



MID DEVON GYPSY AND TRAVELLER FORUM

4.00 pm on Tuesday 15th February 2022

Notes of Meeting (held online via Zoom)

Present:

Cllr Chesterton (Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration), Cllr Evans (Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services), Cllr Letch MBE, Cllr Cruwys, Cllr Barnell

Tristan Peat, Forward Planning Team Leader (MDDC)

Jake Choules, Planning Officer (MDDC)

Arron Beecham, Principal Housing Enabler and Policy Officer (MDDC)

Mojca Sonjak, Forward Planning Assistant (MDDC)

Alison Duckers (Learn Devon)

Hayley Buscombe (Devon Carers)

Several members of the Gypsy and Traveller community in Mid Devon

1.0 Welcome and Introductions

1.1 TP welcomed members of the Travelling community in Mid Devon to the Forum meeting and clarified that it is a 'safe space' to discuss concerns and issues and to build positive relationships. Everyone will have the right to have their say and be listened to. The Forum can provide an opportunity to hear about a range of issues (not just housing and planning) and from other agencies and organisations.

2.0 Learn Devon - job preparation skills – English, Maths, ESOL and digital skills

2.1 AD gave a presentation on what Learn Devon can offer. Smart Skills works with people aged 16+ who may be employed (your employer needs to provide information about the business), self-employed, unemployed or economically inactive. Most of its courses are online. You have to be living in Devon.

For more information please contact:

Alison Duckers, Smart Skills Project Manager - Learn Devon, 01392 384231, smartskills@learndevon.co.uk

3.0 Devon Carers – Support for unpaid carers

3.1 HB gave a presentation about the work that Devon Carers does.

- Any of us can become a carer – 3 in 5 people will become carers at some point in their life
- Since Covid the number of people who have a caring role has increased (by 50%)
- Devon Carers is there to provide free support to unpaid carers as and when they need it
- An unpaid carer is someone who supports family or friends who need help because they are ill, frail, disabled, or have a mental health or substance misuse problem
- Specific help is available for particular conditions e.g. dementia, self-harm
- Devon Carers can aid with accessing medical help
- We can signpost carers to other support and services
- Strictly confidential
- Devon Carers website: <https://devoncarers.org.uk>
- Devon Carers Helpline: **03456-434-435**
- Email: awareness@devoncarers.org.uk

4.0 Plan Mid Devon - consultation about what issues the new Local Plan should focus on

- 4.1 TP gave a presentation about the work that Mid Devon District Council is doing to prepare a new Local Plan. The current Mid Devon Local Plan was adopted in July 2020. This includes provision for 35 new pitches to provide homes for Gypsies and Travellers, including 25 pitches on planned urban extensions at Tiverton, Cullompton and Crediton. The plan also includes flexibility for new pitches on suitable sites elsewhere in the district. There is a requirement for the Council to complete a review of the local plan every 5 years. The preparation of a new local plan can have regard to the latest national planning policies and guidance, and up to date evidence (including the need for new Gypsy and Traveller sites and pitches).
- 4.2 The Council is currently consulting on an Issues Paper, which is the first stage in plan making. It provides information about planning and the issues affecting Mid Devon and provides an opportunity for you to tell the Council what issues you think are most relevant and important to you and your community. A Sustainability Appraisal and Equalities Impact Assessment are also being consulted on.
- 4.3 The Issues Paper includes 6 top priorities – climate change and moving to a net zero carbon future is the overarching priority. Other priorities include: delivering development, infrastructure and regeneration to meet our needs now and in the future; addressing housing affordability and improving choice; protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment, and respecting environmental limits; improving our health and well-being; and, supporting rural vitality and a prosperous rural economy.

