

By: Mike Austerberry, Corporate Director, Enterprise and Environment
To: Gypsy and Traveller Advisory Board – 24 November 2011
Subject: **ALLOCATIONS POLICY FOR GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITE PITCHES MANAGED BY KCC**
Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: An item recommending a consultation proposal for the update of the KCC Allocations Policy, which decides which applicants are offered pitches on Traveller sites managed by KCC.

Background

1. The KCC Gypsy and Traveller Unit (until 2006 called the Gypsy Unit) began to manage sites, and allocate pitches, in 1993.
2. In 1996, an allocation policy was developed specifically for the new pitches on the Barnfield Park site in Ash, Sevenoaks, where there was a great deal of competition for the available pitches and the possibility of legal challenge. The allocation policy was adopted for all the sites that KCC managed.
3. Since 1997, practice on allocations has been progressively improved, including adopting the best practices of housing authorities and housing associations in allocating housing, and requesting more detailed information and evidence from applicants.

Reason for a new policy

4. With the prospect of new council sites on the horizon, and the need not only, as now, to cater fairly for all within Gypsy and Traveller communities, but also to be seen to do so, it seems timely to review the current policy, consult on the proposed new policy, and discuss the issues which arise.
5. The draft policy (Appendix A) has now been completed and reflects a more balanced approach to allocations to Kent County Council's owned or managed residential Gypsy and Traveller Sites.
6. We have also created a draft waiting list guidance information pack (Appendix B) that shows how the system works in an easy to read format. A copy of each is attached to this report.

Features of new policy

7. The draft policy is very much in line with social housing allocation policies in having a points system. Each application is awarded points based on the information supplied by the applicant(s).

8. Points are awarded for particular personal circumstances, including health and social care needs. These are detailed in Appendix A to this item. The balance of points is designed to ensure that those with greatest needs should be highest on the list.

9. In addition, the proposed new policy reflects the need to cater for those who rent or buy land and move to it, without any planning consent, and claim that there is no other Traveller pitch accommodation they can occupy. The new policy proposes, tentatively, that those who do so, at least where the planning policies for the land are very restrictive, should be added to the waiting-list for the relevant area, and may be offered pitches when they become vacant, even if they have not applied to be on the waiting-list. Legal advice is being sought on this proposal currently.

10. An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared for the proposed new policy, and is attached at Appendix D.

Recommendation

11. That the Board recommend to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways & Waste support for a three month consultation on the proposed new policy, to begin on 5 January 2012.

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Background papers: as below only.

Appendices:

A: Draft new Allocations Policy

B: Draft waiting list guidance information pack

C: Flow chart for waiting-list applications