**Minutes of Gypsy & Traveller Strategy Group**

**Monday 5th September 2011, County Hall, CR8**

**Present:**

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| Niki Lewis | Service Director, Communities, Libraries, Heritage & Arts |
| Kamalita Kinshasa | (Minuting) Equality & Inclusion Officer |
| Sharon Brookes | Lead Officer, Equality & Inclusion |
| Estelle Sherry | Principal Auditor |
| Graham Hogg | Service Director, Housing |
| Ken Oliver | Canal Officer |
| Paul Harris | Principal Highways Enforcement Officer |
| Jason Morris | TLO (south) |
| Andy Mullings | Highways Enforcement Officer |
| Sudave Ghuman | Principal Litigation Solicitor |
| Mike Davies | Senior Traveller Liaison Officer |
| Carolyn Gibson | Principle Planning Officer |
| Sarah Hartley | Performance & Research Officer |
| Wendy Atkinson | Teacher, Traveller Education Service |
| Nicole Powell | Lead Professional, Traveller Education Service |
| Nicole Smith | Head of Housing Strategy & Support |
| Toby Sturgis | Cllr |
| Daniel Tyrrell | Planning Compliance Officer |
| Linda Diamond | Equality Officer Housing |

**Apologies:**

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| Aileen Fenlon | ASB Reduction Officer |
| Amanda Smith | Manager, Homes4Wiltshire |
| John Vaughan | Senior Internal Auditor |
| Angie Rawlins | Head of Allocations & Options |

|  | Item/notes | Actions |
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| 1. | **Welcome**  NL welcomed the group and outlined her role as coordinator of the implementation of the GRT Strategy action plan. Apologies were given for the delay in reconvening the group as the group last met 12th Oct 2010.  NL explained the aim of today’s meeting is to look at the findings from the recent Housing quality audit and the internal Audit of Traveller Services to ensure any recommendations are fed into the GRT action plan.  NL also informed the group regarding a new report entitled “The big or divided society” which may be relevant in terms of the needs of GRT communities and could therefore inform our work. | NL’s team to produce a draft revised action plan for discussion at the next meeting |
| 2. | **Action Plan Updates**    **Accommodation**  CG presented the following update:-  We are now required to consider the needs of GRT communities in the same way as settled communities i.e. looking at long term need.  The proposed number of new pitches in the DPD is based on figures for unauthorised developments, however, there is concern around accuracy levels of the data. Current need is for more pitches in the North of the county especially for New Age Travellers.   * (Reference: changes in Government policy - Coalition Government has released the Draft National Planning Policy Statement - consultation period ends 17th October 2011 see   [National Planning Policy Framework - Planning, building and the environment - Department for Communities and Local Government](http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/planningpolicy/planningpolicyframework))  Ongoing consultation with GRT communities is planned either via the GRT forums and/or the newly developed residents associations for Council sites.    LD provided an update regarding a funding bid to the HCA which, if successful, includes the development of new pitches. There is also an amount of 250k which was previously bid for and not spent so this can provide match funding. LD also referred to the Community Land Trust model which can provide a mechanism for GRT communities to move through the planning process  The group also discussed the fact that Planning should be represented on the group.  **Knowledge and information**  PH has produced an updated version of the information leaflet for GRT communities   * **Community Engagement** * The group discussed the training needs of Members especially for those who do not have GRT communities in their area as they may be “disengaged” from the agenda.   **Health, Education and Safer Communities**   * Nicole Powell and Wendy Atkinson of TES gave updates on their education role and outreach work with GRT families. TES now has reduced resources with only 6 part time staff so the focus is work with schools as opposed to on site. There is also potential further risk in terms of the academy model as schools may choose to reduce their funding. | CG to circulate the last housing/planning briefing  NL’s team to produce a Member briefing re: bid  NL to check with Brad Fleet.  NL’s team to lead on a communication strategy to ensure information is fully accessible |
| 3. | **Update on Internal Audit**  Audit Team thanked for their investigation. Graham Hogg gave information on the background to the Housing quality audit and the Internal Audit of Traveller Services plus the restructuring of the enforcement team and the merging of housing management with GRT site management.  ES summarised the findings of the audit report including the fact that capacity has been an ongoing issues with under-resourcing of GRT management in terms of a limited capital budget. There was also found to be a lack of strategic direction and senior ownership.  ES also suggested that we may wish to consider a joint unit for Traveller support in the future so that we can provide coherent service delivery. The group discussed the potential conflict of interest between the enforcement and site management role.  The group agreed the internal audit could be used as the basis for a new revised action plan and a consideration of investment needs for the future.  The group also discussed the fact that Property Services should take ownership of the sites as they should be treated in the same way as any other Council asset and therefore be part of the asset management plan.  The group also discussed the short term maintenance needs in terms of the physical condition of the sites such as the amount of potential trip hazards due to poor surfacing. The group agreed a site inspection team should be put together including the Housing repair team/inspectors, TLOs and LD for consultation with the residents re: their views on priority work required. | NL’s team to lead on a draft response to the Internal Audit  GH to co-ordinate production of a business plan to include income generation and recovery for the longer term  Cllr Sturgis to discuss with Neil Ward  GH to coordinate a programme of site visits to check need and prioritise actions |
| 6. | **Any other business**   * Request for up-to-date list of sites to be circulated. * Request for the needs of boating communities to be discussed at the next meeting * Request for the needs of New Age Travellers to be on the next agenda (look at good practice from Somerset and Dorset) * SG confirmed the legal team would be happy to advise on legal risks as required | DT  KO |