- 4.4 The Issues Paper includes 17 chapters to explore the priorities and a range of themes and matters relevant to the future planning of Mid Devon. It has 58 questions (through an on-line survey) and responses are welcomed to those questions you wish to answer. Consultation on the next stages for preparing the new Local Plan will take place in the summer 2023 (Draft Policies and Site Options) and in mid-2024 (Draft Local Plan).
- 4.5 TP explained that the Issues Paper includes two questions about how new sites for Gypsies and Travellers should be provided. The Council is asking:
- Where it should prioritise new permanent sites to provide homes for Gypsies and Travellers – at the three main towns; in rural and semi-rural locations; and include a policy for rural exceptions sites to meet local traveller needs
 - Are you aware of suitable sites also for transit use; emergency and negotiated stopping, and also ‘yards’ for Travelling Show People.
- 4.6 The Issues Paper consultation is for 8 weeks and will end on 28th March 2022. More information is available on the Council’s website www.middevon.gov.uk. The Council’s Forward Planning Team can be contacted at planmiddevon@middevon.gov.uk or 01884 234344.
- 4.7 There were questions raised and discussions around the issues of the ownership of 2nd homes and private renting, the provision of social housing, tree planting, and offering homes to local people.

5.0 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment

- 5.1 TP explained that the Council is working with Exeter City Council, East Devon District Council and Teignbridge District Council to undertake a new Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA). The last GTAA was completed in 2015 and a new GTAA is needed to provide an up to date understanding about the need for new sites and pitches across the study area. This information can be used by the Councils in the preparation of their new Local Plans. The GTAA will be undertaken by a suitable consultant. It will involve engagement with the Gypsy and Traveller community to find out about housing needs. It was agreed there is a need to raise awareness about the GTAA.

6.0 Planning applications update

- 6.1 TP explained that 1 new pitch has been completed in Mid Devon in the last 12 months. However, he explained that outline planning permission has been granted in April 2021 for 5 new pitches as part of a planned urban extension for 257 homes to the east of Credition (in Sandford Parish) at Pedlarspool / Creedy Bridge. This includes a Section 106 legal planning agreement to secure the delivery of the pitches, and for a management scheme to set out how these pitches would be made available to the Gypsy and Traveller community. TP pointed out that a reserved matters planning application for the scheme is currently being determined by the Council. These proposals mark an important step forward for helping to meet the housing needs of

Gypsies and Travellers in Mid Devon. A discussion also took place about the 'Fairfax' development near Post Hill, Tiverton which includes a requirement for three pitches.

7.0 Parking for lorries

7.1 A member of the Gypsy and Traveller community provided an explanation about some of the challenges facing lorry drivers in the Devon area. There is a need for sites with hard ground for the vehicles. Drivers can live in their trucks but there is no-where for them to stay apart from Services. Sites with CCTV, toilet / wash facilities and cafes are needed, and which are also suitable for the parking of refrigerated trailers. It was explained that many lorry drivers are over 50 years of age and the poor conditions for stopping places was not helping to attract younger people into the business. While it was heard the Council is aware of some of these challenges it was acknowledged there is a need to find out more about them. TP agreed to contact the speaker.

8.0 Covid- 19 – matters arising

8.1 TP explained that the covid-19 pandemic had brought many challenges to everyone in the community. Early consideration had been given to the need for emergency stopping places in Devon, and also for the availability of fresh water to the Gypsy and Traveller community. No further or new matters were raised at the Forum meeting.

9.0 Open discussion to hear about what is important and matters to you most

9.1 No matters were raised.

10.0 How to raise the profile of the Forum

10.1 Suggestions were put forward by a representative from the Gypsy and Traveller Forum, including whether a Facebook Group could be set up. It is not known how feasible this would be, or whether it would be possible for the Council to lead this.

10.2 It was suggested that reminders should be sent out about Forum meetings, and instructions should be provided about how to join meetings where these are held online using Zoom.

11.0 Any other business

11.1 The Forum heard that the Council has been asked about renaming the Forum to include Travelling Show People. This matter will be looked into.

12.0 Date of next meeting

12.1 It was suggested it would be helpful to arrange the next meeting of the Forum to coincide with the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment and engagement with households across Mid Devon and the wider area. This

may be in the spring / early summer 2022. A member of the Gypsy and Traveller community offered to help raise the awareness of this engagement.