

## **Gypsy and Traveller event workshop notes**

Delegates were asked to consider the following questions.

- 1) What are the issues in your area?**
- 2) What are your main concerns?**
- 3) Are you aware of good practice relating to Gypsy and Traveller accommodation issues...what are these?**
- 4) What do you think are the main knowledge gaps for Councillors and officers?**
- 5) How do you think Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs could be more effectively met in your area?**

n.b. the views expressed through the workshops are not necessarily the views held by Shropshire Council; other key West Housing Partnership members or the speakers at the event.

### Table A

- Find the land for the sites
- Have good sites that you can use to inform people
- Litter: farmers give land to G&T to look after land and prevent others leaving rubbish
- Transit sites – perceptions of G&T are informed by what happens at transit sites
- Don't put transit sites by residential sites
- Don't understand the different strands encompassed as G&T – training needed for Members and Parish Councillors
- CARA and Rooftop Housing Associations manage sites
- Need myth busting leaflets
- Do more to inform G&Ts about what the Council is doing and involve them
- Problem with literacy of Gypsies and Travellers – how do we access?
- Could have a stall at Appleby Fayre to access G&Ts
- Very good grapevine among G&T community
- Herefordshire have an unused site which they are selling and ringfencing proceeds to provide another site in County
- LAs to help travellers to bring sites forward and develop to a legal site
- G&Ts approach Shropshire Council themselves for help to find a site
- Need good press like how affordable housing is promoted
- Handshakes are important
- Change G&T perception that planning policy is against them
- Get Members to agree that the LA needs to help to facilitate the site for G&T

- Communicate the available sites
- Grant application to extended family & put a proviso that they put 3 transit pitches as well (some say good practice and some say not), Could work for family members use as transit site
- Need for stopping places but if provided transit sites would they be used?
- Don't know how many private sites are operating transit pitches on sites. Need strong resident management
- Good site management can be flexible but must be strong.

## Table B

- Area targeted for illegal camps – public concern/ resentment; wrong locations; costs. Did not think ahead and make provision – public opinion
- Lack of understanding of scale of problem – need Member; public; officer discussion
- Need strategy on how to do this together – multi-team approach
- General acceptance of authorised sites – problem of planning them; problem of illegal sites in meantime; lack of facilities
- Lack of understanding about what a site looks like/ what different travellers need – leads to feeling that local voice is not being heard
- Need to listen; explain clearly and show examples
- What about the Traveller voice??

## Table C

- Unauthorised sites = tension
- Retrospective planning permission is unfair that they win appeals but other housing is not allowed in the countryside
- Showmen a separate group not part of this issue should not normally be included
- All should follow the rules “deliberately no knowing” planning rules
- Green Belt issues
- Treating people differently seems unfair
- Role of housing associations
- Fenland using s106's to require G&T sites as part of affordable housing provision
- Multiple sites/ homes? How could we know?
- Integrated approach needed – between many organisations HCA/ RSLs/ Councils etc
- Transit sites geared to ensure short stays only ie Irish Travellers
- Small sites dotted around – not a problem
- Policy differences between Councils contribute to confusion on rules
- Migrant workers from eastern Europe
- 2 separate issues:
  - Permanent – no crime or other problems
  - Transit – all sorts of issues

- Some know the system well enough to play the system
- 2 key problems – How to persuade Members; Where the sites should go
- Funding is a problem without grant
  - Finding willing developers
  - Commercial enterprise
- Other priorities are higher up the list ie affordable housing
- Use articulate local G&Ts to make the case
- Some G&Ts could be accused of acting subversively
- Common problem is landowners selling land in protest at lack of planning permission
- Log cabins/ build your own homes for young people in countryside
- Treat everyone the same
- Communication between G&T and settled community is critical
  - Permanent; Mixed; Transient
- Need good management
- Consistent liaison officer
- Positive discrimination is a systematic problem in the system
- Police attitudes can be poor

