

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Leader and Cabinet

8 June 2006

AUTHOR/S: Strategic Officers Group on Traveller Issues

GYPSY AND TRAVELLER DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT

Purpose

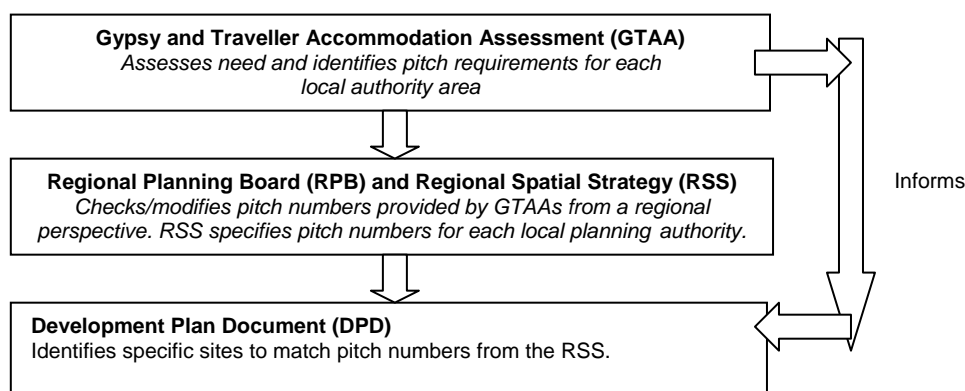
1. To advise members of the details, progress and timetable for completion of the Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document (GTDPD).

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. On 2 February 2006 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) published the long awaited circular 01/2006 "Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites". This replaced circular 1/94, which the ODPM recognised "*failed to deliver adequate sites for Gypsies and Travellers in many areas of England over the last 10 years*".¹ The new circular aims to "*provide(s) updated guidance on the planning aspects of finding sites for Gypsies and Travellers and how local authorities and Gypsies and Travellers can work together to achieve that aim*".²
4. Circular 01/2006 sets out the new planning process to be followed in order to make provision for Gypsies and Travellers. It is set out as follows:



¹ Page 4, paragraph 3 of circular 01/2006

² Page 4, paragraph 2 of circular 01/2006

5. This process is however not set in stone. Where authorities such as SCDC are already well advanced with the Local Development Framework (LDF) and have completed a Travellers' Needs Assessment. The Circular recommends "*local planning authorities should bring forward DPDs containing site allocations in advance of regional consideration of pitch numbers*".³

Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document (GTDPD)

6. Following the advice in the circular and with the Travellers' Needs Assessment almost finalised, SCDC began the process of producing a Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document (GTDPD). An advert was published in *Planning magazine* in early March inviting tenders for the project. The project brief was sent out to 14 interested parties, with three consultants submitting tenders.
7. All three tender documents were scrutinised and evaluated against criteria listed in the project brief, before officers took the decision to interview all three parties. This decision was mainly due to the varying costs submitted, which were:

Consultant A £15,500
Consultant B £53,000
Consultant C £167,888

Officers wanted to clarify the details of the tenders and confirm what was included in each submission for the fee proposed.

8. Following the interviews and a further evaluation process, officers wished to award the contract (Subject to contract standing orders procedures) to consultant B, who had the appropriate skills, knowledge of the planning system, experience in working with Gypsies and Travellers and who's fee was around the budget identified for the project.
9. Following portfolio holder approval, publication in the weekly bulletin (12 April), for call in purposes and reference checks, "cdn planning" were successfully appointed as the consultant to complete the council's GTDPD in late April and work commenced on 2 May 2006.

GTDPD Timetable

10. The timetable for all the LDF documents is set by the Local Development Scheme (LDS). One of the key soundness tests for the GTDPD when it is adopted; will be whether it was prepared in accordance with the LDS. In order to ensure this occurs, the timetable for the GTDPD (**appendix 1**) will need to be incorporated into the next review of the LDS.
11. There are three stages to preparing the GTDPD:
 1. Issues and Options
 2. Pre-submission draft GTDPD
 3. Submission

The full timetable can be viewed at Appendix 1.

