

Meeting	Decision Session - Cabinet Member for Communities
Date	10 February 2015
Present	Councillor Simpson-Laing (Cabinet Member)

54. Declarations of Interest

The Cabinet Member was asked to declare any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, any prejudicial or any disclosable interests that she might have had in the business on the agenda. She declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 4 (York, Gypsy Roma & Travellers Site-Rent Increase Petition) as she was involved in the Council of Roma Alliance. No other interests were declared.

55. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the Decision Session – Cabinet Member for Communities held on 22 December 2014 be approved and signed as a correct record.

56. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been one registration to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Stephen Pittam, a trustee of York Travellers Trust spoke regarding Agenda Item 4 (York Gypsy Roma & Travellers Sites-Rent Increase Petition). It was noted that the petition had been signed by Travellers from all sites across the city. Mr Pittam expressed his concerns at the rent increases themselves and the process that had taken place to implement them. His main concerns were;

- Fairness and Equality- he understood that there had been no consultation document accessible to the public, it was only until a Freedom of Information request was put in October 2014 that this was released.

- That he felt that it forced the community into greater welfare dependency.
- That legally a rise in pitch fees were only implemented once a year and only subject to improvements, and in his view this had not been met.

57. York Gypsy Roma & Travellers Sites- Rent Increase Petition

The Cabinet Member considered a report that provided the background to a petition signed by residents of York's three Gypsy Roma & Travellers sites and asked her for a decision on how to proceed.

The petition related to the 2014/15 travellers site rent increase, the first stage of which was implemented in April 2014 and the second stage of which was implemented on the 1 December 2014. The petition stated 'We do NOT agree to these increased pitch fees'.

In reference to comments made by the speaker under Public Participation, the Director of Communities and Neighbourhoods confirmed that they were currently seeking advice in regards to legal issues over pitch fees. She also added that the Council was aware of the need for managing the sites but wanted to work with York Travellers Trust.

The Cabinet Member added that better site management had to be funded from rents and highlighted that other organisations in the region charged more to manage their sites effectively.

Resolved: That option 1, to continue to support the second phase of the rent increase which was implemented on 1 December 2014, be approved

Reason: Phase 2 of the increase has been independently agreed to and paid by all of pitch holders. This additional funding will be used to appoint a site manager/supervisor to improve the support and management of the sites.

Councillor T Simpson-Laing, Cabinet Member
[The meeting started at 11.00 am and finished at 11.10 am].