

## TRAFFORD COUNCIL

**Report to:** Executive  
**Date:** 23 January 2023  
**Report for:** Decision  
**Report of:** Executive Members for Housing and Neighbourhoods and Environmental Services

### Report Title

**Gypsy & Travellers – Temporary Stopping Places**

### Summary

The Scrutiny Committee has considered the issue of visits by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people in Trafford following a number of temporary encampments in the Summer of 2021. A Task and Finish Group was established and reported its findings in March 2022; these were considered by the executive in June – with the decision to explore temporary stopping places.

This report sets out the practical and operational considerations connected with identifying and managing such temporary facilities. It recommends that plans be progressed on a site in Old Trafford on a trial basis

### Recommendation(s)

**It is recommended that that the Executive:**

- (i) Notes the feasibility considerations relevant to the creation of a Temporary Stopping Place.**
- (ii) That plans for a temporary stopping Place at Boyer Street be subject to local consultation.**
- (iii) to delegate to the Corporate Director of Place, in consultation with the Executive Members for Housing and Neighbourhoods and Environmental Services, the decision on whether to proceed following consultation – and if appropriate, all subsequent steps in developing a Temporary Stopping Place.**
- (iv) That if the site progresses, to review its operation after the first summer season.**

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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Background Papers: None.

Implications:

Relationship to Policy Framework/Corporate Priorities	Suitable accommodation or facilities for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people supports the objective Reducing Health Inequalities. A range of evidence suggests that these communities generally suffer worse health outcomes when compared to the settled population.
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	The 2018 Greater Manchester Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showperson Accommodation Assessment Update 2018 provides a strategic context for identifying Gypsy, Roma and Traveller needs.
Financial	Costs associated with the recommended temporary stopping place in this report are expected to be contained within overall current spending levels. Any additional costs are expected to be minimal (less than £5k).
Legal Implications:	The Council addresses unauthorised encampments under Sections 77-78 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. The Police possess powers under sections 61 of the same Act and more recently under Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022
Equality/Diversity Implications	Gypsy, Roma and some Traveller people are protected against discrimination under the Equality Act 2010 in England (Travelling Show People and 'New Age' Travellers do not enjoy protection). Section 149 of the Act provides that public authorities, when exercising their functions, must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons with protected characteristics and those that do not share them. Where exercising public functions such as the provision of education and health services, public authorities are required to have due regard to this equality duty.
Sustainability Implications	The Provision of suitable accommodation supports the 'social' element of sustainable development.
Carbon Reduction	None directly arising
Resource Implications e.g. Staffing / ICT / Assets	Each visit by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people requires significant input from Council staff, notably amongst Environmental Health, Environmental services and where necessary Adults and Children's services. Providing suitable temporary accommodation is also a complex and resource intensive activity.
Risk Management Implications	Unauthorised incursions on to public or private land can pose risks for the public or individuals through the deposition of refuse or lack of adequate sanitation. Any temporary stopping place would require appropriate oversight and management.
Health & Wellbeing Implications	Providing suitable accommodation promotes better health amongst people who are travelling through a

	locality – by providing better sanitation, clean water and refuse facilities
Health and Safety Implications	The cleaning up of sites following encampments may have implications for health & safety

## 1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Committee on 16 March 2022 considered the Interim Report of the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller Visits Task and Finish Group. This group was established in November 2021 following a summer of several unauthorised encampments by visiting gypsies and travellers.
- 1.2 The Executive then considered the Scrutiny recommendations on 20 June 2022. It was agreed to: “Explore the feasibility of providing a Temporary Stopping Place within the Borough and provide a further report on the matter by December 2022”. Accordingly, this current report considers the feasibility of those temporary arrangements, noting that the December Executive was postponed because of the Parliamentary by-election.

## 2.0 The case for Temporary Stopping Places

- 2.1 A temporary stopping place is a facility that becomes available for a short period of time when Gypsies or Travellers visit a community. The concept is that an area of land is identified and then brought into use when the need arises. Often basic facilities such as a waste bin or portable toilets may be provided.
- 2.2 A temporary stopping place is considered to be a lower cost, more informal alternative to a Transit Site. A transit Site is usually developed when there is a regular ongoing need to accommodate visiting travellers to an area. Such sites will usually be available all year and include permanent sanitary facilities.
- 2.3 The business case for such facilities is usually that they provide better outcomes for travelling and settled communities alike – and can save money on costs incurred in connection with unauthorised visits. The cost of establishing negotiated stopping Place will vary considerably according to its scale, nature and location.
- 2.4 The use of informal areas of highway might cost a few thousands of pounds; in contrast a temporary stopping place in Cornwall completed in 2018, cost a reported £185,000. The South Treviddo site includes hard standing, basic facilities and perimeter fencing. Accordingly, provision for reasonable set up costs would need to be made within the capital programme if the Council was to proceed with the concept.
- 2.5 The Council currently incurs costs of the provision of bins, the cleaning up of sites and on the use of Bailiffs to force removal in appropriate circumstances. During the summer of 2022, £11,820 was spent on Bailiffs – partly because of a limited staffing in the Environmental Health Teams. Full costs in terms of staff time and the cleaning up of sites is not recorded in detail but is estimated at between £15-20,000.
- 2.6 Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that such costs will be reduced if a stopping place is secured, as there can be no certainty that gypsy, traveller and Roma people

passing through the Borough will use the temporary facilities. However some authorities who have implemented this policy, report an overall reduction in costs.

