

Mid Devon Gypsy & Traveller Forum
16th October 2018
Meeting Minutes

1. Welcome and Introductions

Unfortunately attendance was lower than the first forum meeting with less members of the Gypsy and Traveller community. The forum discussed how attendance could be boosted for the next meeting in April, ideas included:

- A flyer drop with details of the next meeting during the January count
- To have the meeting during the daytime
- Setting up a facebook page specifically for the forum to advertise the event and link with other know groups through social media to advertise the forum, including FFT.

Other suggestions are welcome; please get in touch if you have any other ideas: GT@middevon.gov.uk

For this forum meeting we had to change the venue from Moorhayes Community Centre to Phoenix House as Moorhayes had no availability in the evenings. If holding the forum at Phoenix House in the future is a problem, please let me know.

2. Agree minutes of previous meeting and Terms of Reference

The minutes and terms of reference were agreed. The terms of reference can be revised at any point and is a working document.

3. A Positive Image for Travellers, update on work with a National Advisory Panel. To include showing a short film 'Voices from Home' – Lynne Garnett

The forum heard about the work Lynne has been doing with the National Advisory Panel, including working with housing associations that provide Gypsy and Traveller pitches and promoting positive images of the community.

The forum also heard about and watched the short film 'Voices From Home' it was produced in conjunction with Rooftop Housing Group and includes a poem by Damian Le Bas. The film was made by Polly Garnett and is intended to be used as a tool for Local Authorities and others to send a positive message about the community. The images in the film were collected by housing officers. The film is available to watch here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bc5kg7hUpI4>

4. Hate Crime Reporting, an update on the GATE Herts Tool – Hannah Cameron (MDDC)

GATE Herts is a community led organisation based in Hertfordshire. GATE stands for Gypsy and Traveller Empowerment. They seek to educate Travelling communities and the wider population to live side by side in a diverse community. GATE Herts has set up an independent tool for reporting hate crime, as they understand that many community members are reluctant to report directly to the police for a number of reasons. Reporting can be done

by a third party and anonymously. The data doesn't identify individuals but helps to highlight to government and police the extent of incidents against community members, so that hopefully they can counter the problem. GATE Herts can also provide support to victims of racism.

The forum heard that 607 incidents had been reported, most of which were online hate crimes or through social media. Only 20% of the incidents reported were also reported to the police. The most common reason for not reporting to the police was that the incidents were too frequent to report.

You can report hate crime incidents using the GATE Herts tool here:
<http://reportracismgrt.com/>

You can also report directly to the Police through the True Vision website:
http://www.reportit.org.uk/your_police_force

The forum heard from the police that they are trying to make children more aware of their actions and hate crimes through working in schools.

The police are also trying to increase reporting and are open to suggestions of how to improve reporting.

The forum also discussed the definition of hate crime and protected characteristics and how these need to be updated to include all of the travelling community, as currently New Travellers are not afforded any protection.

5. Presentation on a recent report on Gypsy and Traveller Planning Policy and the Approaches of Local Authorities in Devon – Richard Merrifield (DCC, Public Health)

The forum heard from Richard Merrifield on a recently completed report (the full report was sent out with the agenda and can be found here: <http://www.devonhealthandwellbeing.org.uk/library/prof/planning/>). The report discusses the approaches of Devon Local Authorities and it is hoped that the report will act as a tool kit for Authorities to share best practice and discuss problems faced by the delivery of local plan sites.

The forum discussed the lack of transit sites in Devon. The forum also discussed a need to think about its next steps and what it wants to achieve, including the provision of permanent pitches and stopping places. The forum heard that in Somerset there is a principle called 'meanwhile use' where land identified for development that hasn't started can be used for temporary stopping.

Further work on unauthorised encampments and negotiated stopping places across Devon is being done by Devon County Council. An update on this will be provided at the next forum meeting. Suggestions for existing hardstanding sites/areas of land in MDDC that have historically been used for stopping or

would be potentially suitable are welcomed. Please contact GT@middevon.gov.uk if you have any suggestions.

6. Education Update – Charlotte Small (Babcock, Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service)

There have been further cut backs to the service. Academy schools have to pay for the service separately and this often isn't a priority, concerns over the impact to children in academies.

The forum heard about work being done with the police and welfare officers to provide education and training.

The forum also heard that fairground families have had a poor summer in terms of trade and some are looking for ways to diversify to maintain/increase income. This may mean additional educational support is needed if children are travelling more.

7. MDDC Update – Tristan Peat (MDDC)

The forum had an update on the progress of Mid Devon Local Plan, it is likely that the examinations will take place in early 2019 and it is hoped the plan will be adopted in 2019.

The plan has policies for the delivery of the following:

- 35 pitches for Gypsies and Travellers – meet need on larger housing sites
- 11 plots for Travelling Showpeople
- Seek to provide a public site for Gypsy and Traveller pitches subject to funding

The forum heard that on the 5th of December there is a Royal Town Planning Institute conference on social inclusion, there are a number of talks relating to Gypsies and Travellers, including a talk by Tristan Peat, Hannah Cameron and Celia Hadow on the creation of a forum. Tristan will report back at the next forum meeting. The presentations will be made available on the Mid Devon website on the forum page.

The forum also heard that an unauthorised encampment policy is being written for Mid Devon Council by the property services department.

Cllr Richard Chesterton questioned whether there has been any consultation on the document. Since the forum it has been agreed that the document should be consulted on. There is now an opportunity for members of the forum to provide comments on the documents (attached to this email).

The covering letter to go with the consultation reads as follows:

The Council's Property Services team is inviting comments on the 'procedure' from stakeholders, including persons, groups or organisations who we believe will have an interest in the 'procedure'.

The Council's procedure will clarify how illegal encampments will be managed in Mid Devon. It has been written in relation to current legal requirements and planning legislation. It also has regard to the welfare of people and groups making illegal encampments.

Comments are invited on the following documents that are attached to this email:

- **Procedure for managing illegal encampments Nov 18**
- **Illegal Encampments – Five Stage Procedure Nov 18**
- **Illegal Encampments – flowchart Nov 2018**

Comments should be sent by email to propertyservices@middevon.gov.uk, or by post to Mr A Busby, Group Manager for Corporate Property and Commercial Assets, Mid Devon District Council, Phoenix House, Phoenix Lane, Tiverton, EX16 6PP.

Comments must be received by the Council by **12:00 midday Friday 7th December 2018**.

I would also be grateful if you could forward this email to other relevant stakeholders or relevant person(s) within your organisation who may also be interested in this consultation.

8. Waiting list for pitches – Hannah Cameron (MDDC)

No applications have been received to date. Please encourage anyone you know with a need to fill out this form or contact Hannah on GT@middevon.gov.uk or 01884 234218.

The forum discussed updating the website with a direct contact number to make this process easier.

If anyone has any other suggestions to improve the waiting list, please let Hannah know.

9. Support Networks – Hannah Cameron (MDDC)

The following resources are available:

TravellerSpace, Cornwall - 07939 210 014 / 07534 983 046;
tSPACE@travellerspace-cornwall.org

TravellerSpace can offer support to people wanting to set up groups and apply for funding. They have provided me with some documents on setting up a constituted group, I am happy to forward these on to anyone that would like them, please contact Hannah on GT@middevon.gov.uk.

Read Easy – offers 1 to 1 tuition to adults who struggle with reading. www.readeasy.org.uk 01386 700883 there are groups in Exeter, Torbay, Barnstaple, Axminster, Honiton, Wellington and Taunton.

10. Open Forum and Discussion

The forum discussed how best to publicise the next meeting and are open to suggestions.

The forum discussed linking our waiting list page with Friends Families and Travellers to encourage people in our area with a need to fill out the form.

The forum requested information on how many hits the Gypsy and Traveller page is having on the website. Hannah to report back at the next meeting.

11. Agree topics, chairperson(s), day and timing for the next meeting in the spring

Chairperson(s) to be selected once the forum has better attendance from the community. Hannah to continue to be chair for the time being.

The next meeting is to be during the day on **Tuesday the 2nd of April 2019** between 12pm and 2pm at Phoenix House.