

Meeting:	Executive
Meeting date:	9 May 2024
Report of:	Director of Customer and Communities
Portfolio of:	Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects, Human Rights and Equalities

Gypsy and Traveller Action Plan

Subject of Report

1. The council's previous Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Strategy ran from 2013 – 2018 (see **background papers**).
2. This report seeks to pull together several existing workstreams into a cohesive new plan for the city. It identifies progress to date alongside a Gypsy and Traveller Action plan for the coming 12 months (**Annex A**).
3. It is intended that an annual report will be brought before the Executive Member and will set out progress against the previous year's actions alongside considering any additional actions for the coming year.

Benefits and Challenges

4. This report seeks to create a cohesive approach to supporting Gypsy and Traveller communities in York. It builds on existing good work which is taking place and seeks to add greater accountability and structure to these workstreams. The action plan sets out several measurable actions for the coming year which aim to improve the outcomes of these communities.

Policy Basis for Decision

5. The new Council Plan, which was adopted in September 2023, contains four core commitments to enable it to deliver the vision for

the next four years. The first of these is 'Equalities and Human Rights - Equality of Opportunity'.

6. The commitment states: 'We will create opportunities for all, providing equal opportunity and balancing the human rights of everyone to ensure residents and visitors alike can benefit from the city and its strengths. We will stand up to hate and work hard to champion our communities.'
7. Committing to implementing the Gypsy and Traveller Action Plan across the council, rather than having a standalone strategy, will ensure that officers and Members are considering the challenges these communities may face implementing when policies or designing services, which will contribute to meeting this core commitment.
8. A second of the core commitments is Health and Wellbeing. This states 'We will improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities, taking a Health in All Policies approach, with good education, jobs, travel, housing, better access to health and social care services and environmental sustainability.'
9. As Gypsy and Traveller communities are groups which face some of the most considerable health inequalities, a Health Needs Assessment (**Annex B**) and subsequent planned work will seek to address this.

Financial Strategy Implications

10. The action plan can be delivered within existing resources. The newly appointed Accommodation Officer (approved in March 2023) is funded within service budgets and the 2024/25 budget added £50k for an Equalities Manager. Future investment at current and proposed Gypsy and Traveller Sites will require approval as part of future budget reports.
11. Improving the outcomes for these communities can bring longer term budget savings for the council and other public bodies across the city.

Recommendation and Reasons

12. Executive is asked to:
 - I. Approve the action plan at Annex A
 - II. Note that further mapping to understand where Gypsy and Traveller communities may be living within the city, and wider consultation, will take place over the next 12 months as per the action plan.
 - III. Agree that annual updates will be considered at the Decision Session of the Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects, Human Rights and Equalities.

Background

13. Gypsies and Travellers are one of the most marginalised and disadvantaged of all minority groups nationally. Gypsies and Travellers suffer significant inequalities across a range of indicators, including access to suitable accommodation, healthcare, education, employment, financial services, and policing, justice, and probation.
14. To address such inequalities, a 'Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller Strategy' was developed by the City of York Council for the period 2013-2018. This presented six themes, which sought to improve outcomes through education, health and wellbeing, accommodation supply and standards, community safety, employment and financial inclusion, and community engagement and partnerships. The strategy had a focus on partnerships, whereby multiple agencies would work together to support one of the city's biggest minority ethnic groups.
15. In 2021, a Gypsy and Traveller Working Group was established ([Gypsy and Traveller Working Group and Action Plan – City of York Council](#)) in partnership with York Travellers Trust. The group seeks to address the inequalities that the Gypsy and Traveller community face. The vision is to work towards ensuring that Gypsies and Travellers experience an inclusive, fair, and understanding community in York.

16. As a result, several action plans have since been created. This approach was felt to be a more effective way of supporting these communities, rather than merely a refresh of the previous strategy.
17. There is debate around use of the updated designation 'Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showmen and Boater Communities'. Discussion with York Travellers Trust, and members of the Working Group took place around this, and it was decided this is not the terminology the working group currently wish to use. As further consultation takes place the group will consider representations on this.
18. The Showmen's Guild states that its members are 'travelling showmen who gain their livelihoods by attending funfairs'. In a similar vein, Boaters are people who have made a lifestyle choice to live on a boat. This is different to the distinct identity and culture of Gypsies, Travellers, and Roma.
19. The group have not included Roma at this current time as we have not done enough mapping to fully understand the needs of this distinct community. Where the council is supporting Roma residents it is through the Minority Communities team and the 'Our City' migrant hub. This will be kept under review and reconsidered once we have the results of the mapping exercise.

Housing

20. A report was considered by Executive (see background papers) in March 2024 which detailed plans to deliver additional pitches and improve existing facilities on City of York Council owned traveller sites.
21. Actions signed off at that meeting are contained within the action plan for the next 12 months.

