

# Subject: Gypsy and Traveller Site Provision in London

**Report to: Housing Committee**

**Report of: Executive Director of Secretariat**

**Date: 10 February 2015**

**This report will be considered in public**

## 1. Summary

- 1.1 This paper sets out for noting the output from the Committee's investigation on Gypsy and Traveller site provision in London.

## 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **That the Committee formally agrees the wording of the letter to the Mayor on Gypsy and Traveller site provision in London.**

## 3. Background

- 3.1 In February 2014, the Housing Committee agreed to investigate the provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites in London as part of its work programme for 2014/15.
- 3.2 The Committee visited two Gypsy and Traveller sites on 9 September 2014: an authorised site in Southwark and an unauthorised site in Greenwich
- 3.3 This was followed up in October 2014 by a Committee meeting which allowed Members to hear from a range of invited guests and to hear first-hand from Gypsies and Travellers about their experiences.

## 4. Issues for Consideration

- 4.1 The Chair, in consultation with party Group Lead Members, agreed to write to the Mayor. The letter, as attached at **Appendix 1**, sets out the following actions:

### **Action 1**

A majority of the Committee believes the GLA should work with the boroughs to commission a London wide update of the GTANA. This would provide the strategic overview necessary to determine the number of new sites London really needs and could support their fairer distribution.

**Action 2**

A majority of the Committee believes that there is a clear need for increased Gypsy and Traveller site provision in London. The GLA has significant land and other assets at its disposal. Other public bodies in London may also be sitting on surplus land over which the GLA is seeking strategic control. The GLA should consider releasing some of this land for the purpose of creating a pot of land that could be developed for additional Gypsy and Traveller sites and in particular to support the creation of a pilot toleration site.

**Action 3**

In light of the apparent reluctance of the London boroughs to create additional sites, the majority of the Committee requests that the Mayor reconsider the value of reinstating pitch targets in the London Plan.

**Action 4**

The GLA should better publicise the availability of Traveller pitch funding as well as providing practical engagement throughout the process, ensuring timeframes are specifically tailored to the longevity of local land searches.

**Action 5**

In the Committee meeting your officers informed us that a further portion of the Traveller Pitch Funding has been allocated for the creation of Gypsy and Traveller sites in London. Please publish details of this funding allocation, the criteria that will be used to allocate these funds and timelines.

**Action 6**

In light of the success of Leeds Council's toleration sites, the GLA should work with the boroughs on a pilot scheme for London to make land available for short-term Gypsy and Traveller sites modelled on the toleration scheme in Leeds.

**Action 7**

The GLA should encourage the boroughs to adopt robust and fair waiting list procedures, taking into account Gypsies and Travellers involuntarily residing in social housing. These might be based on Kent County Council's approach.

**Action 8**

The GLA should ensure that Boroughs are equipped to regularly engage with their local Gypsy and Traveller communities, providing an accessible frontline point of contact in each borough. Consideration should be given to the possibility of using any underspends from the Traveller pitch fund to finance a support system on which the boroughs could draw.

**Action 9**

The GLA together with London Councils should establish a mechanism to support and encourage sub-regional collaborative working in the context of provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites.

- 4.2 The Committee invites the Mayor, and others to whom recommendations are made, to respond. Responses received will be reported to the Committee, at which time any potential follow-up actions will be considered.

## 5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Committee has the power to do what is recommended in this report.

## 6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

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### List of appendices to this report:

Appendix 1 – Letter from the Chair of the Housing Committee to the Mayor, 15 January 2015

<b>Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985</b>
List of Background Papers: None
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