

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, 24 November 2011.

PRESENT: Mr J D Kirby (Chairman), Mrs A D Allen, Mr M J Angell, Mr S J G Koowaree, Mrs C J Waters and Mr P J Homewood (Substitute)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr W Forrester (Head of Gypsy & Traveller Unit), Mrs L Simpson (Acting Manager, Minority Communities Achievement Service) and Mr G Mills (Democratic Services)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

5. Minutes

(Item. 4)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2011 are correctly recorded, and that they be signed by the Chairman.

6. Allocations Policy for Gypsy and Traveller Site Pitches managed by KCC

(Item. 5) Report by Corporate Director, Enterprise and Environment

(1) Mr Forrester introduced this report recommending proposed updates to the County Council's Allocation Policy for gypsy and traveller site pitches. Appended to the report were the draft revised policy, Waiting List Guidance, and allocation process flow chart. Mr Forrester advised the Board that an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was nearing completion.

(2) During the course of discussion members of the Board asked a number of questions to which officers responded accordingly. Mr Forrester explained to Board members that, although the County Council is not a housing authority, KCC holds the freehold to a number of sites, and also manages several sites for district/borough councils. In relation to the requirement for a minimum of 12 months residency in the local area, Mr Forrester explained that to require any greater length of residency would make it very difficult for many travellers to meet the residency requirement.

(3) The Board AGREED to recommend to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste their support for a three month consultation on the proposed new policy, to commence on 5 January 2012.

7. Provision of Public Traveller Sites in Kent

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

(1) Mr Forrester introduced this report which reviews current and planned public site provision in Kent and Medway.

(2) During the course of discussions members of the Board asked a number of questions to which officers responded appropriately.

(3) The Board noted the report, and AGREED to endorse the efforts detailed to achieve further public site provision.

8. Rents on KCC Traveller Sites from April 2012

(Item. 7) Report by Corporate Director, Enterprise and Environment

(1) Mr Forrester introduced this report which detailed a new process for setting up rents under the Mobile Homes Act 1983, and proposed rents for County Council managed sites from April 2012.

(2) The Board AGREED to endorse the new proposed rents being applied from 1 April 2012, and that pitch occupiers should be advised of the proposed increases with the required 28 days notice in accordance with the Mobile Homes Act 1983.

9. Minority Communities Achievement Service - Update

(Item. 8) Report by Alex Gamby, Head of Advocacy and Entitlement, Education, Learning and Skills Directorate

(1) Mrs Simpson introduced this report which provided an update on issues impacting on the Minority Communities Achievement Service (MCAS). This included a summary of the response by schools to a County Council consultation setting out options for the delegation to schools of funding for services currently provided from the Dedicated School Grant. On the basis of feedback received from schools, KCC Cabinet had confirmed that funding for MCAS would be delegated to schools with the option of buy back from KCC through Edukent.

(2) During the course of discussion members of the Board asked a number of questions to which officers responded accordingly. Board members were particularly concerned about the relatively low level of response to the consultation, and of schools currently indicating that they would propose to buy back from KCC. Mrs Simpson advised that schools had until 16 December 2011 to confirm which services they intended to buy back, and that this option was also available to Academies.

(3) Mr Angell recommended that information about delegation of funding should be cascaded to the Local Children's Trust Boards, which include local Head Teachers.

(4) The Board AGREED to note the content of this report.