



REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 1 DECEMBER 2009

**SUBJECT: ACCOMMODATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF
GYPSIES/TRAVELLERS IN GRAMPIAN**

BY: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report summarises the research carried out by Craigforth on behalf of Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, and Moray Councils' into the accommodation needs of Gypsies/Travellers.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to strategic housing matters.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Communities Committee agrees:-

- (i) the recommendations in the report in relation to Grampian wide issues being considered by the Grampian Gypsies/Travellers Inter Agency Group;
- (ii) that the Moray Gypsies/Travellers Multi Agency Group considers the recommendations from the report that are primarily related to Moray;
- (iii) that Officers continue to seek appropriate transit sites; and
- (iv) that recommendations on implementation of the report action plan be brought to a future Communities Committee.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In January 2008, Moray Council along with Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Council commissioned Craigforth to undertake this study. It is a requirement of the Local Housing Strategy that the accommodation needs of Gypsies/Travellers are assessed. The information is required for Housing and Planning purposes.
- 3.2 The research was primarily undertaken by means of face to face discussion with Gypsies/Travellers across the three Council areas. There were also discussions with Officers from the three Councils and Officers employed by

other agencies in contact with Gypsies/Travellers. The research methodology was based on Craigforth's experience of this sort of study.

- 3.3 The research was presented to a joint meeting of the three councils on 21 August 2009 at which point it was publically made available. A copy of the research is in the Member's library. A copy of the executive summary is attached as **APPENDIX I**.

4. FINDINGS OF RESEARCH

- 4.1 A conservative estimate is that there are 500 to 650 Gypsies/Travellers living in Grampian. Two thirds of them travelled at least part of the year. Gypsies/Travellers households are fairly evenly spread through the three authorities with Moray having 47. Based on current trends, Craigforth estimate a potential growth of up to 50 households in Grampian over the next five years.
- 4.2 The average age of Gypsies/Travellers is significantly lower than the average age of the general population. This is consistent with research elsewhere which has shown that Gypsies/Travellers have a significantly lower life expectancy than the general population. 60% of Gypsies/Travellers households reported some sort of health problem.
- 4.3 22% of the Gypsies/Travellers population were unemployed. Of those in employment, 90% were self employed.
- 4.4 Gypsies/Travellers reported a perception that they were subject to harassment and discrimination which affected their quality of life.
- 4.5 There is a clear desire among Gypsies/Travellers to retain the practice of living with their extended family and friends in trailers or mobile homes, with the option of pulling on or off site if they so choose. 1 in 5 Gypsies/Travellers households would wish to buy their own land.
- 4.6 The development of privately owned sites was a common aspiration among Gypsies/Travellers in Grampian. Many felt money and planning restrictions made this difficult to achieve.

5. RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The researchers identified the following main priorities across all three local authorities:-
- A shortfall of about 35 pitches
 - Whether the current provision does really match the culture, lifestyle and behaviour of Gypsies/Travellers
 - A need for better information and monitoring of Gypsies/Travellers
 - Facilitating Gypsies/Travellers to arrive at their own solutions
 - Developing communities, better relations and improved quality of life
 - To look at the role of GTEIP and other means of liaising with Gypsies/Travellers

- 5.2 The researchers identified the following local priorities to be considered by Moray Council:-
- The development of a permanent site
 - Floating support and quality of life issues.
 - How equipment and adaptations services could be made easier to access by Gypsies/Travellers on the privately owned sites in the area
 - Ongoing consultation with Gypsies/Travellers in Moray
 - Assessment of what, if any, action is appropriate in light of negative perceptions among some Gypsies/Travellers.
- 5.3 The research recommends four outcomes:-
- Better planning by local authorities, RSL's and partner organisations to anticipate, and plan to meet, the future needs and aspirations of Gypsies/Travellers in Grampian.
 - Gypsies/Travellers normally resident in Grampian and Gypsies/Travellers visiting the area have accommodation that meets their needs, culture and lifestyle.
 - Individual support and community development needs are identified and met.
 - Better and more constructive relationships are developed between Gypsies/Travellers and settled communities
- 5.4 The research contains an Action Plan which the researchers recommend that the Councils implement. This Action Plan is attached as **APPENDIX II**.
- 5.5 The key recommendations for Moray relate to the provision of a small permanent site and 1 to 3 halting sites (one possibly shared with Aberdeenshire). Since 2004 the Moray Council has been trying to identify transit sites for use by Gypsies/Travellers. This follows the closure of the former Gypsies/Travellers site at Chanonry, Elgin and the rising number of unauthorised encampments in the area. A report to Policy and Resources Committee on 21 October 2008 (paragraph 14 of the minute refers) outlined the difficulties associated with finding and developing such sites. At present Officers are continuing to search for several transit sites for the Council to provide, as instructed by Committee. Private provision is also an option. It is recommended that the Council continues to prioritise the provision of transit sites and that any consideration of a permanent site is delayed until after the transit sites are in operation and the provision is reviewed.
- 5.6 It is proposed that the pan Grampian issues in relation to this research are taken forward for consideration by the Gypsy/Traveller Inter Agency Group. This is a well established group of Officers from the three local authorities.
- 5.7 It is proposed that the recommendations in the Action Plan that relate to Moray are considered by the Moray Gypsies/Travellers Multi Agency Group.

6. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) **Single Outcome Agreement/Service Improvement Plan**

Some of the proposals in this research report will assist the Council to meet its aims in the Single Outcome Agreement in relation to the Social Programme, Social Inclusion, the Local Housing Strategy and the Council's Race Equalities Scheme.

(b) **Policy and Legal**

Local Housing Strategy Guidance from the Scottish Government stipulates that the accommodation needs of Gypsies/Travellers are assessed. Policy H12 of the Local Plan relates to the provision of sites for Gypsies/Travellers

(c) **Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

(d) **Consultations**

Consultation on this report has taken place with the Director of Community Services, the Director of Environmental Services, the Chief Housing Officer and the Senior Area Housing Manager.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 **This report presents the findings of the accommodation needs assessment of Gypsies/Travellers in Grampian. It is recommended that Officers work in co-operation with Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Councils on Grampian wide issues and that the issues pertaining to Moray are dealt with locally. It is recommended that the Moray Council's main priority remains to identify transit sites rather than a permanent site.**

Author of Report: Iain Terry, Housing Programmes Manager
Background Papers: with author
Ref:gt09

Signature: Jill Stewart

Date: 18 November 2009

Designation: Chief Housing officer

Name: Jill Stewart