Education

22. The Gypsy and Traveller Working Group Education Action Plan was created in July 2021, and last reviewed in July 2022. It seeks to ensure that:
 - Gypsy and Traveller students are not overly represented in home education or exclusion figures compared to other groups.

- Gypsy and Traveller families who are Electively Home Educated can provide the necessary evidence that an appropriate education is being provided.
- Evidence of improved relationships between school settings and Gypsy and Traveller families in contact with the council and York Travellers Trust

Health

23. In August 2023 a Health Needs Assessment was undertaken by Public Health in support of the Gypsy and Traveller Working Group.

24. The aims of this assessment were:

- To provide an evidence base to support the improvement and development of current and future health services.
- To provide a baseline profile of the health needs of this population, and ensure services are developed in ways that meet their needs and are easily accessible.
- To gain an understanding of the experience of service providers' working with these communities.

25. Amongst the recommendations from this needs assessment, there are a number relevant in the formation of this action plan:

- Develop closer relationships between York Travellers' Trust and partners to gain further insights into the health and wellbeing of members of these communities.
- Health services to work with York Travellers' Trust to provide resources and information that can be easily accessed by the Gypsy and Traveller communities. These may include resources written in plain English, photographs representative of the communities, or delivered in different formats, such as audio and information sessions. Topics would include various health topics, including accessing the most relevant health services for a specific health condition, information around diseases and conditions commonly experienced by the communities, and immunisation and vaccination.
- Build a greater awareness amongst health care professionals of the challenges an increased reliance on technology can pose to

the communities for appointment-making, test results, and other communication. Advise that more traditional forms of communication should still be used.

- Collectively, partners should consider their response to the findings of the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities 2021/2022 report into the health needs of Gypsies and Travellers. These include:
 - providing health information and resources provided in accessible format
 - providing mobile outreach clinics
 - providing peer-led efforts to improve cohesion between community members and health services.
 - providing flexible health services to allow for care despite no fixed address has also been suggested.
 - providing GP access cards to navigate literacy barriers
 - better understanding for staff of community culture, with better communication and empathy leading to better engagement and trust.

Community Safety

26. The Gypsy and Traveller Working Group Community Safety Plan was created in October 2021, and last reviewed in October 2022. It seeks to ensure that:

- Improve the way we gather information on crimes linked to Gypsy and Traveller communities (victims and offenders), paying special attention to hate crime; this information will highlight the types of crime where these communities are over-represented and under-represented, where hate crime is happening which can help us to work together to help solve these issues.
- Increase the reporting of hate crime towards Gypsy and Traveller communities.
- Continue to increase understanding and respect between Gypsy and Traveller communities, the police and council enforcement teams.

- Increase awareness of domestic abuse, what domestic abuse is and how it affects families within Gypsy and Traveller communities; this work is also taking place across the settled community in York.
- Consider the impact of Part 4 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill and make a commitment that roadside stopping will continue to be dealt with in a reasonable and balanced manner by the police and the council across York.
- Make sure there is continued respect for the communities' ethnic identity and of the protections offered under Equality Act 2010, and under Section 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (right to respect for private and family life)

Communities and Equalities

27. The Cultural and Integration Partnership Manager (previously Community Involvement Officer for Minority Communities) within the communities team is a key part of the Gypsy and Traveller Working Group.
28. Moving forward this role will work closely with the new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion role and other members of the group to do a more comprehensive piece of work to map the various Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities within the city.
29. The communities team will continue its work supporting the Travellers Trust in its work in relation to food support, community development activities and support to children and young people.

Consultation Analysis

30. Relevant Executive Members, along with senior officers, have met regularly with the York Travellers Trust via the working group to develop this report, including the Health Needs Assessment undertaken by Public Health.
31. An action within the plan is to work alongside York Travellers Trust to begin a mapping exercise to better understand where our

Gypsy and Traveller communities are in York (incorporating Roma communities).

32. This will enable us to undertake future consultation on this rolling action plan more widely than is currently possible.

Options Analysis and Evidential Basis

33. The two options Executive could consider in respect of this report are below:

1. To accept the recommendations at paragraph 11.
2. To choose not to implement the recommendations.

Organisational Impact and Implications

34.

- **Financial** – The action plan can be delivered within existing resources. The newly appointed Accommodation Officer (approved in March 2023) is funded within service budgets and the 2024/25 budget added £50k for an Equalities Manager. Future investment at current and proposed Gypsy and Traveller Sites will require approval as part of future budget reports.
- **Human Resources** - An additional post is being created (with resource included in the 24/25 budget) to lead Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion in the council, including work to support the Gypsy and Traveller Communities. This renewed focus on training, inclusive practice and language will positively impact staff as well as residents.
- **Legal** – As this decision will likely impact more than one ward within the city it should be classed as a Key Decision per Article 7.3 of the City of York Council Constitution. The Executive are therefore the appropriate body to take any decision related to the matters discussed in this report.

