year of the pilot project and was working in collaboration to support five targeted schools. It was stressed that the aim of the programme was to improve the quality of provision and rates of attendance, reduce exclusions and raise attainment, for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children.

(3) During discussion Members praised the content of the report and the achievements that had been made, especially in the rates of attendance.

(4) Mrs Allen suggested that the report should be added as a subject on the Head Teachers Conference and Jenny Robson said she would follow up opportunities for dissemination.

(5) Following further discussion, the Advisory Board:

- (i) noted the progress made by the pilot Schools
- (ii) noted that a further report on the pilot of the Gypsy Roma and Traveller Achievement Programme would be submitted at the end of the academic year 2008/09

5. Update: Gypsy Roma and Traveller History Month 2008
(Item. 7)

Report by Managing Director (Children, Families & Education)

(Carol Mellors was present for his item)

(1) This report updated the Board on the activities that had taken place in Kent to celebrate Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month (GRTHM) in January 2008.

(2) Carol Mellors explained the aims of the GRTHM were to:

- Explain the history and culture of the communities

- To challenge myths and break down barriers
- To celebrate the richness that these communities contribute to everyday life

(3) The emphasis on the month was led by the local community, and Jake Bower, a Gypsy Journalist had co-orientated the planning and promotion of the month within the South East.

(4) A number of activities had taken place within Kent Schools and KCC Libraries & Archives. Hawkhurst Film Club had promoted a film called 'Kino' and a Magazine was designed and funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

(5) Mrs Allen asked if once the Library stands had been finished with, whether these could be made available to schools as a resource. Mr Fittock suggested that if appropriate the film 'Kino' be shown during a promotion week on Kent TV. It was agreed both these suggestions would be followed up.

(6) After further discussions, the Board noted the report and the programme for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month 2009.

6. Regional Assembly Additional Pitch Allocations 2006-16 (Item. 8)

Report by Mr O Mills, Managing Director, Kent Adult Social Service

(1) This report brought the Board up to date with the Regional Assembly Autumn 2008 consultation on the new pitch allocations for inclusion in the South East Plan.

(2) Mr Forrester explained that the reasons for the public consultation were to seek responses on specific options. The report produced for this meeting only referred to option two, as the other fell outside the remit, however Mr Forrester advised the Board of the additional:

- Planning considering
- How will it be different if needs are met fairly

(3) Mr Forrester said it was vital that Kent and Medway authorities worked closely together in order to identify the need for sites, work up proposals for public sites, as well as manage unauthorised encampments and unauthorised developments in the interim.

(4) Mr Angell said he was concerned that the figures in the report were not sufficiently clear and requested further information on the location of the existing pitches.

(5) Mr Forrester said that an additional column would be added to the appendix on the existing permitted provisions and where the sites were located. He said the figures provided by the County Council did in fact go further than what the Region Assembly Board required.

(6) After further discussion, the Board noted the contents of the report and endorsed the approach. The Board noted a further report would be submitted to next meeting.

7. Security of Tenure on Public Traveller Sites
(Item. 9)

Report by Mr O Mills, Managing Director, Kent Adult Social Service

(1) This report briefed the Board on proposed new legislation, the plans for consultation on its details, and the impact for Kent Gypsies and Travellers.

(2) Mr Forrester said that the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 had recently received Royal Assent and publication of a further consultation was expected specifically on the issues around succession to sites on death and the rights to assign pitches to others. In practice, on public sites, once the Act had been brought into force it would affect all new agreements. A response to the consultation paper would be prepared and a copy circulated to members of the Board.

(3) In response to a question about the waiting list figures which had recently increased, Mr Forrester said he would circulate the detail of these figures to Members once they had been collated.

(4) Following further discussions the Board noted the contents of the report.