

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES of a meeting of the Gypsy and Traveller Advisory Board held in the Medway Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 19 July 2011.

PRESENT: Mr J D Kirby (Chairman), Mrs A D Allen, Mr S J G Koowaree
Mrs C J Waters

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr W Forrester (Head of Gypsy & Traveller Unit), Mrs L Simpson (Advisor Refugee & Traveller Achievement, Mid Kent), Jeffery (Traveller Engagement and Operations Manager), Mr G Mills (Democratic Services Manager (Executive), Andrew Swan (Democratic Services)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Minutes

(Item. 4)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2010 are correctly recorded, and that they be signed by the Chairman.

2. Affordable Homes Programme, including progress reports on site projects *(Item. 5) Report by Corporate Director, Enterprise and Environment*

(1) Mr Forrester introduced this report detailing three initiatives under the Affordable Homes Programme in Swale, Maidstone, and Tonbridge & Malling.

(2) Discussion was focused on the new Coldharbour site in Tonbridge & Malling, with Board members encouraged by the fact that there appears to be little local opposition to expansion of the existing site. Mr Forrester explained that there was already a good relationship between local residents and those families currently on the Coldharbour site, and that KCC had worked closely with the District Council, and had involved the local community in the planning process, before the current site had opened. Mr Forrester advised the Board that the current site residents have raised concerns about new people coming onto the site but he felt these concerns could be addressed...

(3) During the course of discussion members of the Board asked a number of questions to which officers responded accordingly. In particular Ms Jeffery explained the process for the allocation of pitches which was she said similar to the allocation process for social housing.

(4) The Board AGREED to endorse and support the actions being taken to secure successful new site accommodation, as described in the report.

3. KCC's response to the current Traveller Planning Consultation by CLG

(Item. 6) Report by Corporate Director, Enterprise and Environment

(1) Mr Forrester introduced this report which provided background and recommended a proposed response by KCC to the DCLG's consultation on proposed policy changes relating to planning for traveller sites.

(2) The DCLG's main proposals included a greater emphasis on local assessment of needs, and the requirement for planning authorities to have a five year land supply for traveller pitches.

(3) During the course of discussion members raised a number of points of detail to which officers responded accordingly. In particular it was said the consultation did not appear to address the issue of transit sites and this was something Mr Forrester said he would raise with the DCLG

(4) The Board AGREED to endorse the proposed KCC response to the DCLG consultation as detailed in the report.

4. Minority Communities Achievement Service - Update

(Item. 7) Report by Alex Gamby, Head of Learners with Additional Needs

(1) Mrs Simpson introduced this report which provided an update on a range of important issues impacting on MCAS. She highlighted in particular a consultation currently being undertaken regarding proposals to delegate funding to schools for a range of services and responsibilities which are currently funded centrally from the government grant for schools and pupil services (the Dedicated Schools Grant). For each of these services there were outline proposals for buy-back options, with MCAS offering a range of prescribed packages of services for schools to consider 'buying back'.

(2) Mrs Simpson advised that, at this point in time, the future of MCAS remained uncertain with no specific financial savings currently identified for the service.

(3) Following further discussion The Board noted the report, and additionally AGREED that it should be passed to the relevant Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee(s) so they could be aware of the wide range of activities and actions being undertaken by MCAS, and of the implications of the proposals currently under consultation in terms of resource for supporting GRT (Gypsy Roma Travellers) young people no longer being 'ring-fenced'.