

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

**REPORT OF THE INTERIM ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF
REGULATION AND ENFORCEMENT
TO THE LICENSING AND PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE**

12 FEBRUARY 2020
ALL WARDS

UPDATE REPORT ON UNAUTHORISED ENCAMPMENTS

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides Committee with an update on work being undertaken to further manage unauthorised encampments in the city since the last report on the 12th October 2020.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the report is noted and outstanding minute number 1231 be discharged.
- 2.2 That Committee requests a further report to be brought in 3 months to update on the various work items contained within this report.

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3. Background

- 3.1 This report is an update on activities since the last report to your Committee on 12th October 2020.
- 3.2 An unauthorised encampment is one which is established on land without the express permission of the landowner. The groups responsible generally comprise elements of Gypsy, Romany, Traveller or other ethnic groupings and are collectively known colloquially as “travellers” or more correctly GRT.

Transit Sites

- 4.1 As previously reported, colleagues in Housing and the Inclusive Growth Directorate have applied for capital funding to bring the two transit sites in the Birmingham Development Plan (BDP). Currently £50k has been approved from the Homes England Grant and a further capital expenditure of £290k has been identified for 2019/20 and 2020/21.
- 4.2 Proctor Street transit site has been operational since 1st November 2020. There have been 3 groups that have used the site. One for 2 weeks and the others for 4 weeks.
- 4.3 Legal action has been successfully taken in the County Court to recover the land in Aston Brook Street. Those occupying the land have been ordered to leave this site and this will enable the council to again have vacant possession and develop the site. Currently at the time of writing there is one vehicle on the land and an application has been made for High Court bailiffs to enforce the possession order. Housing Officers and a Programme Manager have been requested to move forward with the development plans. Planning permission has already been secured for this work.
- 4.3 Legal advice on Tameside Drive site has been requested but cannot be reported. as the matter remains with legal services.

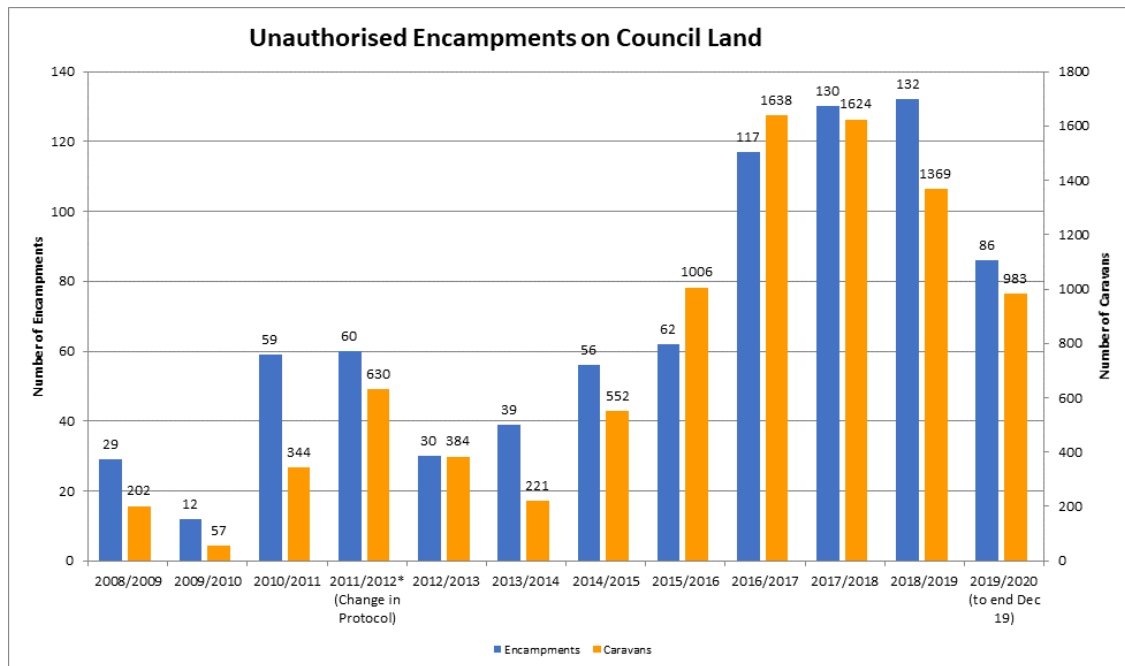
Unauthorised Encampments

- 5.1 The number of incursions has dropped markedly since the opening of the transit site. The four unauthorised in November were already on land when the transit site opened. These encampments declined to go to the transit site and left the city by the 8th of November 2019. In the remaining weeks of November and December 2019 there has been a couple of reported overnight stops on council land which arrived late in the evening and had vacated by the time our officers arrived the next morning. In January there was an encampment on a park in Balsall Heath that moved following the service of a Sec62A notice. They were resident for 20 hours and declined to use the transit site.

Financial Year		2019-20												
			April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Council Land	Number of Incursions		7	8	17	19	14	8	9	4	0	1	0	0
	Number of Caravans		51	43	149	363	128	91	125	33	0	8	0	0
	Mean Hours to Depart		387.3	116.0	127.1	131.8	345.2	309.6	179.7	53.3	0	20.0	0	0
	Mean Days to Depart		16.4	5.4	5.8	5.9	14.7	13.3	8.0	2.8	0	1.0	0	0
Private Land	Number of Incursions		0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	7	0	0
	Number of Caravans		0	0	0	0	10	11	0	15	0	52	0	0
	Mean Hours to Depart		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

5.2 Although a reduction in the overall numbers of unauthorised encampments, there has been a slight increase in unauthorized encampments on private land. Predominantly this has been on car parks to supermarkets. Both WM Police and our officers have spoken to the managers for these facilities, who have declined the use of Sec 62A notices in favour of employing their own bailiffs to remove the encampment.

5.3 The graph below shows the trend data for total encampments per year since 2008.



7. Consultation

7.1 The report is for information and, therefore, no consultation has been undertaken.

7.2 Information continues to be made available to MPs and elected members to offer support in reducing the impact on communities that unauthorised encampments have and to reduce the burden on land owning departments.

8. Implications for Resources

- 8.1 Regulation and Enforcement is responsible for the assessments leading up to legal action, the service of notices and arrangement of resources for an eviction to occur. The default costs (bailiff actions), the repair of land and its cleansing, is borne by the land owning departments. The Environmental Health resources employed in carrying out the work detailed in this report are contained within the approved budget available to your Committee.

9. Implications for Policy Priorities

- 9.1 This work supports the Regulation and Enforcement Division's mission statement to provide 'locally accountable and responsive fair regulation for all - achieving a safe, healthy, clean, green and fair trading city for residents, business and visitors'.

10. Public Sector Equality Duty

- 10.1 The management of unauthorised encampments is a process that affects groups and individuals who are (mostly) from specific and defined ethnic minorities e.g. Romany Gypsies, Irish Travelers.

INTERIM ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF REGULATION AND ENFORCEMENT

Background Papers: Nil