

Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

(Via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

9 February 2022

Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman

Vice Chairperson: Councillor S.E.Freeguard

Councillors: N.T.Hunt, C.James, S.A.Knoyle, R.Mizen, S.Paddison, L.M.Purcell, S.H.Reynolds, R.L.Taylor, A.N.Woolcock and W.F.Griffiths

Officers In Attendance K.Jones, A.Jarrett, A.Thomas, N.Pearce, C.Griffiths, H.Jones, L.Beynon, J.Woodman-Ralph and C.Plowman

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors M.Harvey, D.Jones, L.Jones, E.V.Latham, A.R.Lockyer, P.A.Rees and P.D.Richards

1. Pre-decision Scrutiny

The Committee scrutinised the following Cabinet item:

Housing (Wales) Act 2014 – Consideration of the Neath Port Talbot Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment

Members were provided with a report seeking to agree the findings of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) (2022) and authorise the submission of the GTAA Report to the Welsh Ministers for approval.

It was explained that part 3 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 placed a duty on Local Authorities to undertake a new GTAA every five years; where the assessment identified a need for mobile home pitches, the Council would need to make provision to address the identified need.

Officers highlighted that the study was undertaken in-house, using Welsh Government guidance; colleagues from various services were involved in producing the GTAA, including Social Services, Housing, Planning Policy, Estates, Vulnerable Learner Services and Local

Area Coordinators. It was noted that the study identified that there was no need for pitches in the next five years (2021 to 2026), however there was a need for 10 pitches in the longer term (2027 to 2036).

The Committee was informed that if the circulated report was approved by Cabinet, Officers will submit the assessment to Welsh Government for review; once Welsh Government had approved the report, the Council will need to meet any needs that were identified.

It was asked why there was currently no provision for the Gypsy and Traveller communities in the valley areas. Officers confirmed that Neath Port Talbot currently had three public sites, which were all situated along the coastal corridor of the County Borough; there was also one private site in Margam. When undertaking the survey, the need for public sites was recognised, and additional pitches would be looked into if it was identified as a requirement; Officers would need to wait for Welsh Government to approve the study, before progressing with this work. Members were informed that potential sites and pitches would form part of the candidate site process for the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP); in regards to where they would be situated, it was mentioned that Officers would need to look into this in more detail. It was added that the Gypsy and Traveller communities often prefer to live together, which had been identified from the household formation of existing sites; Officers would also explore the detail of their findings from the interviews that had been undertaken.

A discussion took place in regards to transiting; if there was no need identified for a transit site, it was queried where these communities would go. It was stated that although no need for transit sites had been identified currently, Future Wales: the national plan 2040, stated that Gypsy and Traveller accommodation should be assessed at the regional level; this will now be a requirement as part of the Corporate Joint Committee. Officers mentioned that the Corporate Joint Committee, will have a Sub-Committee who will appoint a Team to produce a Strategic Development Plan around this; it was important to look at a wider geographical area than the Local Authority when trying to identify new transit sites, as this will provide a better understanding of where the most sustainable location would be for these sites.

Members highlighted an error on page 43 of the circulated report; in paragraph 4.3.3 it refers to Gypsy and Traveller as an ethic group rather than an ethnic group.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by Cabinet.

CHAIRPERSON