

**Traveller Meeting – Draft Notes**  
**Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2018, MUDC Magherafelt Office**

**In Attendance:**

Members: Cllr N Doris, Cllr C McFlynn, Cllr A Forde, Cllr R McGinley, Cllr D McKinney

Other: Mark Kelso (MUDC), Andrew Cassells (MUDC), Dr Chris Boomer (MUDC), Ursula Mezza (MUDC), Fiona McClements (MUDC), Philip Clarke (MUDC), Johnny McNeill (MUDC), Georgina Junk (MUDC) M Bradley (NIHE), A Hickey (NIHE)

**Apologies:** Cllr K Ashton, Cllr P McLean, Cllr T Wilson (MUDC), M Dallat (NIHE), Connor Smith (NIHE) N Bratton (DFI Roads)

**Meeting Draft Notes / Actions**

M Kelso opened the meeting. Cllr McGinley advised it would be beneficial to have the meeting Officer-chaired on this occasion and agree an elected member chair at the next meeting.

Notes of meeting held 24 July 2018 were noted.

**Draft Terms of Reference**

Following discussion re meeting times was proposed and agreed that meetings would be held bi-monthly commencing 5.30pm in Cookstown in Cookstown offices. Next meeting scheduled for Tuesday 15 January 2019.

Terms of Reference had been drawn up for discussion. A Hickey queried how potential conflict of interests for members /officers sitting on planning committee and working group would be addressed. M Kelso advised members had all received relevant training and would identify any potential issues if circumstances required. It was agreed that the working group would facilitate NIHE - Place Shaping working to address their statutory responsibility and it would not get into the detail of the site selection.

Dr Boomer advised that Planning Service have appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure no potential for conflict of interest. The group has to identify the need on different levels. Planners are currently working with NIHE at regional level to draw up a strategic needs assessment and their role was in an advisory capacity, not to identify any specific site. Dr Boomer accepted the differences between the strategic and the operational assessment. Any planning application for a temporary or permanent serviced site solution would be accompanied by a planning statement which demonstrates the specific housing need for the proposed accommodation.

Cllr McGinley stated that the Working Group is a task and finish group, with no decision making powers. The Group's role was to identify and scope out potential temporary and permanent sites for travellers, which would be separate from the planning process. Council have the opportunity to be pioneers in this process.

Cllr McGinley asked if it would be useful to have a Human Rights Commission representative on the group in view of their ongoing work with traveller issues. M Kelso advised officers were already engaged with the NIHRC and working group would address relevant issues.

## **Update on Current Position**

Cllr McKinney advised it would be useful to get a location map drawn up of all potential sites for discussion between the group and those travellers who would be utilising any sites. Cllr Forde agreed this would be a useful exercise as there was a clear need for some type of site provision.

Dr Boomer indicated that the group should be mindful that travellers' needs come in different shapes and sizes. One larger site might not be the best solution. It may be easier to integrate smaller groups.

M Bradley asked if there was a duty on Council within its Community Plan to bring education or health issues on board for travellers. M Kelso advised matter can be referred to the relevant Thematic Group for consideration.

Cllr McFlynn advised that Council can advise NIHE on what sites they may have available and NIHE can carry out the scoping exercise as is their duty. NIHE had agreed on a 'halting' site to accommodate 6/8 families.

The Council are not in a position to share their landownership details with NIHE as it does not exist in a format that can be easily shared. A Cassells agreed to assist in identifying any potential sites which can be forwarded to NIHE.

A Cassells queried if there is a set of criteria to evaluate sites to measure if they are suitable. A Hickey advised this was a set out in the policy guidance and would be addressed through the PAD process.

M Kelso queried if there would be any potential for redundant portions of roadway to be considered given extent of new roadworks in the area. A Hickey agreed to take this up with DFI Roads.

Some discussion took place on what size of ground would be required. A Hickey advised approximately 1.5 acres – this is in line with Planning Policy Guidelines.

A Hickey was asked to circulate a map which defined the site selection area.

NIHE have written to all directors of statutory authority and central departments with regard to their landholdings in the former Magherafelt district Council area and await their feedback. NIHE will be following this up with relevant staff from these bodies in the coming weeks.

Councillor McKinney raised the issue regarding size/design guide. A Hickey undertook to circulate the Design Guide for Traveller Accommodation.

M Kelso asked if any complaints or actions had been taken to address the unauthorised temporary facility on the lay-by at Hillhead Road. F McClements advised that the area was under the control of Roads service and believed that Notices had been served. The complainant's concerns would appear to be, not with the travellers themselves, but with rubbish build up and certain behaviours. The complainant seems to be engaging with the travellers and the situation is improving.

M Bradley advised that Conor Smyth had assessed the site and had referred the matter to Roads Service who own the land.

A Hickey also undertook to check whether DfI have initiated court proceedings to move the families currently residing at Hillhead Road, Castledawson.

Cllr McKinney queried facilities at the site and the merits of providing a skip or bins on-site. A Cassells advised that the rubbish was currently being managed by travellers themselves.

Cllr McGinley advised that it is each agency's duty to deal with those issues relevant to them in an impartial and objective way, which minimises risk to children and families on the site, taking into consideration the control of rubbish and sanitation issues (provision of portaloo facilities). I.

### **DRAFT ACTIONS FOR REVIEW**

1. Map and scope out potential Temporary and Permanent sites and provide a list all properties owned by NIHE and Council, in the legacy Magherafelt area (MUDC / NIHE). A Cassells agreed to assist in identifying any sites which may be in council ownership of sites as put forward by NIHE. A Hickey was asked to circulate a map which defined the site selection area. NIHE have written to all directors of statutory authority and central departments with regard to their landholdings in the former Magherafelt district Council area and await their feedback. NIHE will be following this up with relevant staff from these bodies in the coming weeks.
2. A Hickey undertook to circulate the Design Guide for Traveller Accommodation.
3. Consider the legal connotations if Council / DFI Roads were to provide skips / portaloo's at the present site (MUDC / DFI).
4. Review and consider NIHRC recommendations for traveller sites. ( NIHE/ MUDC)
5. Get an update on the current situation with the traveller families on the site to assess their needs (NIHE). A Hickey also undertook to check whether DfI have initiated court proceedings to move the families currently residing at Hillhead Road, Castledawson.

### **NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2019, in Cookstown offices, at 5.30pm.

### **AOB**

Councillor Bateson has retired and a new Member is to be nominated to the Travellers Working Group.