

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Leader and Cabinet

8 June 2006

**AUTHOR:** Chief Executive

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### TRAVELLERS' NEEDS ASSESSMENT

#### Purpose

1. To advise members of the survey results and the next steps.

#### Effect on Corporate Objectives

2.	Quality, Accessible Services	Traveller Issues have implications for all four corporate objectives, not least 'Quality Village Life'. The Council's policy on Traveller issues features a commitment to "engage with Travellers and the local community in order to make available appropriate and authorised Traveller sites - identifying suitable additional sites, where necessary, and accommodating the service needs of Travellers, wherever possible".
	Village Life	
	Sustainability	
	Partnership	

#### Background

3. In anticipation of government legislation advising local planning authorities to complete a survey of need for the Travelling population, the Cambridgeshire authorities plus four other authorities in the sub-region agreed, early in 2004, to commission a sub-regional Travellers Needs Assessment (TNA).
4. Cambridgeshire County Council led a multi-agency consortium in preparing a brief for the work, which was put out to competitive tender. The councils involved in this joint project were, South Cambridgeshire; East Cambridgeshire; Fenland; Huntingdonshire; Cambridge City; Peterborough (unitary); King's Lynn & West Norfolk (Norfolk); Forest Heath and St. Edmundsbury (both Suffolk). The contract was awarded to academics from Anglia Ruskin University and Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College. In order to ensure credibility with the Traveller community, a Traveller consultant was engaged to work with the research team.
5. Progress in developing the brief for the TNA was reported to the Development Conservation and Control Sub-Committee in December 2004. All councillors were sent an update in May 2005 about the survey getting under way. The draft findings were reported to Cabinet in December 2005, with the promise of a final report once all the government guidance and other supporting material was available to include and verify the findings. The Government guidance was finally produced in February 2006, which enabled the final adjustments to be made to the assessment.
6. At the Cabinet meeting on 8 December 2005 members "noted" the provisional findings of the TNA as they related to South Cambridgeshire, and "agreed":
  - a. to instruct officers to make the survey findings available to the Regional Housing Board and, at the same time, make the case as to why not all of the need currently found in the district should be met long-term within the South

Cambridgeshire district, as set out in paragraphs 25-26 of the report;

- b. to instruct officers to adopt the same approach as in (a) above in respect to the Examination in Public of the East of England Plan;
- c. to use the results of the survey to support any future bids for capital or revenue funding for site provision;
- d. to refer this report and the TNA to the Development and Conservation Control Committee for its information; and
- e. that the survey output inform the work of the Local Development Framework (LDF) including work on finding suitable locations for sites.

### **Aims of the Assessment**

7. The main aims of the assessment were to:
  - a. assess the current and potential future need within the Travelling communities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough for learning, health services and other services provided by local authorities and their partner organisations;
  - b. understand the demographic profile of the Travelling Community, household formation within it, accommodation and housing needs and routes into accommodation and housing;
  - c. increase understanding of how services might best be provided to meet Gypsies/Travellers' needs, such as how to make services and accommodation accessible to Gypsies/Travellers;
  - d. meet the requirements of the Housing Act 2004-assessing housing needs.

### **Methodology**

8. The following approach was taken to completing the survey:
  - a. a reference group of nationally known Gypsies/Travellers were recruited;
  - b. the statutory bodies devised a list of questions (councils, Health and Police). This was passed to the Reference Group to ensure that the form of the questions was relevant to Gypsies/Travellers so as to gather the most accurate responses possible;
  - c. nine Gypsies/Travellers were trained as interviewers. Not all were literate and tapes and transcriptions were used successfully. The academics also interviewed, both to increase the number of interviews and as part of the quality testing;
  - d. a total of 318 interviews were completed. Each interview was with one or more members of each family. This has much in common with the Census approach. Interviews were run with Gypsies/Travellers on all kinds of sites as well as those in housing and some on the roadside;
  - e. existing data was analysed, particularly the ODPM 6-month caravan counts from 1980 to 2004. School role data was also analysed and used to identify

Gypsies/Travellers living in houses;

- f. some focus groups were run to explore more detailed issues;
- g. each housing authority in the study area had a “Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment” in line with the Housing Act 2004 and ODPM guidelines. Importantly, the Act requires an assessment of the accommodation needs of “Gypsies and Travellers residing in *or resorting to* their district”.

