

## RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER

This form **MUST** be used to record any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Executive Member (Portfolio Holder).

The form must be completed and passed to the Service Manager (Committee & Administrative Services) no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 days have passed and the Service Manager (Committee & Administrative Services) has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

**1. Description of decision**

To approve the completion of the two additional pitches at the Kempston Hardwick Travellers Site at a total cost of £703,000 and to update the capital programme with the total cost to be funded from:

- a) The existing capital budget of £410,000.
- b) £154,000 from the existing Gypsy and Traveller Sites and Encampments revenue reserve.
- c) A virement of £139,000 from the anticipated current year underspend in the Temporary Accommodation Acquisition Programme capital budget allocation.

**2. Date of decision**

27 July 2023

**3. Reasons for decision**

To ensure that the provision of accommodation in the Borough for people from the gypsy and traveller community meets the demand that has been assessed through the Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Assessment for the Local Plan 2030.

**4. Alternatives considered and rejected**

The alternatives of not completing the construction or constructing just one pitch were considered and rejected since it would mean the Council was not fulfilling its obligation under the Local Plan 2030 and that there was a shortage of suitable accommodation for families from a disadvantaged section of the community.

**5. How decision is to be funded**

The total cost of £703,000 will be funded from:

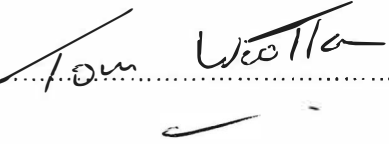
- a) The existing capital budget of £410,000.
- b) £154,000 from the existing Gypsy and Traveller Sites and Encampments revenue reserve.
- c) A virement of £139,000 from the anticipated current year underspend in the Temporary Accommodation Acquisition Programme capital budget allocation.

**6. Conflicts of interest**

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and date of dispensation)	Did the Chief Executive give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and the date of the dispensation).

The Mayor has been consulted on this decision

Not Applicable

Signed 

Date 27 July 2023

Name of Decision Taker TOM WOOTTON

**This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Service Manager (Committee & Administrative Services) as soon as it is completed.**

Date decision published: .....27July2023.....

Date decision can be implemented if not called in: .....8August2023.....

(Decision to be made exempt from call in.....NO.....)

**Bedford Borough Council – The Mayor**

**27 July 2023**

**Report by the Chief Officer for Assessment, Application and Business Support**

**Subject: CONSTRUCTION OF TWO ADDITIONAL PITCHES AT KEMPSTON HARDWICK TRAVELLER SITE**

**1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The Council owns and operates two residential sites for Gypsies and Travellers at Kempston Hardwick (22 pitches) and Willow Drift (14 pitches).
- 1.2 The Council is required to undertake a Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) as part of its Local Plan. In 2017 the GTAA for the Local Plan 2030 identified a need for two additional pitches, one by 2026 and one by 2031. Planning approval was obtained for two additional pitches to be constructed at the existing Kempston Hardwick site and footings have been constructed for one of the pitches.
- 1.3 There is a remaining allocation of £0.410m in the Council's capital programme which is funded by a Homes England grant to be used for the construction of the two new pitches.
- 1.4 Tenders have been invited for the construction of two additional pitches but, despite proactively encouraging contractors to submit tenders, only one company did so. The total cost of the completion is expected to be £0.703m, including £0.154m for security etc. during construction (including ensuring residents safety whilst construction is in progress). It is proposed that this element is funded from the existing Gypsy and Traveller Sites and Encampments Reserve, with the shortfall in the cost funded from an anticipated current year underspend in the Temporary Accommodation Acquisition Programme capital budget allocation.

## **2. Recommendations**

### **2.1 The Mayor is recommended to:**

**Approve the completion of the two additional pitches at the Kempston Hardwick Travellers Site at a total cost of £703,000 and to update the capital programme with the total cost to be funded from:**

- a) The existing capital budget of £410,000.**
- b) £154,000 from the existing Gypsy and Traveller Sites and Encampments revenue reserve.**
- c) A virement of £139,000 from the anticipated current year underspend in the Temporary Accommodation Acquisition Programme capital budget allocation.**

## **3. Reasons for Recommendations**

**3.1 To ensure that the provision of accommodation in the Borough for people from the gypsy and traveller community meets the demand that has been assessed through the Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Assessment for the Local Plan 2030.**

## **4. Key Issues**

### **(a) Legal Issues**

- 4.1 The assessment of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs, as part of carrying out a periodical review of housing needs under section 8 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by section 124 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016), is a statutory requirement.**
- 4.2 The Council does not have a statutory obligation to provide or manage the accommodation, but must ensure that there is suitable provision to meet the assessed need in the Borough.**

