

**Decision Session Cabinet Member for Homes
and Safer Communities**

7 July 2014

Report of the Assistant Director – Housing & Community Safety

**Approval of the updated Allocations Policy and Application Form for
City of York Councils Gypsy Roma and Travellers Sites.**

Summary

1. To seek approval of updated Allocations Policy and Application form, in order to allocate pitches across the Councils three sites fairly and consistently.

Background

2. City of York Council owns and manages 3 Gypsy Roma and Travellers sites, geographically located across the City and totalling 55 pitches. Each pitch has a hard standing with amenity block and includes, electricity, running water, toilet and bathing facilities, kitchen and living space.
3. The waiting list held by the council for it's three sites currently stands at 17 households.
4. The key objectives of the Allocations Policy are to:
 - Make sure that those assessed as being in most need are prioritised;
 - Be fair, efficient and consistent in the allocation of pitches; and
 - Ensure equality of opportunity in the allocation of pitches.
5. The Council reviews it's policies on a periodic basis and this policy was last reviewed in 2006.

Consultation

6. York Travellers Trust have been engaged in the updating of this policy and application, including the change of name to Gypsy Roma and Traveller Sites Allocations Policy and Application Form. It was

subsequently jointly agreed that we would hold a consultation event at their office/ youth club in order to discuss the proposed changes with those on the waiting list. We wrote to all concerned and an event was held on 17th April. Broadly there was agreement to the content and layout of the draft policy and application form. A number of those who attended had individual questions about their position on the list which we also sought to resolve on the day.

Options

7. Option 1- To approve the updated draft policy and application form to be implemented forthwith.
8. Option 2- To reject the updated draft policy and application form.

Analysis

Option 1

9. This option is recommended in order that the Council has an up to date Gypsy Roma and Travellers Allocations Policy, which reflects the new Traveller Pitch Agreement, on which we will allocate all future pitches, including the six forthcoming pitches at the Osbaldwick Site.
10. This policy has been updated:
 - To reflect best practice nationally
 - To reflect changes to the pitch agreements for the sites and practical changes, including changes in contact details.
 - To provide greater detail so applicants are clear about the policy and procedure for allocating pitches, including; who can access the list, how applicants are queued, conditions under which applicants will receive an offer and why applicants maybe suspended on the list, including the timescales attached to any suspension; the procedure for appeals and complaints and key contact details.
 - The most significant change in the policy is that Gypsy Roma and Travellers households living in traditional housing who seek to live on a site can apply to the waiting list and be given priority need. Currently these households are deemed to be suitably housed despite a strong sense from the community that this type

of housing does not meet their traditional and cultural needs. This is a nationally recognised issue.

http://www.york.gov.uk/info/200406/ldf_evidence_base_documents/465/ldf_evidence_base_documents/25

- Three out of the current 17 on the waiting list live in traditional bricks and mortar housing at present and might benefit from an increased banding on the waiting list. It is not possible to tell at this time how this change in policy will increase applications to the waiting list. The updated Gypsy Roma and Traveller Area Assessment has identified a shortfall of 66 pitches in York up to 2030. Households living in bricks and mortar, who have expressed a desire to live on a site, have been taken account of in this figure.
- The updated application form has an improved layout. It allows us to establish greater detail about the applicant and their household including; household composition, accommodation needs, current accommodation, local connection and any criminal convictions. There is greater emphasis on issues of data protection, declaration and authorisation of information provided by the applicant and Equality of access through ethnic monitoring.

Option 2

11. This would leave us with an outdated policy and application form. It would also result in the council not meeting best practice when considering the allocation of pitches to this client group.

Council Plan

12. This Strategy links in with the following themes in the Council Plan:
 - Build Strong Communities; financial inclusion and public health
 - Protect vulnerable people; supporting families, health and wellbeing Board and Fairness Commission

Implications

12. The implications arising from this report are:
 - **Financial:** None

- **Human Resources (HR):** None
- **Equalities** - None.
- **Legal** - None
- **Crime and Disorder** – None
- **Information Technology (IT)** - None
- **Property** – None
- **Other-** None

Risk Management

13. There are no known risks associate with this report.

Recommendations

14. To approve Option 1 and agree the updated draft policy and application form to be implemented forthwith

Reason: To ensure we have an up to date policy and application form which reflects the new Traveller Pitch Agreement and meets the council’s requirements regarding equalities. Approval of this policy will enable us to allocate the Osbaldwick site pitches to ensure the incoming residents have appropriate choice over the incoming facilities in the amenity blocks and a genuine investment in the success of the redevelopment.

Contact Details

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**Report
Approved**



Date 1st July 14

Wards Affected: List wards or tick box to indicate all

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Annex 1: Pitch Allocations Policy for Gypsy Roma and Traveller Sites-
May 2014

Annex 2: York Gypsy Roma and Travellers Site Application Form