### Final report and findings

Members may recall the Cabinet report of 8 December 2005, which presented the draft findings of the survey. It suggested based on provisional figures (which might be subject to change) that, in South Cambridgeshire, there was demand for a further 170 – 220 Traveller pitches over the next five years. These figures were calculated on five assumptions relating to: current supply; families in unauthorised caravans; overcrowding; preferences for housing/caravans and natural population increase. These assumptions are explained in more detail on page 35 of the TNA and can be accessed by clicking onto the following link:

[http://www.scams.gov.uk/documents/retrieve.htm?pk\\_document=904533](http://www.scams.gov.uk/documents/retrieve.htm?pk_document=904533)

- 9. A shorter summary of the TNA can also be found at **Appendix 1**.
- 10. The final TNA has based its findings on the same assumptions but they have been adjusted to take account of changes since December 2005. The table below summarises the final pitch numbers (total demand) over the next five years, with the full results being available at the above link. The district specific needs assessments can be found at page 67 with South Cambridgeshire at page 82 on the above link.

	South Cambridgeshire Draft Dec 2005	Cambridge Sub-Region Total Draft Dec 2005	South Cambridgeshire Final June 2006	Cambridge Sub-Region Total Final June 2006
<b>Supply:</b> (Assumption 1)	220-230	529-751	210-220	675-775
<b>Demand:</b> Unauthorised families (Assumption 2)	80-90	293-323	55-65	221-260
<b>Demand:</b> Overcrowding (Assumption 3)	45-80	108-162	25-30	72-92
<b>Demand:</b> Housing transfer (Assumption 4)	10-15	157-212	5	25-31
<b>Demand:</b> Family formation 2005-2010 (Assumption 5)	34-37	152-167	25-30	84-134
<b>Total demand (2-5):</b>	170-220	710-864	110-130	405-535

- 11. Members will notice a reduction in the final figures, compared with those reported in December 2005 (170-220 to 110-130). This reduction is displayed across all the authorities involved and is reflected in the sub-regional totals too. These changes are due to a number of factors:

- a. provisional figures were requested in September/October 2005 (in accordance with the original contract but ahead of new ODPM guidance), and these were supplied, but with a strong health warning that they could change in the final report;
- b. the later results are refined from the earlier draft, and come up with a narrower range than earlier versions (as one would expect). These follow the ODPM methodology, which was not officially available until February 2006, and required some adjustments to be made to assumptions;
- c. the later figures were informed by the final survey data analysis of all completed 313 questionnaires, which was delayed by late completions and required some further adjustments to assumptions (eg caravan/household ratio, overcrowding measures, and total G/T population forecasts);
- d. the 'trawl' or 'baseline study' was received after the initial projections, and this, together with other local data and feedback from individual districts, necessitated some further adjustments to detail (eg council site pitch data & status of tolerated sites).
- e. all figures and assumptions were recalculated for the final version (some minor errors being found & corrected), and account taken of individual district comments.

12. Key findings from the overall TNA include:

- a. there are an estimated 6,000 to 6,500 Gypsies/Travellers in the study area, including those living in houses;
- b. around 5,000 to 5,500 of these are in Cambridgeshire;
- c. of those in Cambridgeshire, around 2,800 are in Fenland, 1,300 in South Cambs and 1,000 in East Cambs;
- d. when counted as a single group, Gypsies/Travellers constitute one of the largest minority ethnic groups in the study area;
- e. English Gypsies formed around 72% of respondents to the survey and tended to 'born and bred' in the region;
- f. Irish Travellers formed around 23% of respondents to the survey, some of whom had recently moved in to the area;
- g. the total number of caravans in the study area almost doubled between 1980 and 2004 from around 900 to around 1,600;
- h. since 1980 the total numbers have risen in five districts and fallen in four;
- i. South Cambridgeshire and Fenland each have over 400 caravans;
- j. there was a particularly large influx of Gypsies/Travellers to South Cambridgeshire between 2002 and 2004, increasing the number of caravans on unauthorised encampments in that district;