(b) Policy Issues

- 4.3 In 2017 the Council commissioned a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) to inform the preparation of the Local Plan 2030. The GTAA concluded that to meet the expected future need from the Traveller community for suitable accommodation, two additional pitches were needed, one in the period 2021 – 2026 and the second in the period 2026 – 2031.
- 4.4 As a result, two policies were included in the Local Plan 2030; Policy 61 explaining that provision will be made for at least two additional permanent G&T pitches between 2015 and 2030 (2015 was the start date of the plan) and Policy 62 which explains that the two new pitches will be provided at the existing Kempston Hardwick G&T site.
- 4.5 The delivery of the two pitches at Kempston Hardwick will satisfy Policy 61 of the adopted LP2030 and will go some small way towards meeting the updated need for the 2020 – 2025 period set out in Local Plan 2040.
- 4.6 The GTAA 2017 and GTAA 2021 are both publicly available on the Council's web site <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/planning-traveller-sites>.

(c) Resource Implications

- 4.7 The Council has previously received Government grant funding towards the cost of constructing the two additional pitches. Following initial work to construct the footings for one of the pitches the remaining approved capital budget is £0.410m.
- 4.8 A tendering process has been undertaken for the work to complete the construction of the two additional pitches. Despite proactive work by the Council's Design Services in encouraging construction companies to bid for the work, only one tender was received.
- 4.9 The overall cost of the work, including the Council's design fees and contingency, is circa £0.703m. The available budget is £0.410m, therefore, completing the construction would be likely to result in an overspend in the region of £0.293m.
- 4.10 The cost includes £0.154m for security during construction (including ensuring residents safety whilst construction is in progress), security fencing etc. It is proposed that this element of the cost should be met from the Gypsy and Traveller Sites and Encampments Reserve.

4.11 The remaining expected cost of £0.139m is proposed to be met by virement from the temporary accommodation acquisition programme capital budget allocation.

(d) Risk Implications

4.12 If the additional two plots are not completed it is likely that there will be insufficient accommodation for Gypsy and Traveller families in the Borough. This could lead to families living long-term in unauthorised roadside encampments leading to increased inequality in accessing essential services, such as schooling for children and healthcare.

4.13 The latest two GTAAs have concluded that there is no requirement for the Council to provide a temporary stopping site in the Borough as there are relatively few unauthorised encampments. If there is an increase in the number of unauthorised encampments, particularly by families with a local connection to the Borough and no permanent pitch, it is likely that future assessments may recommend provision of temporary stopping sites and/or tolerated stopping.

(e) Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Council by 2030

4.14 The two additional pitches will be constructed on an existing traveller's caravan site and in accordance with planning and building control requirements. The land on which the pitches will be constructed is currently rough land and has regularly been subject to fly tipping. Completing the pitches will prevent fly tipping on the land where the pitches are developed.

4.15 No adverse environmental implications have been identified as arising from the recommendations in this report.

(f) Equality Analysis

4.16 In preparing this report, due consideration has been given to the Borough Council's statutory Equality Duty as set out in Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010, to have due regard to the need to;

(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

4.17 Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers are groups with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. Completing the additional caravan pitches will increase the availability of accommodation in the Borough which meets the cultural needs of the gypsy and traveller community.

## 5. Details

- 5.1 The Council has identified a need for two additional permanent caravan pitches for gypsy and traveller families in the Borough through its Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment.
- 5.2 The accommodation will meet the specific cultural requirements of gypsy of traveller families by providing a modern self-contained dayroom or utility building containing a kitchen, bathroom and seating area, together with sufficient hard standing for two caravans or mobile homes and parking for other vehicles.
- 5.3 Whilst much of the cost can be met from a Homes England grant received by the Council for this purpose, due to the current high costs in the construction industry there will be a shortfall of circa £0.296m compared to the approved budget.
- 5.4 The construction will be undertaken on a residential caravan site with a high number of children living on the site and regular vehicle movements by residents. Therefore, it is essential that the construction sites are carefully managed to minimise safety risks and the contractor has allowed for security costs in the tender. The tender also allows for additional security fencing and for some planting to improve the environmental amenity around the new pitches. There is an established Gypsy and Traveller Sites and Encampments Reserve intended to meet costs such as security requirements at the sites and, therefore, it is proposed to meet these costs of £0.154m from that reserve.
- 5.5 The remaining cost of £0.139m can be met by virement from the temporary accommodation acquisition programme capital budget allocation.
- 5.6 Throughout the construction the Council will continue to work with the contractor to reduce costs wherever feasible.
- 5.7 The Mayor is requested to approve the completion of two additional pitches and the use of the reserve funding as proposed in this report.

6. **Summary of Consultations and Outcome**

Relevant Managers

7. **Ward Councillor Views**

Not applicable for this report.

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*Previous Relevant Minutes:* None

*Background Papers:* None

*Appendices* None