

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

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

15 FEBRUARY 2017
ALL WARDS

UPDATE REPORT ON UNAUTHORISED ENCAMPMENTS

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides Committee with an update on work being undertaken to improve the response to unauthorised encampments in the city since 14 December 2016.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That outstanding minute number 775 be discharged.
- 2.2 That Committee agree to a further report 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 Decembers Licensing and Public Protection Committee.
- 3.2 An unauthorised or illegal encampment is one which is established on land without the express permission of the landowner. The groups responsible comprise elements of Gypsy, Romany, Traveler or other ethnic groupings and are collectively known as travelers or GRT.

4 Update on the Revised Protocol

- 4.1 The revised Memorandum of Understanding, between West Midlands Police and the Council has been circulated on an internal intranet for West Midlands Police officers to refer to when dealing with unauthorised encampments. The document has also been up loaded to BCC's web pages.
- 4.2 The seven West Midlands Chief Executives have committed to having a unified response to Unauthorised Encampments across the seven Metropolitan Local Authorities. This group is being led by Nick Page, Chief Executive for Solihull, and Superintendent Phil Dolby for West Midlands Police. The task and finish group set up to deliver this document has agreed that the overarching policy should be the same for the whole of the West Midlands Force area but with local nuances in tackling unauthorised encampments being contained in appendices for each authority. This will enable localised solutions to be detailed and ensure our response is not out of step with local need.
- 4.3 The Head of Environmental Health met with Superintendent Matt Shaer at Lloyd House on the 25th January 2017 and have agreed to explore a more integrated response to dealing with those encampments that participate in anti-social behaviour and/or criminality.

5 Appointment of Additional Support

- 5.1 Currently Environmental Health has two officers, with substantive roles in the waste enforcement team that are redirected as necessary to tackle unauthorised encampments. These officers with some assistance from land owning department staff, primarily in Parks, they have undertaken all of the interventions necessary to evict and recover council land for over 10 years.
- 5.2 Following a procurement process additional support for these officers has now been arranged. The successful company is Equita Ltd. They have quoted for undertaking first visits, serving notice on unauthorised encampments to vacant land and undertaking the eviction. Having this procured service provides resilience to support our two officers and to keep a continuous service when they are on leave or only one is at work.

6 Update on the Provision of a Transit Site

- 6.1 The Head of Environmental Health has been advised that a proposal to create a shared transit site with Sandwell Council is not going to be progressed.
- 6.2 A meeting has been held with Housing, Legal Services and Planning & Regeneration to look into bringing forward the approved site for Proctor Street in Nechells. These officers are looking at how this can be developed and funded.
- 6.3 At a meeting held on 2 February 2017, Planning Officers have identified land which could on a temporary or long term basis be used for a transit site. Currently no firm proposals have been forthcoming but we do now have a number of sites that need to be investigated and officers are looking at determining.

7 Implications for Resources

- 7.1 The resources employed in carrying out the work detailed in this report are contained within the approved budget available to your Committee.

8 Implications for Policy Priorities

- 8.1 The protocol contributes to fulfilling the Council's vision (Vision 2020) set out in the *Council Business Plan for 2016*, specifically to provide 'thriving local communities' and to work towards delivering 'a healthy, happy city'.
- 8.2 The work also 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'.

9 Public Sector Equality Duty

- 9.1 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. The changes to the policy is covered by the existing Equality Assessments and will be updated when the regional assessments is brought forward.

ACTING DIRECTOR OF REGULATION AND ENFORCEMENT

Background Papers: Nil