- k. Gypsies/Travellers in the survey expressed a preference for providing or owning their own site;
- l. work and travel are major reasons why Cambridgeshire is attractive to Gypsies/Travellers:
- m. life expectancy for English Gypsies appears to be comparatively high in the study area. The situation regarding Irish Travellers is less clear.

### **Next Steps**

13. Government guidance requires all TNAs to be considered by the Regional Housing Boards (RHB) in each region. In the Eastern region, a single-issue review of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) has just commenced, with the appointment of a Gypsy and Traveller Steering Group (GTSG), which met for the first time in May. The deputy development services director represents SCDC on the steering group.
14. The GTSG has been set up by the Regional Planning Board to guide the preparation of a single-issue review in to the RSS for the East of England concerning the provision of Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites. Its remit is to:
  - a. advise the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) on the development the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) revision. This includes testing the soundness and assumptions of local authority TNAs, and identifying their implications;
  - b. commission, on behalf of and as requested by EERA, advice relating to the translation of the needs assessments into recommendations for an adequate level and spatial distribution of pitch provisions in meeting the needs of Gypsy and Traveller communities in the East of England. This should include advising on the soundness of a translation exercise, and its underlying assumptions and identifying its implications;
  - c. assist with future review, evaluation and monitoring of the RSS policy review and other principal regional strategies;
  - d. provide a mechanism for sharing technical expertise and information across the region, and for liaising with adjoining regions as appropriate;
  - e. provide a mechanism for joint lobbying on pitch provision issues at a national level;
  - f. contribute to national and pan-regional groups as appropriate.
15. The GTSG accepted at its inaugural meeting in May that individual needs within the sub-region (on the basis of survey data at a district level), can be met outside the district where the need has been identified. This will be the case where there are constraints that limit site provision within the district concerned.
16. Officers will emphasise at future meetings throughout the review:
  - a. Traveller families themselves are flexible about where they are located. The Needs Survey states: "No specific geographical location was preferred - more sites anywhere";

- b. there are a large number of approved sites in South Cambridgeshire because the authority has responded positively to earlier legislative requirements and to planning applications. However, this provision has encouraged Travellers to visit the area (and relatives here) in contrast to local authorities that have not taken such a positive attitude. This places an increasing burden on finding suitable sites and becomes cumulatively more difficult. The RSS has the opportunity to redress the regional imbalance by requiring site allocation in areas that have not been constructive and positive in the past;
  - c. the burden of housing and other growth, coupled with Green Belt restrictions etc, puts available land at a premium whereas other areas in the region may well not face the same pressures;
  - d. Travellers are increasingly moving away from some traditional occupations (e.g. seasonal farm work) towards other work (e.g. trading). Having a more widespread network of site options than the current pattern - with its bias towards previous work patterns - will facilitate their options for developing new patterns of work, trading and travelling.
17. The consultants preparing the Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document (GTDPD) will also use the results of the TNA. It is one of the essential documents to be taken into account when identifying the relevant search criteria against which the suitability of sites can be tested. Following on from this, they will need to assess and identify specific locations to properly accommodate Traveller sites. Officers would draw to members' attention the separate report on the details of the GTDPD also on this meeting's agenda.

#### **Financial Implications**

18. Efforts to identify approved sites for Travellers, either in this district or elsewhere in the region, could help to reduce the need for the costs of enforcement action on unauthorised sites. The findings of the TNA will also help to support bids for ODPM funding to develop or maintain council/housing association-run Traveller sites.