³ Page 11, paragraph 43 of circular 01/2006

Issues and Options

12. Preparatory work has already started with consultation sessions conducted with Gypsies and Travellers, key partners and over the next month with parish councils. The key messages from this work along with other background information will enable the consultants to draft an issues and options report. This will be passed to the member reference group (MRG) established at Council on 25 May before being passed to Council to agree in August 2006.
13. Once agreed it will then go out to formal consultation. In partnership with the consultants, officers are working on a range of ways to consult on the draft report, including a large workshop in September/October for everyone, a web based formal response database, public meetings and by letter.
14. The responses will all be entered in to the database and considered by the consultants when preparing the representation responses and DPD approach. These will then be reported to the MRG and Council in December 2006 and January 2007.

Pre-submission draft DPD

15. The consultants will start preparing the pre-submission draft GTDPD early in 2007. They will revise the issues and options report based on responses from the consultation and report this to the MRG and then Council in March 2007.
16. This will then again be subject to consultation from April to June 2007 and similar procedures will be in place to ensure there is as much involvement as possible from all sectors of the community.
17. By the end of June 2007 the consultants will assess all the responses and changes to consultation on the draft GTDPD and present these to the MRG and Council in September 2007.

Submission

18. If the Council accepts the revised draft GTDPD it will then be prepared for submission. Objection sites consultation will take place early in 2008 and the responses considered during February and March 2008. The public examination is likely to take place mid May 2008 and the inspector's decision will be reported in September 2008. The council will adopt the GTDPD four weeks after receipt of the inspector's decision and the full document and inspectors decision reported to Council at the next available meeting.

