

London Gypsy and Traveller Forum

10th February 2015.

Venue

London City Hall. Committee Room 2.

Attendance

Brenda Downes- Lewisham, Matt Brindley- Traveller Movement, Lizzy Lenferna De La Motte- Richmond and Kingston, Dorothea Savva-People of the Road, Sarah Clark – Croydon, Pauline Barry – Croydon, Ilinca Diaconescu – LGTU, Grantley Bisphom – Tower Hamlets, Iman Achara- Roma Forum, Marian Mahoney – Eleanor St Residents, Emma Milne – LGTU

Chaired by

Debby Kennet – LGTU,

Apologies

S. Mutter – Redbridge, N. Wilson – Kingston, M.Nowak- Camden

1. Minutes and Matters Arising:

Minutes were agreed from October 28th 2014.

2. Presentation: People of the Road and Ealing Traveller Services- Dorothea Savva

Dorothea presented the back ground, and some of the work of the services open to Travellers in Ealing. She talked about the Ealing Travellers Project which is focused mainly on people's short term needs, such as benefit claims. People of the Road was set up in partnership with Ealing Travellers Project/ Traveller Achievement Service, with the aim of addressing the long-term needs of the community. The services they run include a youth group, women's group and music class. Also a forum has been set up about the site at Bashley Road, and a meeting was called with the planning department about the extremely poor living conditions.

There followed a discussion about the situation on Bashley Street. Marian Mahoney asked whether there is a residents group, and talked about what had worked when the site at Eleanor street was being moved.

3. Presentation: Operation Traveller Vote- Matthew Brindley

- Operation Traveller Vote is aimed at increasing the number of Gypsies and Travellers who vote in the general election.
- Why?: If people don't vote then there is no pressure on politicians to listen to them.
- The Traveller Movement will be going around the country delivering the presentation and talking to people about voting.

Discussion:

- Will anyone be working on extracting some key points from the manifestos to help people make an informed decision about who to vote for?
 - o MB; there are issues around being a charity and what you can say during a general election. Also it's very difficult as all of the language in manifestos is nuanced, and everything is made to sound good/hard to tell what it really means.
- Can you come out to talk to the community where I am?
 - o Yes, we want to go to as many people as possible so just get in touch and ask.
- Jake Bowers is standing in Hastings as a Green Party Candidate
- What is the best way for Travellers to engage with the campaign?
 - o Contact us or a local group. Also we are on Twitter and using the hashtag #Travellervote
- It was discussed that many people prefer to vote with a postal vote rather than going into a polling station
- People need to know who there is to vote for- It's no good being registered to vote if no one knows what the options are when it comes to actually voting.

4. Presentation: DCLG consultation- summary and what next? Emma Milne

Emma updated the forum on what had happened with the consultation since that last time the forum had met. This included:

- The postcard campaign
- The facebook page and its comments
- The oral hearing
- The rally and postcard hand in

What next?: MB mentioned the idea of a protest. DK suggested another Traveller meeting as soon as we hear. People agreed they wanted to be kept informed via the forum mailing list.

5.Presentation: Housing Committee investigation recommendations . Ilinca Diaconescu

Ilinca summarised the process of the investigation and summarised the recommendations they had made in their letter to the mayor:

Tom Copely arrived during the presentation. He thanked everyone who had contributed to the investigation. He said it was unlikely that anything would happen before the new mayor is elected. The next steps should be working on the candidates and then the new mayor with the recommendations.

The recommendations give us an official basis for engaging with the candidates. Tom can facilitate the conversation with Labour candidates. Andrew Boff is probably best to speak to for the Tories.

Discussion:

ID: Who affects the London Plan review?

TC: Rick Blakeway and planning is the best way in.

MB: What can the Housing Committee do to scrutinise the DCLG decision on the definition change?

TC: Chair of Committee or the mayor to write to DCLG. It's something we want to keep pushing on.

MB : In the letter of recommendations it talks about 'tolerated sites', this seems like an unhelpful way to phrase it, perhaps something like 'negotiated stopping places' would be better?

TC: This can be changed in future.

6. Mayoral election discussion

Emma presented on the process in the run up to the London elections 2016. We also discussed the plan to choose three or four themes to focus the forum meetings on over the next year to build a picture of key issues we want to engage the candidates and then the next mayor on.

MB: these can then be put in to a manifesto- similar to the Traveller Movements manifesto for the General election.

Group discussions on policy themes included comments on:

- Scrap metal- London wide License recommendation

- Education: access to alternative education- especially around Key Stage 4. Also how attendance is dealt with

- No recourse to public funds for Roma refugees

- Habitual Residents test- affecting Irish Travellers

- Generally lots of comments about Education and Employment Issues