



CABINET – 17TH FEBRUARY 2016

SUBJECT: GYPSY & TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION ASSESSMENT (G.T.A.A)

REPORT BY: CHIEF HOUSING OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 In compliance with Part 3 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, local authorities are required to undertake an accommodation needs assessment in relation to Gypsies and Travellers who are living or travelling through the County Borough and use the evidence gathered to underpin the review of the Council's Local Development Plan.
- 1.2 This report provides summary information for consideration by Cabinet prior to the full detailed report attached as Appendix 1 being submitted to Welsh Government (WG) in compliance with legislation and guidance issued.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The purpose of the G.T.A.A is to provide the Council with an indication of the accommodation requirements of Gypsies and Travellers living in or travelling through the borough and to make provision for permanent sites where the G.T.A.A identifies an unmet need for mobile home pitches. In addition, the G.T.A.A should also provide evidence, where applicable, of the requirement for transit provision and for legal stopping places.
- 2.2 The main aims of the G.T.A.A were to:
 - Ensure compliance with the local authority duties under Part 3 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014;
 - Understand the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers living or travelling through the borough; and
 - Provide an evidence base to underpin the review of the Council's Local Development Plan (LDP).
- 2.3 The duty to undertake G.T.A.As, under Part 3 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 rests with individual authorities, but such assessments are also required to be submitted to W.G for approval by Welsh Ministers.
- 2.4 Having conducted the assessment in compliance with Welsh Government guidance, the assumptions made in the G.T.A.A are based on a very low sample size, despite the best endeavours of the Council to engage with members of the Gypsy and Traveller community.
- 2.5 Based on the analysis of the information drawn together as part of the G.T.A.A, the Council concludes that there is currently insufficient evidence to support the provision of a permanent or transit site in the borough.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Welsh Government's Gypsy and Traveller Framework for Action, Travelling to a Better Future (2011).
- 3.2 The Single Integrated Plan 2013-2017 has a priority to 'improve standards of housing and communities, giving appropriate access to services across the borough'.
- 3.3 The Council's Local Housing Strategy 'People, Property and Places' has the following aims:
"To provide good quality, well managed houses in communities where people want to live and offer people housing choices which meet their needs and aspirations".
- 3.4 In a wider context, the G.T.A.A. also links to the aims of the Council's Strategic Equality Plan.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The attached detailed report outlines the process and findings of the 2016 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (G.T.A.A) undertaken by CCBC. In coming to its findings, the report considers a range of quantitative and qualitative data, based on existing data sources and interviews carried out with members of the Gypsy and Traveller community.
- 4.2 The G.T.A.A was undertaken in-house by the Council in accordance with guidance issued to local authorities by Welsh Government. It was completed between June 2015 and February 2016.
- 4.3 The purpose of the G.T.A.A is to provide the Council with an indication of the accommodation requirements of Gypsies and Travellers living in or travelling through the borough and to make provision for permanent sites where the G.T.A.A identifies an unmet need for mobile home pitches. In addition the G.T.A.A should also provide evidence, where applicable, of the requirements for transit provision.
- 4.4 The GTAA must be re-undertaken at least every 5 years to ensure that the evidence gathered remains robust.
- 4.5 Welsh Government has issued guidance to local authorities to assist them in discharging their duties under part 3 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. A copy of the guidance has been placed in the Members' library. The methodology used by the Council to undertake the G.T.A.A is set out in Chapter 3 of the report.
- 4.6 There are currently no local authority owned Gypsy and Traveller sites in the County Borough, either permanent or transit. This has been the position since the inception of CCBC in 1996.
- 4.7 There are also no privately owned sites in the County Borough which are designated for Gypsy and Traveller use. Information provided by the Planning Division, also confirms that there are currently no known unauthorised developments in the borough.
- 4.8 The evidence base for the [adopted LDP](#) indicated that there was no identified need for a Gypsy and Traveller site in the borough and, therefore, no permanent or transit sites were allocated in the LDP. The plan does, however, set out a criteria based policy against which any planning applications for permanent and transit Gypsy and Traveller caravan sites would be assessed should they come forward in the plan period. As mentioned in paragraph 2.2 of this report, the G.T.A.A provides an evidence base for the review of the LDP, which is currently in progress.
- 4.9 The 2011 Census shows that 31 people, or just 0.02% of the population in the County Borough described their ethnicity as 'Gypsy or Irish Traveller'. Due to the relatively small number identified by the Census, the Office of National Statistics would have used data

swapping techniques to protect people's identity. Care therefore needs to be taken when analysing this data or drawing any conclusions from it. The main report attached provides a breakdown of this data focusing on age groups, gender, employment, qualifications, health and household composition.

