

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Leader and Cabinet  
**AUTHOR/S:** Strategic Officer Group

10 November 2005

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### **GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITES GRANT 2006 - 08**

#### **Purpose**

1. To alert Members to opportunities for grant-funding to refurbish or develop local authority owned travellers sites during the period 2006-08.

#### **Effect on Corporate Objectives**

2. Traveller Issues have implications for all four corporate issues. This is identified as a 'major issue' for the Council in the 2005 Performance Plan.

#### **Background**

3. The Government is making available up to £56 million nationally in 2006-2008 for new traveller sites and the refurbishment of existing local authority & RSL (registered social landlord) sites. Of this, £18 million is being allocated for the Eastern region. The deadline for bids is 31 January 2006. There are 9 pages of guidance on how to apply, including requirements for policy documents, detailed plans and evidence of consultation. Where it is not yet possible to put forward final bids for 2007/08, early outline bids are encouraged, although these cannot be fully funded until finalised.

#### **Considerations**

4. Senior SCDC managers met the ODPM's Gypsy & Traveller Lead Officer for the Eastern Region (Sheila Clarke) on 3 November, soon after she was appointed, to discuss the bidding process. It was clear that the Council's proactive approach was welcomed. Officers are aware of the real opportunities presented by the possibility of grant-funding, especially in the context of the need to provide alternative sites for occupants of unauthorised plots (or, at least, to demonstrate that we have made determined efforts to pursue such opportunities).
5. Earlier this week, the senior managers re-assembled to consider potential sites in the district for which a bid could be made and the process for making an application. So far, initial discussion has focused on opportunities for possibly a couple of small, SCDC/RSL run-sites at Northstowe (towards the end of 2007/08) and/or another small site elsewhere in the district, which could be started sooner.
6. No specific possible sites have yet been identified. Officers are acutely aware of the amount of work that would be needed over the next two months in order to prepare for submitting a bid – not least in terms of identifying suitable sites, local consultation and finding an RSL partner. Even so, officers would advise that the possibility of grant-funding is very much worth exploring further.
7. The Leader has asked officers to produce this urgent report to seek Cabinet's support for undertaking the necessary preparatory work, with a view to making an application - if that turns out to be possible. Officers aim to report back to the Cabinet in January 2006, hopefully with more details of the proposed bid that would be submitted later that month.

### **Financial Implications**

8. In the aftermath of capping and reduced budgets, any grant aid received would help the Council considerably in maintaining standards at current traveller sites and/or providing new sites.

### **Legal Implications**

9. There may be contractual agreements to be drawn up if the assistance of any RSLs or housing associations is eventually agreed as a way of fulfilling grant specifications.
10. Travellers have indicated that they prefer to have security of tenure. A lease system might therefore need to be drawn up between Travellers who wish to occupy any new site developed with the use of this funding.

### **Staffing Implications**

11. Putting together viable bids by 31 January 2006 will be resource intensive but this may be necessary in order to reduce the number of unauthorised sites in the district.

### **Risk Management Implications**

12. Traveller Issues feature prominently on the Council's corporate risk register, both in terms of the problem of the unauthorised encampments and the challenge of future traveller site provision. If the Council did not try to make a bid for this grant-funding, it could be criticised by the Government and residents.

### **Consultations**

13. There will need to be consultation with parish councils, local Members, residents and stakeholders in identifying suitable sites. It may be possible to do this after the draft bid has been submitted, before the finer details are worked out.

### **Recommendations**

14. The Cabinet is asked to endorse efforts by officers to undertake the necessary preparations with a view to making an application for Gypsy & Traveller Site grant-funding in 2006-08.

### **Background Papers:**

- Gypsy and Traveller Site Grant Guidance 2006-2008
- Gypsy Site Refurbishment Grant 2005-2006 decision letter 21<sup>st</sup> July 2005

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