Article 7.2.1 of the City of York Council Constitution requires that all decisions taken on and behalf of the Council will made respect for human rights and equality of opportunity, and this includes those from Gypsy and Traveller communities.

- **Procurement** – There are no direct procurement impacts contained in this report. However, protected characteristics can be focused upon when considering social value in procurement and the new Human Rights and Equalities Analysis Tool currently under development will be used prior to starting a procurement exercise.
- **Health and Wellbeing** – The United Kingdom is a signatory to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This means the United Kingdom is bound, in international law, to protect the right to health.

A Council Plan core commitment is Health and Wellbeing. This means reducing health inequalities, taking a Health in All Policies approach, with good education, jobs, travel, housing, better access to health and social care services and environmental sustainability.

The Health Needs Assessment (**Annex B**) gives the Public Health Team the baseline data to support the improvement and development of current and future health services.

- **Environment and Climate action** - In a resolution of 8 October 2021, the United Nations Human Rights Council recognised that access to a healthy and sustainable environment is a universal right. Although nonbinding, this resolution could be a first step towards filling a significant gap in international law. City of York Council should ensure that the financial burden of climate action is not carried by those groups who can least afford it, and this will include some members of Gypsy and Traveller communities. It will also be important to balance changes to more sustainable ways of working (transport etc), with the preservation of a distinct culture and way of life.
- **Affordability** – Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states *‘Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of themselves and of their family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.’*

Implementing this action plan will allow City of York Council to ensure that this core commitment within the Council Plan is met

for Gypsy and Traveller communities, so that everyone who lives in York benefits from the success of the city. This also ensures targets support to those who need it most and supports Gypsy and Traveller communities to build on their own strengths and draw on those of the people around them.

- **Equalities and Human Rights** - The Council recognises, and needs to take into account its Public Sector Equality Duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it in the exercise of a public authority's functions).

The Race Relations Act (1976, amended 2000) and the Equalities Act (2010) legally recognise Gypsies and Travellers as ethnic groups and thus protected from discrimination.

The attached action plan seeks to address the significant inequalities Gypsy and Traveller communities in York face. However, this is not a standalone strategy. The intention is that Gypsy and Traveller communities will be considered in every policy, strategy and service change and Equalities Impact Assessments (to become Human Rights and Equalities Analysis) will take place where appropriate.

- **Data Protection and Privacy** - Data Protection Impact Assessments are an essential part of our accountability obligations and is a legal requirement for any type of processing under United Kingdom data protection and privacy legislation. Failure to carry out a Data Protection Impact Assessment when required may leave the council open to enforcement action, including monetary penalties or fines.

Data Protection Impact Assessments help us to assess and demonstrate how we comply with all our data protection obligations. It does not have to eradicate all risks but should help to minimise and determine whether the level of risk is acceptable in the circumstances, considering the benefits of what the council wants to achieve.

The Data Protection Impact Assessment screening questions were completed for this report and as there is no personal, special categories or criminal offence data being processed for the options set out in this report, there is no requirement to complete a Data Protection Impact Assessment at this time. However, this will be reviewed where required, on the approved options from this report.

Communications - The communications service annual plan is being developed to take account of the commitments of the newly adopted council plan, 'One City for all', and consequently work done by the council to create opportunities for all, providing equal opportunity and balancing the human rights of everyone to ensure residents and visitors alike can benefit from the city and its strengths will be intrinsic to communications activity.

- **Economy** - There are no direct economic impacts contained in this report. However, Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states '*Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.*' By working both internally and externally to reduce inequalities for these communities, City of York Council may increase opportunities for those who wish to access employment or volunteering.

Risks and Mitigations

35. Should the actions in this report and action plan not be delivered, the council would risk not fulfilling its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.
36. A failure to move forward with clear actions to improve outcomes for Gypsy and Traveller communities would significantly impact the Council's ability to deliver on its key commitment to Human Rights and Equalities and allow barriers currently impacting these communities to continue unchallenged.

Wards Impacted All

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Background papers

The York Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Strategy 2013- 2018 [York Gypsy Roma and Traveller Strategy 2013-18 CMT 23.05.13](#)

‘Delivering Additional Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation and improving Facilities’, Executive, 14 March 2024 ([Public Pack](#))[Delivering additional Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation and improving existing facilities Report Updated Agenda Supplement for Executive, 14/03/2024 17:30 \(york.gov.uk\)](#)

Annexes

Annex A – Gypsy and Traveller Action Plan

Annex B – Gypsy & Traveller Health Needs Assessment: A Rapid Assessment of the Health Needs of York’s Gypsy and Traveller Population

Abbreviations

The use of abbreviations in council papers is a barrier to access for many. As such, there are no abbreviations contained in this document.