

Report to	Cabinet
Date of meeting	14th December 2021
Lead Member / Officer	Councillor Mark Young Lead Member for Planning, Public Protection, Safer Communities and Domestic Abuse
Report authors	Angela Loftus (Strategic Planning & Housing Manager) & Kim Waller (Lead Project Manager)
Title	Denbighshire's Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2021

1. What is the report about?

1.1. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires that an assessment of accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers must be undertaken and submitted to Welsh Government every 5 years. The Council is now required to undertake and submit a new assessment, as the existing assessment was approved in 2017. This report outlines the approach taken and the findings and recommendations of the draft Denbighshire Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1. The purpose of this report is to present the draft Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment for Denbighshire and to seek approval from Cabinet for submission to Welsh Government. The deadline for the GTAA to be submitted to Welsh Government is 24th February 2022. The draft Denbighshire Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2021 (GTAA) is attached as Appendix 1 (Appendix D to Appendix 1 is excluded from publication by virtue of Paragraphs 12 and 13 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972).

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. That Cabinet confirms support for the approach adopted for the delivery of Denbighshire's Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment as being robust and in line with Welsh Government guidance.
- 3.2. That Cabinet approves the draft Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2021 for submission to Welsh Government.
- 3.3. Delegate authority for the Lead Member Planning, Public Protection, Safer Communities and Domestic Abuse to agree any minor editorial changes required to the draft Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment, prior to submission to Welsh Government, and
- 3.4. That Cabinet confirms it has read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (Appendix 3) as part of its consideration.

4. Report details

Background

- 4.1. The Housing Act (Wales) 2014 places a legal duty on Local Authorities to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers (Section 101) and subsequently meet those needs (Section 103). In line with this requirement the Council is now required to undertake and submit a new Assessment to Welsh Government. An up to date GTAA is also a requirement for the replacement Local Development Plan.
- 4.2. Welsh Government have published detailed statutory guidance '*Undertaking Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments*'¹. Welsh Government will assess the completed GTAA against this methodology. The GTAA is required to identify permanent residential and transit accommodation needs in Denbighshire. It is not required to identify locations for sites.
- 4.3. Consultants Opinion Research Services (ORS) were commissioned jointly with Conwy County Borough Council to undertake the new GTAA on behalf of both Councils.

¹ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/undertaking-gypsy-and-traveller-accommodation-assessments.pdf>

Separate assessments and reports have been produced for each authority. A robust project management approach has been adopted with the establishment of a Member-led Project Board, with the Leader and Lead Member working with Senior Officers to direct this work ensuring Member involvement, openness and transparency.

- 4.4. Elected Members and Scrutiny Committee had previously raised concerns regarding the level of consultation with Gypsy and Traveller communities and the need for early engagement with Members. Communities Scrutiny Committee agreed at its meeting on 13th May 2021 to establish a Task and Finish Group to provide support to the development of the new GTAA. (Terms of Reference are attached as Appendix 2).
- 4.5. The purpose of the Group has been to ensure that the approach taken to deliver the new GTAA complies with the Welsh Government methodology and that previous feedback is taken into account in line with Scrutiny requirements.
- 4.6. At its meeting on 26th July 2021, Communities Scrutiny Committee endorsed the Work Brief and the Stakeholder Communication and Engagement Plan (these can be viewed as [Appendices 2 & 3 to business item 4](#) on that meeting's agenda) developed by the Task & Finish Group to support the delivery of the GTAA in line with the Welsh Government methodology. Scrutiny Committee confirmed that it supported the approach adopted as being robust and in line with Welsh Government methodology and supported the launch of the GTAA. Work on the Assessment was undertaken through August to October 2021. The Task & Finish Group have reviewed the findings and recommendations of the GTAA and are satisfied that the Assessment has been carried out in compliance with WG methodology and followed the agreed Work Brief and Stakeholder Communication and Engagement Plan. The final report and conclusions of the Task and Finish Group were discussed by Communities Scrutiny Committee on 9th December 2021.
- 4.7. A wide range of methods have been used to raise awareness of the GTAA and to engage with the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (GRT) community in line with the Stakeholder Communication and Engagement Plan. Work initially consisted of gathering data from a number of sources including the 2011 Census, unauthorised encampment data, planning records, the housing register (SARTH), affordable housing register (Tai Teg) and liaison with Traveller Education and partner Registered Social Landlords. The study was publicised to ensure that the Travelling community were aware of the study and were encouraged to participate. The work was promoted via a press release,

social media, posters in the community, through frontline services including the Health Board and North Wales Police, and surveys to Elected Members and City Town and Community Councils. Information was circulated through GRT advocacy organisation – Travelling Ahead and through the GRT Liaison Officer.

4.8. Fieldwork and data collection for the survey was undertaken by Opinion Research Services (ORS). Gypsy and Traveller households who had been identified were interviewed to assess their needs using the survey questionnaire provided within the WG methodology. A total of 10 interviews were completed with households living on unauthorised sites and in bricks and mortar within the County. Information collected from the interviews forms the basis of the needs assessment. Work on the Assessment has now been completed and the draft GTAA is attached as Appendix 1.

4.9. The draft Denbighshire GTAA (Appendix 1) concludes that:

- There is a need for 8 residential pitches to meet the identified needs of 3 households/ extended family groups in the County.
- There is no evidence of need for a permanent transit site, due to the low numbers of unauthorised encampments, short term nature of these encampments and the fact that interviews with Gypsies and Travellers did not identify there was a need for permanent transit provision locally. It is recommended that the management based approach currently applied to unauthorised encampments could be further developed based on best practice from across the UK, which may include 'negotiated stopping'.
- Future household growth is predicted to be 4 additional households from 2026 - 2033

4.10. If approved by Cabinet, the next step will be to submit the draft GTAA to Welsh Government for its approval.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

Completion of the GTAA will contribute to the Corporate priority: *Housing* by identifying the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

Consultants were procured jointly with CCBC to undertake the GTAA. The DCC commitment of £5.5k will be met from the LDP budget.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

A Well-being Impact Assessment has been carried out for the project and is attached as Appendix 3. This concludes that the overall impact is positive.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

The Task and Finish Group established by Communities Scrutiny Committee has met six times and informed the development of the Stakeholder Communication and Engagement Plan and Work Brief. Scrutiny endorsed the GTAA Work Brief and Stakeholder Communication and Engagement Plan and confirmed support for the approach adopted at its meeting on 26th July 2021. A final report from the Task and Finish Group and the draft GTAA were considered at Communities Scrutiny Committee on 9th December 2021. Due to timescales a verbal update from this meeting will be provided at Cabinet. The Stakeholder Communication and Engagement Plan included activities to seek input from the Travelling community assisted by the new post of Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Liaison Officer. Work has been undertaken with the advocacy organisation Travelling Ahead.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

As set out in Section 6 there are no direct costs related to the work of the Task and Finish Group and it is welcome that the initial costs of consultants have been taken account of within existing budgets.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

A number of risks to the project have been identified and have been included in the full project business case risk assessment. A lack of political support has been identified as a significant risk which has led to the engagement of the Leader and Lead Member in the project from the start. The establishment of the Task and Finish Group and reports to Scrutiny have aimed to ensure wider Member involvement in the project.

11. Power to make the decision

Section 101 - Housing (Wales) Act 2014