

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of People and Places. Introduced by the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods	Executive Cabinet	18 February 2010

GYPSY ROMA TRAVELLERS (GRT) – COUNCIL APPROACH

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to inform Members of a multi agency response procedure to the Councils approach to Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) encampments.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. That the Council adopt the procedure for dealing with illegal encampments which has been developed by a task team of the merged Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

3. The current operational methodology for dealing with illegal encampments is ad hoc and the merged CDRP has developed a procedure to ensure that encampments are dealt with in a consistent and fair manner which addresses GRT needs as well as ensuring the settled communities fears and needs are addressed.
4. The multi agency assessment will ensure that the illegal encampment are made aware of the legal status of the encampment at a very early stage as well as establish any urgent welfare needs for the encampment.
5. A key part of the revised approach is early contact with appropriate Members and communication with the surrounding settled community to keep them informed of developments as the process for removing the encampment progresses.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

(If the recommendations are accepted)

6. To ensure that dealing with illegal GRT encampments is undertaken in a fair, systematic and consistent way and that the settled community is kept informed of developments.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

7. Retain the existing ad hoc system for dealing with encampments.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES



8. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Put Chorley at the heart of regional economic development in the Central Lancashire sub-region		Develop local solutions to climate change.	
Improving equality of opportunity and life chances		Develop the Character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live	
Involving people in their communities	√	Ensure Chorley Borough Council is a performing organization	√

BACKGROUND

9. The proposed procedure is in the form of a flow diagram and is attached as Appendix A.
10. As part of the procedure an assessment of any encampment will be made jointly by the Council, Police, Fire and Rescue Service and Lancashire County Council. A draft assessment form is attached as Appendix B.
11. A code of conduct for illegal encampments has been drafted and is attached at Appendix C. This indicates clearly the illegal nature of the encampment but provides information on the expected behaviours and practices within the encampment whilst it occupies the land illegally.
12. These documents have been drawn up by a multi disciplinary task group including officers from both Chorley and South Ribble Councils, Lancashire County Council , Police and Fire Services.
13. In undertaking this work the task group reached the following broad conclusions:
- Once aware of an unlawful encampment an immediate site meeting should be held between the Police, relevant local authorities and if on private land, the landowner where known, to include an initial assessment of the situation, including risks.
 - A 'Case Conference' involving relevant agencies should be held within one working day of every trespass to recommend the most appropriate option, including whether to ask the Police to use urgent powers to move travellers on or whether to tolerate the trespass temporarily until an eviction order is obtained.
 - Early involvement of Ward Members and the Councils Communication Team.
 - Where it is decided to temporarily tolerate the trespass, a Code of Conduct should be issued to travellers outlining the behaviours expected and the sanctions for not following the Code. This should include an option for the travellers to hire skips/latrines.
 - Council Officers to be contactable and able to respond appropriately outside of normal office hours.
 - Improved liaison with and assistance for local residents/businesses, including issuing of information leaflets etc. These are currently being drafted.
 - Documented procedures and guidance are produced to help ensure consistency of approach between and within the agencies involved.
 - A multi-agency training/awareness workshop is held and will include Members.

- The procedures and code of conduct are published under the name of the Safer Chorley and South Ribble Partnership.
- Maximum publicity is given to the new approach

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

14. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance	√	Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal	√	No significant implications in this area	

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF TRANSFORMATION

15. There will be some minor additional costs associated with the provision of welfare and skip facilities on site. Given the scale and frequency of the events any such costs will be contained within current budgets.

COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF GOVERNANCE

16. The report does not introduce new powers, and as such there are no legal issues. However, as it sets out a new procedure for approaching these matters an equality impact assessment should be considered.

JAMIE CARSON
DIRECTOR PEOPLE AND PLACES

There are no background papers to this report.

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