## Table D

### Issues

- Unauthorised temporary encampments on common land – cost of clear up when leave
- Some pressure on social rented stock
- Fairness re planning – unauthorised sites and community relations as 2 way process
- Certified caravan sites – planning issue if become G&T site (Yes)
- Concern re over-provision/ saturation in areas – need to spread provision
- Removal of RSS/ agreed targets – less provision? And equalities issues?
- Budgetary cuts

### Good practice

- Some good privately/publically run sites
- Could RSLs build/ provide specifically?
- Scope for cheap to build modular units
- G&T networks which can provide advice to LAs
- Multi agency approaches
- Seek PCT lead on health issues
- Identify possible sites ie ex MOD

## **Knowledge gaps**

- Changing legislation/ planning context
- Examples of good practice
- G/T traditions ie weddings
- Reality v. perception
- Who to ask for detailed specialist advice
- Input from G&Ts eg into events

## **Table E**

### **Issues**

- Unauthorised encampment
- Requirement to meet G&T needs urgent
- Buying land and P.P.
- Europe workers, Travellers lose jobs
- Crime
- Illegal sites – farmer resistance
- Good relations with G&Ts
- Conflict between UK and foreign Gypsies
- Rehousing elderly Gypsy population and housing challenge
- Purchasing housing – infrastructure inadequate
- Time limited sites – human rights legislation
- Tax legislation
- Residents powerless to react
- Bank holiday system exploitation
- Equality of opportunity
- Commercial land – illegal camps
- Refurbishment of pitches
- Strait jacket
- Illegal encampment – exemplar

### **Good practice**

- Rugby – refurb. Communication between Gypsies and community
- Shropshire supporting people programme – going onto sites.
- Gypsy Liaison Officer – but illiteracy is excuse for lack of communication

### **Knowledge gap**

- Convinced needs figures are correct??
- Temp. voids causes 200 influx “reserved” pitches
- Traditions and culture + motivation – health and education (lack)
- Agricultural employment opportunities drives temp. immigration

## **Meeting Accommodation needs**

- Government land
- High value resi – resistance to perceived downward pressure
- Identify where Travellers want to be – there ARE Traveller routes seasonal agricultural movement
- Imposition of sites breeds resentment where no apparent demand
- Financial incentives probably not workable
- Part time transit site – allocated

## **Table F**

### **Issues**

- How many people in need in specific areas complex matter – accuracy – may be willingness to have further provision in Authorities where GTAA figs are low/ nil. How to tackle if RSS goes?
- Further evidencing of local need – abolition of RSS
- Inaccuracy of reporting – recording G&T status, recording births census 2011 start of more accurate picture but not likely to be full picture to rely upon
- Affordable housing need greater priority
- Positives gained from affordable warmth schemes and difference improvements made within G&T community for cold winter
- Need education on site for secondary age school and adults
- Inaccurate perception especially unauthorised encampments, all negative
- 'Happenings' directed toward G&Ts
- Do contribute to area when stability in place
- Unauthorised sites do majority of damage around G&Ts locally e.g. visibility, abandoned rubbish

### **Main concerns**

- Poverty for G&T communities (high early deaths etc) Income generated not sufficient even with provision of more sites
- Level of need brings high cost when everything pressurised for resources and proportion of cost reqt overall marries proportion of housing need?
- Response of supply moving on doesn't work, shared LA responsibility

## **Good practice**

- Affordable warmth schemes on no. of sites (eg Telford and Wrekin)
- Education schemes, potential to share resources across LAs
- Visits to G&T sites by Councillors

## **Knowledge gaps**

- Understanding of costs for provision
- Understanding different cultures and the breadth of diversity among G&T communities/ Banner G&T hides specifics
- Basic facts for history of G&Ts eg Egyptian origins
- Need to listen more to Gypsy Liaison Officers
- Understanding further role of Councillors; GLOs in context G&Ts
- Need to be aware range of relevant orgs. Relevant to G&Ts Equality and Human Rights Council and others have lists
- Need to make good relationships with G&T communities with churches, education etc
- Councillors as advocates that fairness of treatment does happen
- Visit sites directly
- Meeting needs more effectively – central Govt grant required; mix of sites – not too big.