- 4.10 Other sources of data used to inform the assessment included Local Authority Housing and Planning records, Gwent Education Minority Ethnic Service, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Gwent Police and the knowledge of other specialist officers and voluntary organisations.
- 4.11 A project steering group was established to oversee all aspects of the G.T.A.A which consisted of a Councillor (the Council's equalities champion), the community cohesion officer for West Gwent and representatives from Housing Services, ICT and Customer Services, Public Protection and Regeneration and Planning.
- 4.12 Attempts were made to involve members of the Gypsy and Traveller community in the steering group process, but despite promoting this opportunity in Newslines, the Council's household newspaper and the Council's main website, no members came forward.
- 4.13 As identified within the report, there is no identifiable Gypsy and Traveller community living within the County Borough, there are no designated Gypsy and Traveller sites, the number of people self-ascribing in the 2011 Census is very low (31No.) and the number of known unauthorised encampments in the borough each year are also low (5 in each of the last two calendar years). As a result, only 4 interviews were undertaken during the G.T.A.A – see Chapter 4 of the report.
- 4.14 Although the 2011 Census identified 31 people as Gypsies and Travellers, due to the fact that there are no known sites within in the County Borough, it would be logical to assume that the majority of these would be living in bricks and mortar accommodation (traditional housing). However, no members of the Gypsy and Traveller community living in bricks and mortar accommodation came forward to be surveyed.
- 4.15 Chapter 5 of the attached report provides details on the assessment of the residential and transit unmet need and explanations for the findings.
- 4.16 The undertaking of the G.T.A.A has been complicated by a number of factors that have been highlighted in the report. The assumptions made in the G.T.A.A are based on a very low sample size despite the best endeavours of the Authority to engage with members of the Gypsy and Traveller community.
- 4.17 Based on an analysis of the information drawn together as part of the G.T.A.A, the Council concludes that there is currently insufficient evidence to support the provision of a permanent or transit site within the County Borough.
- 4.18 The Council agrees to keep the findings of the G.T.A.A under review to ensure that emerging needs and aspirations of Gypsies and Travellers living in or passing through the County Borough are taken into consideration. This will be achieved via the continuation of the Gypsy and Traveller accommodation working group, which will meet biannually. In addition, should a planning application for a permanent or transit site be submitted in the future, this can be addressed through existing planning policies.
- 4.19 The Council would be supportive of Welsh Government leading on the development of an all-Wales network of transit provision. Such an initiative could potentially address the lack of current provision and reduce the number of unauthorised encampments throughout Wales.
- 4.20 The Council would recommend to Welsh Government that a review of the G.T.A.A process is undertaken in association with local authorities and interested parties.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Issues relating to Gypsies and Travellers are covered by section 6 iv) of the Council's current Strategic Equality Plan in terms of Education, Social Services, the Environment and Housing.
- 5.2 The G.T.A.A. notes in section 2 the range of individuals and organisations contacted to gain additional insight and relevant information to ensure that the final document was accurate and appropriate for Caerphilly County Borough. This aspect of the consultation in effect ensured that the draft document and final version were being continually impact assessed throughout their development and approval process.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications that arise directly from the report.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no personnel implications that arise directly from the report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 All consultation responses have been considered and reflected within the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That the full report attached as Appendix 1 be approved by Cabinet for submission to Welsh Government.
- 9.2 That a copy of the report be placed on the Council's website and that the current website content be reviewed.
- 9.3 Agree that all instances of unauthorised encampment in the County Borough be entered onto the new W.G recording system.
- 9.4 Agree that the Council continues to monitor the ongoing accommodation requirements of members of the Gypsy and Traveller community through bi-annual meetings of the accommodation working group.
- 9.5 Use the findings from the G.T.A.A to inform the revision of the Local Development Plan.
- 9.6 Ensure that the ethnicity of all applicants on the common housing register is recorded using the 2011 Census ethnicity classifications.
- 9.7 Continue to participate in the all-Wales Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Forum.
- 9.8 Actively participate in any future Welsh Government led review of the G.T.A.A process.
- 9.9 Participate in the Gwent Police led development of a regional protocol for managing unauthorised encampments.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To comply with the Council's legislative duty under Part 3 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Housing (Wales) Act 2014, Part 3.

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	Christina Harrhy	Director of Communities
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	Kenyon Williams	Private Sector Housing Manager
	David A Thomas	Senior Policy Officer
	Elizabeth Sharma	Research Officer
	John Elliott	Research Officer
	Gail Williams	Monitoring Officer
	Mark Jennings	Housing Strategy Officer

Background papers:

Undertaking Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessments (Welsh Government, 2015) – placed in Members' library

Appendices:

Appendix 1: 2016 Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment