

**Mid Devon Gypsy & Traveller Forum**  
**15<sup>th</sup> May 2018**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

17 people attended the first forum meeting, including council officers, elected members, representatives from the Police Diverse Communities Team, a representative from EMTAS, DCC Gypsy and Traveller liaison officer, Teignbridge forum coordinator and members of the Gypsy and Traveller community.

Everyone in the room introduced themselves.

**2. Talk about the Teignbridge Gypsy and Traveller Forum**

The co-chair of the Teignbridge Gypsy and Traveller's Forum talked about the how this Forum had been successful in bringing together members from different parts of the Travelling community over the last 10 years. It is important that respect is given for people from all of the different travelling communities and the Forum is an opportunity to learn about each other's culture. It is important that the Forum is chaired by a member from the Travelling community and that this should be the same for the Mid Devon Forum. The setting up of a Forum in Mid Devon can help provide a voice and support for the Travelling community where there is a lack of other support organisations. Travellers were encouraged to use the Forum to bring up burning issues and to use the Forum as a way for their voice to be heard.

The Forum heard about some of the history of Romani Gypsies and dates in the summer that are of historical significance, including 16<sup>th</sup> May (Romani Resistance Day), June (Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month) and 2<sup>nd</sup> August (Roma Genocide Remembrance Day) event being held in Dorchester.

The new definition was also spoken about and the impacts of this, it was mentioned that a group had been set up recently to tackle this and that a member would be willing to talk to the Forum.

The co-chair was thanked for her very informative talk.

**3. Terms of Reference**

The need for the scope of the Forum to be set out was discussed and copies of the Draft Terms of Reference were available. Forum members were encouraged to look at this document and provide any comments. The draft is to be agreed at the next meeting.

The terms of reference can be found here:

<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/media/345130/forum-terms-of-reference-draft-20218.pdf>

#### **4. Talk on Hate Crime**

The Police Diverse Communities Team gave a talk about the work that it does, including the “Zero Tolerance to Hate Campaign” to eliminate prejudice, promote respect, educate two-way, report incidents and raise awareness. There is a presentation about this on the Devon and Cornwall Police website: <https://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/advice/threat-assault-abuse/hate-crime/resources/>

The Police are keen that more incidents of hate crime are reported so that this can help the Police provide more resources to tackle this crime, including through third party reporting if people aren't comfortable reporting directly to the police. But, there was concern expressed that the Police do not listen to or represent the Travelling community well. It was pointed out that the Diverse Communities Team is new and that police officer's training involves a placement in the community for some officers, who present their experience to the wider trainee team. The Traveling community were encouraged to use the diverse communities team to mediate between themselves and other Police officer if/when issues arise.

There was reference to a conference that will be held in London on 20<sup>th</sup> June about 'Reporting Racism GRT' a new tool to tackle hate crime against Gypsies, Roma and Travellers.

There was reference to unauthorised encampments that have caused bad publicity for the wider Travelling Community and unrest. It was heard that Leeds City Council has negotiated stopping places, which has helped to reduce the cost of responding to unauthorised encampments. It was suggested that there should be a partnership arrangement between local authorities in Devon to arrange negotiated stopping places.

#### **5. Traveller Education**

The Forum heard that there is only one person employed by Devon County Council to help assist with education issues arising for members of the Travelling community in Devon. Previously there have been 6 people for this. The role includes a range of work, including visiting children on encampments, helping to get children into schools and arranging travel packs for children on the road, and supporting children experiencing bullying or not achieving, support is given to both travelling children and schools with travelling children. Training opportunities have been made available to schools but there has been limited interest.

Children must spend a minimum of 100 days in a school each year. It is the duty of their schools to provide education material for those children while they are travelling and to follow up their learning on their return.

It is recognised there is a need for schools to be supportive of children from the Travelling community. It is rare for children to progress from primary into secondary education and common for children to be afraid to tell other children at school that they are from the Travelling community. It was heard that young people's thoughts about the Travelling community changes as they become older and are influenced by others people's views.

The Forum discussed how supportive schools is the key to achievement in school for members of the travelling community

## **6. 17/00348/MOUT**

The Forum was told about a current planning application for 256 new homes at Crediton which includes 5 pitches for Gypsies and Travellers. An indicative site layout masterplan was circulated for all to see, with the location of the pitches on the site indicated. It was explained that this is an 'outline' planning application on land identified by the Council in a local plan. Detailed planning proposals about the siting of new homes, pitches and other matters would follow later.

The Forum was encouraged to comment on the application if they wished to do so, in particular on need, how the pitches are incorporated into the site and whether the location of pitches within the site as shown on the masterplan was suitable. The Forum members were advised that further planning applications for this site and other sites could be brought to the Forum for discussion, on detailed design and other finer details, like site allocation and management. The Forum discussed the need to use Government guidance when designing sites, as good practice.

The Forum was told that the Council wants to set up a public site for Gypsies, but no suitable site has been found for this and funding is also needed. The Council is not permitted to buy sites on land that has been allocated for new pitches in the Local Plan. The Police representatives indicated there is a need to avoid high density development, which can cause social issues. The Police have an Architectural Liaison Officer.

The difficulty in finding/identifying new sites was discussed. Although the forum has an ambition to help advise on the development of new sites in the district, in particular a public site, which has been supported by planning policy for a number of years. The Forum members were encouraged to put forward any land they were aware of/owned that may be suitable for a new site. There is also potential to approach Devon County Council about land they own.

If and how racist and discriminatory comments on planning applications were reported was questioned, this will be looked in to and reported back to the Forum.

## **7. Waiting list for pitches**

The Forum heard there is a need to make sure that pitches coming forward through the planning process are made available to those households in the Travelling community that have the greatest housing need. Forms were made available at the Forum meeting for households to register their housing need. This form is also available on the Council's website:

<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/gypsies-and-travellers/register-your-need-for-a-pitch/t>

It was pointed out that that the housing needs can differ between Travelling households (such as the size of pitch). The forum was encouraged to use the waiting list form and to share it with others with a housing need, to help better inform Mid Devon of the current need in the area.

#### **8. Next Meeting**

The Forum agreed to have the next meeting in the evening and that it should be alternated between daytime and evening to give different people an opportunity to attend.

Next meeting to be held in October outside of the travelling season, avoiding key events held in October. Date to be agreed and circulated.

The Forum agreed that the Moorhayes Centre was a good venue that was easy to find with convenient parking.

The Forum briefly discussed topics for the next meeting, these included education and wellbeing.

The forum closed at 2pm.