#### **Legal Implications**

19. The completion of the survey discharges the council's obligations under section 225 of the Housing Act 2004.

#### **Equal Opportunities Implications**

20. In line with duties under the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the council operates a Race Equality Scheme (RES) in order to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote race equality and good race relations. The 2005 – 2008 Scheme identifies planning enforcement & appeals and corporate co-ordination of the council's approach to Traveller Issues amongst the most relevant services through which the council can fulfil its general statutory duty. The RES gives priority to actions relating to Travellers as the biggest ethnic minority in South Cambridgeshire (estimated to be around 1.7% of the district's population

#### **Staffing Implications**

21. The management of this project should not be underestimated. Considerable effort was put into ensuring the TNA met its aims and objectives, and that all authorities involved were kept up to date with the findings. Particular thanks should be given to

Trevor Baker of Cambridgeshire County Council who took over the management of the project on behalf of all the authorities involved, and in addition produced a short summary to be read in conjunction with the main findings (this can be seen at appendix 1).

22. The issues of future site provision and the response to current unauthorised sites in the district have implications for a wide range of council services. A considerable amount of work has continued to take place throughout the last year in order to:
  - a. Enforce planning controls fairly, firmly and consistently;
  - b. Strengthen community relations between local households and Travellers;
  - c. Lobby for changes in planning law.
23. In the coming months work will continue on:
  - a. conducting the GTDPD in line with LDF requirements;
  - b. on-going planning and legal enforcement action (especially injunctions) against unauthorised traveller sites;
  - c. advising the Regional Planning Boards steering group on the allocation of pitches throughout the sub region;
  - d. taking forward the actions outlined in the Traveller project service plan.

### **Risk Management Implications**

24. Traveller Issues feature prominently on the council's corporate Risk Register. The council needs to implement policies on future Traveller site provision that strike an appropriate balance between the needs of all sections of the community and that recognise the council's commitment to firm, fair and consistent planning enforcement. In addition the council needs to ensure that it meets its statutory obligations and that the LDF requirements are followed in order to get the LDF process successfully completed.

### **Consultations**

25. The development of the brief for the TNA followed draft Government guidance. At the same time, a wide range of statutory and voluntary stakeholders, including the Travellers Implementation Group (TIG), discussed the operational aspects of the project.
26. The Strategic Officer Group has been party to all the discussions and preparations of this report.

### **Recommendations**

27. Cabinet is recommended to:
  - a. note the findings of the Travellers' Needs Assessment, as they relate to South Cambridgeshire, as set out in paragraphs 9-12 and in the assessment results at the following link;  
[http://www.scambs.gov.uk/documents/retrieve.htm?pk\\_document=904533](http://www.scambs.gov.uk/documents/retrieve.htm?pk_document=904533)
  - b. instruct officers to make the survey findings available to the Regional Housing Board and, at the same time, make the case as to why not all of the need currently found in the district should be met long-term within the South

Cambridgeshire district, as set out in paragraph 16a-d;

- c. use the results of the survey to support any future bids for capital or revenue funding for site provision;
- d. thank Trevor Baker for his efforts in successfully managing this project as highlighted in paragraph 21.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

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- a. "Planning for Gypsy and Travellers Sites – Circular 01/2006", ODPM, February 2006 - available from [www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk).
- b. Traveller Housing Needs Survey newsletter 2, Cambridgeshire County Council, April '05
- c. Regional Housing Strategy 2005-2010 - available from [www.eera.gov.uk](http://www.eera.gov.uk).
- d. Report to the Regional Housing Board 28/9/2005 - "Single Regional Housing Pot Allocations 2006-08"-available from [www.go-east.gov.uk](http://www.go-east.gov.uk).
- e. Cambridge Sub-Region Traveller Needs Assessment - Principal authors: Robert Home and Margaret Greenfields  
([http://www.scambs.gov.uk/documents/retrieve.htm?pk\\_document=90453](http://www.scambs.gov.uk/documents/retrieve.htm?pk_document=90453))
- f. Cambridgeshire sub-Region Gypsy/Traveller Needs Assessment 2005 – Summary – Author: Trevor Baker, Research group, Cambridgeshire County Council.

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