

Report to	Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	19 th October 2023
Lead Member / Officer	<p>Cllr. Win Mullen-James – Lead Member for Local Development and Planning</p> <p>Cllr. Peter Scott - Chair – Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment Task and Finish Group</p>
Head of Service	<p>Emlyn Jones</p> <p>Head of Planning, Public Protection & Countryside Services</p>
Report author	Kimberley Mason (Corporate Project Manager)
Title	Revision of Denbighshire’s Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) (2023) – report back to Communities Scrutiny from the Task and Finish Group

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 (WG) every 5 years. The Council undertook the assessment between August and October 2021, and this was submitted to WG on 24 December 2021.
- 1.2. Following Cabinet approval and WG submission of the previous Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA), a family with an existing need who had previously declined to participate, contacted the Council, and asked to now be included.
- 1.3. Following a report to Cabinet Briefing on 9 January 2023, a Task and Finish Group (T&F) was established to support work on the new assessment. The T&F Group has

now concluded its work and the final report from the Group is attached as [Appendix 1](#). This report provides the conclusions from the work of the T&F Group.

- 1.4. This report also presents the revised draft GTAA for Denbighshire, attached as [Appendix 2](#) to be re-submitted to WG following Cabinet approval.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to update Scrutiny Committee on the work of the T&F Group. Work on the revised GTAA has now been completed and the conclusions of the T&F Group will help to inform Scrutiny's consideration of the draft revised GTAA.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. That Scrutiny endorses the conclusion of the T&F Group that the WG methodology has been applied appropriately to the analysis of need.
- 3.2. That Scrutiny confirms support for the approach adopted for the delivery of Denbighshire's GTAA as being robust and in line with WG guidance.
- 3.3. That Scrutiny recommends to Cabinet that the revised draft GTAA should be approved for re-submission to WG.
- 3.4. That the Committee confirms that it has read, understood, and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment, attached as [Appendix 3](#) as part of its consideration. This was completed prior to the first assessment submission in 2021 and has been reviewed in 2023.

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). There is a legal requirement (Housing (Wales) Act 2014) for GTAAs to be undertaken as a minimum every 5 years. An up to date GTAA is also a requirement for the replacement Local Development Plan (LDP). The deadline for the GTAA to be submitted to Welsh Government was 24 February 2022, but local authorities are permitted to submit a revised GTAA until WG approval. As of September 2023, WG has not yet provided any feedback to any local authorities in

Wales and no clear indication as to when this is likely to occur has been provided either.

- 4.2. WG have published detailed statutory guidance '*Undertaking Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments*'¹ and will assess the completed GTAA against this methodology.
- 4.3. A robust project management approach was re-established in 2022 with a Member-led Project Board, with the Lead Member working with Senior Officers to direct this work ensuring Member involvement, openness, and transparency.

Task and Finish Group

- 4.4. The purpose of the Group has been to ensure that the approach taken to deliver the revised GTAA complies with the WG methodology and that previous feedback regarding Member and community involvement is considered within the document in line with Scrutiny requirements.
- 4.5. The T&F Group has met three times since March 2023. They have reviewed progress on the assessment and the findings of the revised draft GTAA report. The Lead Member, Councillor Win Mullen-James has also attended meetings as a member of the group. Their final report is attached as [Appendix 1](#).
- 4.6. The revised draft GTAA findings and recommendations were presented to the T&F Group at its meeting on 21 September and the Group agreed that they were satisfied that the WG methodology had been applied appropriately to the analysis of need.

Draft Denbighshire GTAA

- 4.7. A wide range of methods were 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 when the initial work was carried out in 2021.
- 4.8. For the revised assessment, the consultants, Opinion Research Services (ORS) who undertook the assessment in 2021 for Denbighshire, contacted the additional family

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

for inclusion in the resubmission, assessing their needs using the survey questionnaire provided within the WG methodology. ORS also contacted the existing families interviewed in 2021 to ensure their circumstances had not changed and that their information was updated accordingly.

4.9. Work on the Assessment has now been completed and the revised draft GTAA is attached as Appendix 2.

4.10. The revised draft Denbighshire GTAA concludes that:

Based upon the evidence presented in ORS' study the estimated additional pitch provision needed for Gypsies and Travellers in Denbighshire for the first 5 years of the study period (2023/24 - 2028/29) is for **16 permanent residential pitches**.

Based on the need by 2033, the end of the Denbighshire replacement LDP period, is for a further **2 permanent residential pitches** for future household growth.

This gives a total need for the whole period across Denbighshire for **18 permanent residential pitches** which is **an increase of 6 permanent residential pitches from the previous GTAA completed in 2021**.

To clarify, 1 pitch will meet the needs of 1 household.

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.

4.11. Discussions at this meeting will be reported to Cabinet on 21 November 2023 and the intention is to seek approval at that meeting for submission of the revised draft GTAA to WG for its approval.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

5.1. Completion of the GTAA will contribute to Denbighshire's Well-being and Equality Objective: *A Denbighshire of quality housing that meets people's needs* by identifying the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community.

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

6.1. Consultants were procured jointly with Conwy County Borough Council to undertake the GTAA. Denbighshire's commitment of £5,500 has been met from the LDP budget. Any costs incurred from this additional work will be funded through the original commission and the LDP budget.

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

7.1. A Well-being Impact Assessment was carried out for the project in 2021 and reviewed in 2023 for this additional work and is attached as [Appendix 3](#). This concludes that the overall impact was and remains positive.

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

8.1. The T&F Group has met three times since reconvening in March 2023 and discussions informed the work programme for ORS to complete the revised GTAA.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1. As set out in Section 6, there are no direct costs related to the work of the T&F 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?

10.1. Several risks to the project have been identified and were included in the full project business case risk assessment. A lack of political support was identified as a significant risk which led to the engagement of the Lead Member in the project from the start, as well as involvement from the Leader during the work completed in 2021. The establishment of the T&F Group and reports to Scrutiny aimed to ensure wider Member involvement in the project.

11. Power to make the decision

[Section 101 - Housing \(Wales\) Act 2014](#)

[Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000](#)

[Section 7.4.1 and Section 7.4.2 \(d\) of the Council's Constitution](#)

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) Task and Finish Group Report October 2023

Appendix 2 - Revised GTAA 2023 for Denbighshire

Appendix 3 – GTAA Well-Being Impact Assessment 2021 (reviewed in 2023)