

**Mid Devon Gypsy & Traveller Forum**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> April 2019**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

The forum discussed how attendance could be boosted for the next meeting in April, ideas included:

- Coming and saying hello during the biannual count
- To have the meeting on a Friday afternoon or a weekend, as these days may be easier for people.
- Evening meetings.
- Email forum contact list for suggestions on when is a good time for people to attend the forum.
- 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](mailto:GT@middevon.gov.uk)

**2. Agree minutes of previous meeting and Terms of Reference**

The minutes were agreed.

**3. Negotiated Stopping &**

**4. Rubbish disposal for temporary sites/stopping points**

These items were discussed together. Sabrina Thomas was unfortunately unable to attend the meeting, but Sabrina asked that the following was read out:

*Negotiated Stopping*

*At the last multiagency forum in North Devon I presented local district councils with the proposal of agreed/negotiated stopping points across the county. Although these places have not yet been identified, most local authorities around the table committed to collecting information for unauthorised encampments (UEs) this year (2018/19 into 2019/20) so that a picture of the total number of UEs and the total costs to local authorities can be presented to the chief officers group towards the end of this year. By presenting a county wide picture, the hope is to get buy in at the chief officers level so that a coordinated approach can be adopted around agreed/negotiated stopping. In that same meeting, most local authorities also agreed to use the updated welfare action form so that the experience of Gypsy Travellers is consistent across the county.*

*Most will be aware of the governments response to the consultation to UEs that was carried last year. I attach the document for information. It is ever more important that a coordinated way forward be agreed before statutory guidance be implemented on local authorities to act in relation to UEs, which will undoubtedly mean a bigger drain on budgets using an eviction only policy.*

The forum suggested opening up of existing closed stopping places and that we should investigate with Devon County Council Highways why laybys get blocked up.

Tristan Peat advised that he intends to take a report to the leadership team later in the year to discuss the benefits of negotiated stopping, including how this has potential to diffuse damaging images of travellers and negative media reports.

### **5. Reporting Back on Royal Town Planning Institute conference (December 2019)**

Officers from Mid Devon and Teignbridge (Hannah Cameron, Tristan Peat and Celia Hadow) and Lizzie Issacs, made two presentations.

Lizzie Issacs told a story of her experiences as a Romany Gypsy. Lizzie's speech captivated the audience and was very moving, sharing first hand experiences of life as a Romany Gypsy on a human level.

The officers presented on how to set up a forum, including the benefits of doing so and the risks of not engaging with this community.

The feedback on both presentations was very positive, in particular how beneficial and thought provoking it was to hear from Lizzie.

### **6. Unauthorised Encampment Policy for Mid Devon**

The Forum heard that this policy has been taken to and approved by Cabinet members, but still needs to go to Full Council. An update will be given on this at the next meeting.

The policy was item 143 on the 7<sup>th</sup> February 2019 Cabinet meeting, the associated documents can be viewed using this link:

<https://democracy.middevon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=133&MId=945&Ver=4>

### **7. 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 here:

<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/gypsies-and-travellers/register-your-need-for-a-pitch/> or contact Tristan, Christie or Jake on [GT@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:GT@middevon.gov.uk).

The forum discussed the importance of people filling out this form, despite Mid Devon not currently having any pitches to allocate. As if Mid Devon has a

waiting list, we will have a better idea of the need and will be able to involve those with a need in identifying and developing sites.

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

## **8. Open Forum and Discussion**

The Forum heard from Tristan Peat about the progress of the Mid Devon Local Plan and that a letter and full report is expected from the Inspector later in the summer. Tristan briefly outlined the implications and policies relating to Gypsies and Travellers. Tristan will update the Forum at the next meeting.

The forum also discussed potentially inviting developers to discuss sites at future forum meetings.

## **9. Agree topics, chairperson(s), day and timing for the next meeting in the autumn**

The forum discussed the importance of improving attendance.

The next meeting will take place in early October, the date is to be confirmed and the forum contacts will be notified of the date once it has been decided.

Chairperson(s) to be selected once the forum has better attendance from the community.

The next meeting is to be on a Friday afternoon in October at Phoenix House, date to be confirmed.

### Important details:

Email: [GT@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:GT@middevon.gov.uk)

Website: <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/gypsies-and-travellers/gypsy-and-traveller-forum/>

Key contacts: Tristan Peat, Christie McCombe, Jake Choules