### **3.0 Feasibility Considerations**

- 3.1 Site Selection. A key consideration is finding a suitable site – one that is both operationally effective, available for sporadic use and compatible with adjacent uses, including other residents. There is also the practical consideration of ensuring such a site is sufficiently commodious that it is utilised by groups passing through the Borough.
- 3.2 Examination of other areas where this technique has been employed suggest that areas of disused highway or underutilised areas of Council land tend to be best for this type of use. For example County Durham have a series of Temporary Stopping places that are brought into use each year in connection with those travelling to the Appleby Horse Fair in nearby Cumbria. Many of these are laybys or areas of wide highway verge, alongside other land not currently in active use.
- 3.3 Site Facilities. Usually basic facilities such as the provision of a bin and porta-loo are provided on site for the duration of any stay. Any such costs are met by the Local authority although in some cases payment may be secured. Ideally a site would have access to fresh water – obtaining clean water can be problematic for those travelling – but not every site will have an available supply. Issues also arise with metering and related costs.
- 3.4 Site effectiveness. The Purpose of providing a temporary stopping place is to ensure that groups of Gypsies, travellers and Roma people passing through an area have a safe designated place to resort to – and one that does not interfere with the every day activities of the settled population. In Trafford groups often choose to stay on parks or playing fields – and this can disrupt the normal use of those areas for sport and recreation.
- 3.5 Use of stopping places is purely voluntary – and therefore they must be attractive and suitable for use by those travelling through. Many of the authorities who employ such sites are those that cover large rural areas – and so have a wide variety of potential sites available, many of which will be located in a countryside setting. One Metropolitan area which has used the approach successfully is Leeds City Council - but even a City such as Leeds contains a large rural hinterland and urban fringe, alongside its core urban areas. In contrast Trafford is relatively small and highly urbanised; it is evident that our choice of sites will be limited, urban in character and much more constrained.
- 3.6 Where a local authority Transit site is in place, the Local Authority can employ enhanced powers to move travelling peoples off parks and playing fields. The Provision of a temporary stopping place however does not provide the same regulatory advantages – current procedures would remain as at present.

### **4.0 Site Considerations**

- 4.1 In contrast to a permanent Transit site, temporary stopping places are inherently more informal and temporary in nature. As such Highway and Planning Officers have

undertaken a site search of areas of vacant road or highway verge throughout the borough, employing the feasibility considerations set out above.

- 4.2 This exercise reveals there are very limited site options available, largely because most of Trafford is highly urbanised with most land being very intensively used. Accordingly the choice of suitable sites is inevitably constrained.
- 4.3 Having considered the feasibility criteria set out above, the best short term option appears to be to utilise little used road space on Boyer Street for this purpose. The road previously served adjacent land at the Greater Manchester Police Headquarters and a nearby car park. However both are currently not in use – and the northern end of the road is blocked by bollards and pavement from the adjacent Chester Road. As a result use of the road would not cause any obstruction for vehicles – and limited impediment for pedestrians. The Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Greater Manchester Police have been advised of the suggestion.
- 4.4 As a consequence this is a relatively quiet cul de sac – with very few adjoining active uses. Within a few years it is expected that the area will once again become highly developed – but in the meantime it provides a safe, suitable and self-contained environment in which Gypsies and Travellers could be accommodated for a temporary period.
- 4.5 The Boyer Street site requires very little alteration in order to accommodate visiting caravans and vehicles. Consequently the main cost involved in the project would be the provision of bins and portable toilets. This would arise when / if the site was put to use.
- 4.6 It is therefore proposed that the Boyer Street be progressed to consultation with local residents and businesses. This will enable the idea to be tested with local people who live or work close to the site. In order to ensure that the site could be ready for the spring and summer season, it is recommended that all necessary further steps in the process be delegated to the Corporate Director of Place, in consultation with relevant Executive Members.
- 4.7 If it is concluded that the Boyer Street site should proceed as a temporary stopping place, it is further suggested that the role of the site be reviewed after a period of two summer seasons, so its operation and effectiveness can be assessed

## **5.0 Conclusions**

- 5.1 The use of Temporary Stopping Facilities can be helpful in ensuring that groups passing through an area have a safe place to stay with some basic facilities. They can also provide a genuine alternative to temporary stays in locations where conflict with other uses is more likely.
- 5.2 However the choice of potential sites in a dense metropolitan area like Trafford is limited – and we cannot be sure that any land that is identified will prove attractive to visiting groups. The under used road at Boyer Street appears to provide the best chance of finding a suitable site ready for the next travelling season – and so should now be progressed to consultation.

- 5.3 The Trafford local Plan will consider the need for Gypsy and traveller accommodation – including the need for transit pitches. The creation of a Transit site is a much more significant undertaking – in terms of site identification, construction and management costs – but it would provide a better standard of facilities and be more effective in ensuring travelling groups do not resort to unsuitable locations.
- 5.4 Consequently pending consideration of more permanent solutions, further progression of a temporary stopping place appears to provide the best outcome for travelling and settled communities alike,

### **Other Options**

The Council could opt not to pursue a policy of providing temporary stopping places.

### **Consultation**

Any temporary stopping facility would need to be the subject of local consultation. The policies of the Local Plan are subject to formal periods of consultation

### **Reasons for Recommendation**

To ensure that the Council responds appropriately to Gypsy, Traveller and Roma People visiting the Borough.

### **Urgency of Decision**

Not applicable

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 Location Plan

**Key Decision** (as defined in the Constitution): No  
**If Key Decision, has 28-day notice been given?** N/A

Finance Officer Clearance PC

Legal Officer Clearance TR

[CORPORATE] DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE

(electronic) .....

To confirm that the Financial and Legal Implications have been considered and the Executive Member has cleared the report.