

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 Thursday, 11 February 2010.

PRESENT: Mrs A D Allen, Mr A H T Bowles, Mr A D Crowther and Mrs J Whittle.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr W Forrester (Head of Gypsy & Traveller Unit), Mr G Franklin (Travellers Engagement & Operations Manager), Mr G Mills (Democratic Services Manager (Executive)) Democratic Services Officer and Mr A Ballard (Democratic Services Officer).

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Introduction

Mrs Allen chaired the meeting in her capacity as Vice-Chairman due to the adverse weather conditions which resulted in a number of Members not being able to attend the meeting.

2. Minutes

(Item. 3)

Subject to paragraph 4 (3) being changed to read the Kent Housing Group rather than the Countywide Chief Housing Group, the minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2009 were agreed and signed as a true record.

3. Matters Arising

(1) Mr B Forrester confirmed that under Item 3 of the minutes, Security of Tenure, that Mr Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services had contacted the Relevant Minister within the Communities and Local Government Department and had received a letter which indicated some support for a national recommended Model Pitch Agreement for local authorities to be devised. Due to pressure with Parliamentary time however the law could not be brought into force before April resulting in a delay until at least after the General Election.

(2) Mr Forrester would arrange for a copy of the letter to be circulated to Members of the Advisory Board.

4. Update: Access and Achievement for Gypsy Roma & Traveller Children & Young People

(Item. 4 - Report by Martin Baker, Strategic Director for Schools, Colleges and Settings and Jenny Robson, Head of Service, Minority Communities Achievement Service)

1) This report updated members on progress in achievement of Gypsy Roma and Traveller children and young people and the actions planned to narrow the gap in outcomes in 2010-11.

(2) Due to adverse weather conditions, Mrs J Robson was unable to be present at the meeting, however Members wanted to place on record their thanks for submitting such a comprehensive report.

(3) Mrs Whittle said she had recently been speaking to Gypsy and Traveller children on how they had kept engaged within education in their local community and volunteered to arrange for some of these students to be invited to a future meeting to discuss their views.

(4) The Board Agreed to:

(a) Note the action already taken to address the attainment gap between Gypsy Roma and Traveller children and all Kent children.

(b) Receive a further report on the outcomes from Key Stage 2 and 4 assessments in 2010 at a future meeting of the Board.

(c) Receive a further report at a future meeting relating to wellbeing of Gypsy Roma and Traveller children including the outcomes of the Children and Young Peoples' Survey 2009.

5. Rents for KCC-run sites 2010/11

(Item. 5 - Report by Gary Franklin, Traveller Engagement and Operations Manager Gypsy and Traveller Unit)

(1) Mr G Franklin introduced this report and detailed the proposed increases in site rents from for April 2010. He made special reference to the sites at Barnfield Park and Polhill, both within Sevenoaks district and asked the Board to note the proposed increase in the rents to bring them more in line with the charges levied on the other KCC managed sites.

(3) The Board **AGREED** that the new rents detailed in the report be introduced from 1 April 2010 and that Licensees are advised of the increases with the required 28 days notice in advance of that date, and that the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services be advised accordingly so that he can take these views into account when he takes his decision on this matter.

6. Proposed Kent and Medway Gypsy and Traveller Forum

(Item. 6- Report by Bill Forrester, Head of Gypsy Unit)

(1) Mr Forrester presented a report on the proposal to establish a Gypsy and Traveller Forum for Kent, run by members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities.

(2) Mr Mills reported via Mr Angell saying that he very much welcomed this report and was pleased to see this coming forward for decision.

(3) During the course of discussion, concerns were raised on how this would be publicised in order not to discriminate against or in favour of one sector of society. However it was felt this Forum could potentially help look at ways to improve engagement with the Gypsy and Traveller community and that work could be linked in with ways around education achievement and discussed in item 4 of the Agenda.

(5) Resolved that:-

- (a) the recommendation to support this initiative be endorsed and advised the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services accordingly
- (b) a further report be submitted to the Gypsy & Traveller Advisory Board on 13 July 2010
- (c) Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services be advised that the Board supports this initiative.

7. Contract for Management of Maidstone Borough Council's Council Sites

(Item. 7- Report by Bill Forrester, Head of Gypsy Unit)

(1) This report discussed the transfer of the management of Maidstone Borough Council's caravan sites for Gypsies and Travellers to the KCC Gypsy and Traveller Unit.

(2) Mr Franklin outlined the benefit of the Gypsy and Traveller Unit taking a 3 year contract as it would provide high quality management at a lower cost. Also it was felt that KCC could provide more flexible staffing arrangements with Maidstone Borough Council still being responsible for any future risks.

(3) Resolved:

- (a) the recommendation to support this transfer, likely to take effect from early April 2010 be endorsed and;
- (b) to advise the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services to be advised accordingly so that he can take this into account when taking a decision on this matter.