



## **HOUSING AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 21ST JUNE 2022**

**SUBJECT: GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION ASSESSMENT 2022-27**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING**

### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek the views of members of the Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on the new Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2022-27 (GTAA) prior to its presentation to Cabinet on 13th July 2022.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Part 3 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires local authorities to undertake an assessment of the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers residing in or travelling through their area, and to make provision for sites where the assessment identifies an unmet need for mobile home pitches.
- 2.2 Statutory guidance has been produced by Welsh Government to enable local authorities to discharge the first part of this duty.
- 2.3 Local authorities must submit their completed GTAA to Welsh Ministers for scrutinization. Ministers will decide whether to approve or reject a GTAA. Approved GTAA reports must be published by local authorities.
- 2.4 The first GTAA undertaken by the Council (2016-21), showed that there was no requirement for either permanent or transit provision in the county borough.
- 2.5 A similar process used to undertake the first GTAA was used to undertake the 2022-27 GTAA. The 2022-27 GTAA was undertaken in-house by officers, with field work carried out between July and October 2021.
- 2.6 The GTAA process requires an analysis of quantitative and qualitative information, which includes interviews with member of the Gypsy and Traveller community. In total, 9 interviews were completed for the 2022-27 GTAA, which is more than the 2016-21 GTAA.
- 2.7 Tailored information was produced by the Council to raise awareness amongst member of the Gypsy and Traveller community on the undertaking of the 2022-27 GTAA.
- 2.8 The 2022-27 GTAA identifies an unmet need for a total of 11 mobile home pitches within

the next 5 years and a total of 14 mobile home pitches over the lifetime of the Local Development Plan. No requirement was identified of transit site provision or specific provision for Travelling Showpeople.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 That the contents of this report are noted and discussed by Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and that any amendments or clarifications are raised in advance of the Cabinet meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2022.
- 3.2 Members of the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee are asked to endorse the findings of the GTAA report.

### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 To ensure that the Council's complies with the legislative duty under Part 3 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

### **5. THE REPORT**

#### National Context

- 5.1 Part 3 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires local authorities to undertake an assessment of the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers residing in or travelling through their area, and to make provision for sites where the assessment identifies an unmet need for mobile home pitches. Statutory guidance has been produced by Welsh Government to enable local authorities to discharge this duty.
- 5.2 For the purposes of undertaking an accommodation assessment the term Gypsies and Travellers covers:
  - a) Persons of a nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin, including:
    - 1. persons who, on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependant's educational or health needs or old age, have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, and
    - 2. members of an organized group of travelling show people or circus people (whether or not travelling together as such); and
  - b) All other persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in a mobile home.
- 5.3 The purpose of the GTAA process is to allow local authorities to assess the accommodation requirement of Gypsies and Travellers. The process was introduced by Welsh Government in 2015, with the first round of assessments taking place in 2016. GTTA must be redone at least every 5 years. In 2020, Welsh Government informed local authorities not to undertake new assessments due to restrictions put in place to protect public health during the Covid-19 pandemic. Local authorities are now required to submit their new GTAA to Welsh Government by February 2022. To satisfy this requirement a draft report has been submitted to Welsh Government pending approval of the final report by Cabinet.

- 5.4 Local authorities must submit their completed GTAA to Welsh Ministers for scrutinization. Ministers will decide whether to approve or reject a GTAA. Approved GTAA reports must be published by local authorities.

### Local Context

- 5.5 The Council undertook its first GTAA in 2015, with a report being presented to Cabinet on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2016. The GTAA was approved by Welsh Ministers on submission. It showed that there was no requirement for either permanent or transit provision in the county borough.
- 5.6 A similar process used to undertake the 2016-21 GTAA was used to undertake the 2022-27 GTAA. The 2022-27 GTAA was undertaken in-house by officers, in accordance with the statutory guidance.
- 5.7 Information from the 2022-27 GTAA will provide an evidence base for the development of the Council's new replacement Local Development Plan.