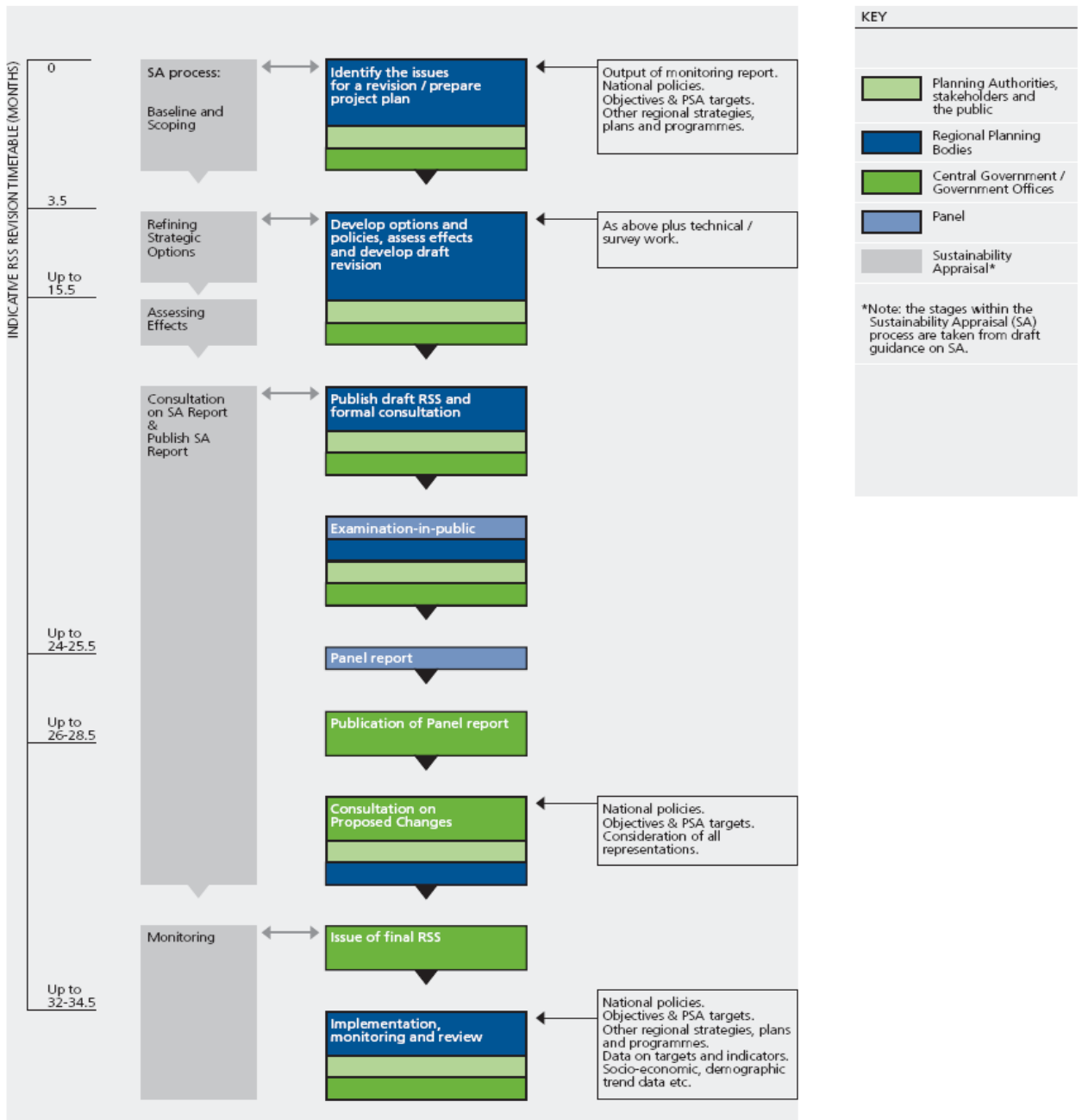
Regional Spatial Strategy

19. The Regional Planning Board have been tasked with preparing a single-issue review into the Regional Spatial Strategy in order to include the needs of Gypsies and Travellers. In order to do this a steering group has been established to help guide the review (Gypsy and Traveller Steering Group (GTSG)). The deputy development services director has been nominated to the GTSG as the district council representative for this region. There are 6 other local Government representatives on the group (Norfolk, Hertfordshire, Essex, Welwyn Hatfield, Ipswich, & Luton) and a range of other partners/stakeholders including Sheila Clarke, our local officer from the ODPM.

20. The remit of the Gypsy and Traveller Steering Group 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 needs assessments, 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.
21. At its inaugural meeting in May the Steering Group accepted 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.
22. Officers will continue to advise the steering group, explaining that:
- a. Traveller families themselves are flexible about where they are located. The Needs Survey says: "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.

23. The draft timetable for the RSS revision can be seen below. This is to be reviewed at the next steering group meeting (end of June) but will enable members to picture the scale of the review.



Financial Implications

24. The fee agreed to complete the GTDPD is £53,000 subject to changes with the proposed expenses.

Legal Implications

25. The council has a legal obligation under the Local Development Regulations to complete a Development Plan Document relating specifically to Gypsies and Travellers. This replaces policy HG23 within the current local plan.

Equal Opportunities Implications

26. 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

27. The council will be responsible for administering the plan-making process, which will need to be undertaken alongside the council's other DPD's.
28. The corporate projects officer has been identified as the council's main contact for the consultants and the project, with assistance available from the planning policy manager and deputy head of development services as required. The project is not scheduled to be complete until October 2008, and this will have implications on the management of the project as the corporate project officers post is due to expire in April 2007. This issue will need to be considered by members at another meeting.

Risk Management Implications

29. Traveller Issues are highlighted as one of the key corporate risks facing the organisation (currently rated 'very high likelihood' / 'critical impact') on the Council's Risk Register.

Consultations

30. The Strategic Officer Group has been party to all the discussions and preparations of this report.

Conclusions/Summary

31. The completion of this GTDPD will fulfil the requirements of the LDF and provide a criteria based policy for planning officers to follow when presented with planning applications for Gypsy/Traveller sites. It will also meet the expectations of circular 01/2006 and provide the Regional Planning Board with a good base on which to consider pitch requirements within the sub region.

Recommendations

32. It is recommended that Cabinet:
- a. note the details and stages of the GTDPD and the project plan;
 - b. note the details and stages of the RSS revision (single-issue review):
 - c. Approve the proposed timetable at appendix 1 and agree that it be included in the next review of the LDS.

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

1. GTDPD Brief for consultants
2. Circular 01/2006 "Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites"
3. GTDPD Tender for professional services – cdn planning
4. Project plan for a draft revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England to address the provision of Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites – May 2006

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