

Hart District Council, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Traveller Transit and Temporary Stopping Places Task and Finish Group

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

There is a need to increase the provision of traveller sites to address under provision, maintain an appropriate supply level and reduce unauthorised encampments. The *immediate* need is to provide additional transit and temporary stopping places to meet the accommodation needs of travellers if unauthorised encampments are to be reduced.

The role of the T&FG at this stage is not to pinpoint specific sites, but to establish a framework for local communities to actively participate in the process of identifying and supporting these sites.

Definitions

‘Transit site’

A pitch on which a person is entitled to station a mobile home under the terms and agreement for a fixed period of up to 3 months. Transit sites are permanent sites used to provide temporary accommodation for their residents. Lengths of stay can vary but are usually set at between 28 days and 3 months. They are not intended as a permanent base for any household.

‘Travellers’

Travellers means persons of the beneficiary as set out in the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites and the National Planning Policy Framework, which, for the avoidance of doubt, includes Romany Gypsies, Irish Travellers, New Age Travellers, and travelling show people. The word ‘traveller’ should be construed accordingly.

‘Temporary stopping place’

Pieces of land in temporary use as authorised short-term (less than 28 days) stopping places for all travelling communities. They may not require planning permission if they are in use for fewer than 28 days. They are not occupied all year round but may be made available at times of increased demand, such as weddings, funerals, fairs or cultural celebrations that Travellers attend.

2. Membership

Membership of the T&FG:

- Up to 4 members drawn from the new 2024/25 Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee to comprise: 1 from each of the 3 political groups + independent(s).

The T&FG may invite officers to join meetings, including:

- Chief Executive
- Director of Place
- Planning Policy Manager
- Development Management Manager

The T&FG will be largely self-contained but may draw upon modest support from Committee Services to assist with meeting arrangements and finalisation of outputs.

3. Authority

The terms of reference for the T&FG were agreed upon at the O&S committee meeting on 16 April 2024.

The T&FG is accountable to O&S Committee for successfully completing its activities.

The T&FG is not a constituted committee of Hart District Council. There is no requirement to meet in public or make any notes or minutes public.

4. Activities

Ultimate success in identifying a suitable community engagement strategy requires an assessment of the nature of engagement with all sections of the local community. The T&FG will assess how to encourage positive engagement with some or all the following groups:

- Local travellers and representative groups
- Current site residents within Hart District or families on unauthorised encampments to seek their views on whether the proposed site would be used, whether it is in an appropriate area, what facilities would need to be provided etc
- Local residents and businesses
- Education, planning, health, social services, and transport authorities
- Relevant local agencies such as police and fire services
- Neighbouring authorities within the expected catchment area
- Parish Councils, local MPs

The T&FG will also need to be able to articulate the consequences for local communities if positive engagement is not forthcoming.

The T&FG shall (method):-

- Gather member and community (particularly Parish Council) views
- Understand the existing issue
- Research best practice and other council's operational experience
- Draft and agree a report summarising the activities undertaken and recommendations for consideration at O&S for late summer 2024
- Publish the report to O&S Members and Chief Executive.

5. Decision Making

The T&FG has no formal decision-making powers.

The final report should be a broad consensus, suitable for implementing an engagement exercise to identify sites. Minority views should be included.

6. Meeting Protocol

The T&FG is free to decide its own schedule of meetings, their content, attendees and locations.

Members of the T&FG shall treat information noted as being operationally or commercially sensitive appropriately. Additional constraints or controls may be required to share this with other Cllrs; Committee Services should be consulted to ensure data breaches are avoided.

7. Reporting Structure

A brief, verbal update is requested at O&S in September (and bi-monthly thereafter if the end date is moved).

April 2024

The main output will be a single focussed report (~10 pages) in Hart document style.