### Methodology Overview

- 5.8 A project steering group oversaw the GTAA process. This group was originally set up for the undertaking of the 2016-21 GTAA and have met on a biannual basis since to monitor any changes in the local situation. The group consists of representatives from Housing & Social Services, Regeneration and Planning, Public Protection, ICT and Customer Services, and two west Gwent community cohesion officers. Prior to the commencement of the GTAA the Council also met with a representative from Travelling Ahead, a Welsh project working with young people and families from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, and a representative of the Gypsy and Traveller community to discuss the Council's methodology for undertaking the GTAA.
- 5.9 Due to regulations imposed by Welsh Government to protect public health during the pandemic no members of the Gypsy and Traveller community were invited to take part in project group meetings. In addition, public engagement during the field work stage was restricted in-line with the regulations at the time.
- 5.10 All field work was undertaken between July and October 2021. Face to face interviews were only completed once restrictions had been relaxed sufficiently to allow them to go ahead.
- 5.11 Advice was sought from the corporate Communications team in relation to raising awareness of the undertaking of the GTAA. An A4, colour poster was produced by the Graphic Design team and displayed at various locations throughout the borough. A dedicated web page on the Council's website was updated with information on the GTAA process. The Council's social media accounts were also used to carry information on the undertaking of the GTAA. The Council also wrote to a range of national and regional Gypsy and Traveller support organisations asking them for assistance in promoting the undertaking of the GTAA amongst their service users.
- 5.12 3 private residential caravan / park homes sites were visited and leaflets left with the occupants. Residents of the 3 unauthorised developments were also visited.
- 5.13 The assessment requires an analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. However, there is currently a dearth in secondary data, with many Gypsies and Travellers known to be reluctant to self-ascribe on public surveys, and due to 2011 Census data now being out of date. Data from the 2021 Census was not available to use at the time of undertaking the

GTAA.

- 5.14 Primary data was collected through interviews carried out with willing members of the Gypsy and Traveller community using a Welsh Government prescribed form. Members of the Gypsy and Traveller community at one of the unauthorised developments declined to take part in the interviews. Results of the interviews are shown in summary in the subsection below and in detail in the report.

### Key Findings

- 5.15 Since the inception of the Council in 1996 there has been no local authority owned, Gypsy and Traveller designated site provision in the county borough, either permanent or transit. In addition, there are currently no privately owned sites in the county borough, which are designated solely for Gypsy and Traveller use.
- 5.16 Analysis of data provided by the Environmental Health team showed that over the last 10 years on average there were 1 or 2 instances of unauthorised encampments per year taking place on public owned land. Encampments taking place during this period typically lasted less than 1 week and consisted of 2-3 caravans. These encampments would have been managed by the Environmental Health team in accordance with the Council's protocol for managing such encampments.
- 5.17 There are currently 3 unauthorised developments (occupying land without the necessary land use permission) at separate locations in the county borough. Each unauthorised development is occupied by members of the Gypsy and Traveller community, who have separately submitted retrospective planning permissions to regularise their status. Should any of these applications receive approval then information provided through the interview process shows that each site has capacity to accommodate any natural growth from existing residents over the next 5 years.
- 5.18 The statutory guidance requires the Council to consider the requirement for mobile home pitches from families living on all unauthorised developments. Therefore, the total requirement for mobile home pitches shown in the report takes into consideration the requirement arising from each of the 3 locations. In the event that planning permission is refused at either of these locations then the statutory duty arising from the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 places a requirement on the Council to make provision for sites where the assessment identifies an unmet need for mobile home pitches. Provision could be made either on public or privately owned land.
- 5.19 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 needs to be taken, therefore, 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.
- 5.20 No requests were received by the Council from members of the Gypsy and Traveller community currently living in bricks and mortar accommodation to complete a survey. Therefore, no interviews were carried out with members of the Gypsy and Traveller community currently living in bricks and mortar accommodation
- 5.21 9 interviews in total were completed with members of the Gypsy and Traveller community. Interviews were carried out using a Welsh Government template survey. Below is a summary of responses:

- Each respondent described their ethnicity as Roma.
- The age range of respondents was 19-64.
- 5 respondents described their gender as female and 4 male.
- The number of people per respondent household ranged from 1-5.
- All respondents lived on a private site without planning permission (unauthorised development).
- All respondents said they were happy with where they currently lived.
- 5 respondents had lived at their current location between 1-6 months and 4 respondents between 2-5 years.
- When asked how long they would stay there, all respondents said they did not intend to move.
- All respondents said they were not planning to move into other accommodation.
- 1 respondents said that someone in their household was likely to move into their own home in the next 5 years, which they indicated would be in the county borough.
- None of the respondents had camped by the roadside / on an unauthorised encampment / on a transit site on Wales while travelling in the past year.
- 5 of the respondents said they think there should be more transit sites provided in Wales and 4 said they didn't think there should.
- When asked where the transit sites should be provided the 5 respondents said in every local authority area in Wales.

5.22 The GTAA identified an unmet need for a total of 11 mobile home pitches within the next 5 years and a total of 14 mobile home pitches over the lifetime of the Local Development Plan. No requirement was identified of transit site provision or specific provision for Travelling Showpeople.

### Next Steps

- 5.23 Subject to a Cabinet decision the approved GTAA will be submitted to Welsh Ministers for scrutiny.
- 5.24 The Council will keep the findings of the GTAA under review to ensure that any emerging needs and aspirations of Gypsies and Travellers living in or passing through the county borough, including those people living at the 3 unauthorised developments, are taken into consideration. This will be achieved by the continuation of the Gypsy and Traveller accommodation working group, which will continue to meet biannually.
- 5.25 There is a lack of transit site provision throughout Wales, which is known to inhibit the nomadic lifestyle of many Gypsies and Travellers. The Council is currently in discussions with local authorities in SE Wales regarding the requirement for a regional transit site. Future transit site provision would potentially address the lack of current provision and reduce the number of unauthorised encampments occurring throughout the region. Any significant developments on this matter will be reported to this committee.

## **6. ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 The GTAA is based on an analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. The unmet need for mobile home pitches is based on information sourced from interviews with members of the Gypsy and Traveller community.
- 6.2 It is not the role of the GTAA to determine or report how any unmet need identified through this process will be met.

## **7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed and can be accessed below:

Link to Integrated Impact Assessment

7.2 The Housing (Wales) Act 2015 conveys a statutory duty on Welsh local authorities to undertake GTAA's. The 2022-27 GTTA has been undertaken in accordance with this guidance. The GTAA is an assessment of the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers living or travelling through the county borough at the time of its undertaking. The GTTA does not contain any proposals or makes any recommendations; it simply reports on the requirement for mobile home pitches to identified unmet needs over a 15 year period.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no personnel implications arising directly from the report.

8.2 Financial implications may arise in the future should a requirement ever emerge for the Council to provide a publicly owned and managed Gypsy and Traveller site(s). The GTAA has identified an unmet need for mobile homes pitches at 3 unauthorised developments in the county borough, which are all subject of separate planning applications. Should any of these planning applications fail to receive approval then the Council has a statutory duty to make provision for sites, which could be either privately or publicly owned. There is currently no budget provision for providing GTAA sites, other than to fund the first part of the statutory requirement from Part 3 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 by undertaking the assessment of the accommodation needs every 5 years

## **9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no personnel implications arising directly from the report.

9.2 Personnel implications may arise in the future should a requirement ever emerge for the Council to provide a publicly owned and managed Gypsy and Traveller site(s). The GTAA has identified an unmet need for mobile homes pitches at 3 unauthorised developments in the county borough, which are all subject of separate planning applications. Should any of these planning applications fail to receive approval then the Council has a statutory duty to make provision for sites, which could be either privately or publicly owned.

## **10. CONSULTATIONS**

10.1 Engagement has taken place throughout the GTAA process with members of the Gypsy and Traveller community and organisations that support the community, as detailed in the GTAA report.

10.2 Comments from Consultee's are reflected in the report.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 Local Government Act 2014, Part 3 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 Draft Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2022-2027