

Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)

Task and Finish Group Report October 2023

1. Purpose of the Group

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 a Task and Finish Group (T&F) was established to work on the initial Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA). The GTAA was submitted to WG on 24 December 2021.

Following Cabinet approval and WG submission of the previous GTAA, a family with an existing need who had previously declined to participate, contacted the Council, and asked to now be included.

Following a report to Cabinet Briefing on 9 January 2023, it was acknowledged that the previous T&F group had worked well in supporting the initial assessment, therefore it was agreed to re-establish this group to support work on the new assessment. The T&F Group has now concluded its work and this report provides the conclusions from the work of the group. This report provides an update on the work and presents the findings and recommendations of the T&F Group.

Welsh Government (WG) have published detailed statutory guidance '*Undertaking Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments*'.¹ This forms the basis for undertaking the GTAA and WG will assess the completed GTAA against this methodology.

The purpose of the T&F Group has been to provide quality assurance by ensuring that the approach taken to deliver the revised GTAA has complied with the WG methodology and

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

that previous feedback has been considered within the new document in line with Scrutiny requirements. In addition, the group has monitored progress and advised as necessary on the delivery of the Assessment.

2. GTAA Project structure and management

The WG GTAA methodology requires that a project Steering Group is established. There has however been a more comprehensive and robust project structure developed for managing the Denbighshire GTAA, including establishment of a member-led Project Board and a T&F Group. This is above the requirements set out within the methodology and has included a role for Elected Members within the project structure through a T&F Group.

2.1 Project Board

This is a project management requirement and is not a requirement of the WG GTAA methodology. A Project Board was originally established with the purpose of ensuring that this piece of work is Member-led through inclusion of the Leader of the Council and the Lead Member. The Board reconvened in late 2022 to complete the revised Assessment, at this point the Leader agreed with the Board that it was not imperative for them to attend for the additional work. The role of the Project Board has been to manage the delivery of the project, secure resources for the project, and ensure communication about the project.

2.2 Task and Finish (T&F) Group

This is not a requirement of the WG GTAA methodology. The role of the Task and Finish Group as defined in the agreed Terms of Reference has been to monitor adherence to the methodology and report to Communities Scrutiny Committee.

2.3 Consultants

The WG methodology allows for external consultants to be engaged to undertake the Accommodation Needs Assessment. Opinion Research Services (ORS) were commissioned to undertake the assessment on behalf of Denbighshire County Council and Conwy County Borough Council. Separate reports have been developed for each authority and they have carried out the additional work at this time for Denbighshire.

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2.4 Membership of the Task and Finish (T&F) Group

The T&F Group comprises one elected Member appointed by each of the Council's Member Area Groups (MAG), to ensure geographical spread. The group has been chaired by Councillor Peter Scott and has been supported by the Strategic Planning and Housing Manager and the Corporate Project Manager. The Lead Member, Councillor Win Mullen-James has also been part of the group. The group has met three times since reconvening in March 2023 and discussions have included all aspects of the Welsh Government methodology, project structure, data sources, engagement and communications, data analysis and draft revised GTAA findings.

A summary of the issues discussed at each group meeting is set out below:

Summary of Task and Finish Group meetings	
Meeting 1 - 2 March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reviewed and agreed Terms of Reference for the group• Reviewed background, context, and statutory requirements• Reviewed and agreed Project Structure and management• Discussed timetable for GTAA and future group meetings
Meeting 2 – 14 April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussed the work programme and progress• Reviewed the governance process for GTAA resubmission
Meeting 3 – 21 September 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reviewed the draft revised GTAA• Reviewed and agreed draft report to Communities Scrutiny providing an update of the work of the T&F Group, seeking Scrutiny endorsement of the revised GTAA• Agreed the Group would attend Scrutiny with Chair Cllr. Peter Scott presenting the report

3. Review of GTAA summary findings

A summary of the GTAA analysis and findings for residential and transit needs were presented to the T&F Group at its meeting on 21 September 2023. The findings conclude 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.

The Task and Finish Group reviewed the GTAA data analysis and summary findings at its meeting on 21 September 2023 and agreed that they were satisfied that the WG methodology had been applied appropriately to the analysis of need.

The T&F Group concluded that the arrangements and process undertaken by the group had worked well and requested that the same group membership be involved in the site selection for pitches, when required, in the next phase of this project.

4. Conclusion

At its meeting on 21 September 2023 the T&F Group requested that comments and conclusions from the group should inform a report to Communities Scrutiny Committee on 19 October 2023, presented by the Chair of the T&F Group, Cllr. Peter Scott. It was agreed Members of the group could also attend Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting.

This report summarises the detailed in-depth discussions undertaken by the group and presents the key conclusions:

The Task and Finish Group reviewed the GTAA data analysis and summary findings at its meeting on 21st September 2023 and agreed that they were satisfied that the WG methodology had been applied appropriately to the analysis of need in the revision of the GTAA.