

## London Gypsy and Traveller Forum Minutes

13th February 2018

### City Hall, Committee Room 3

**Attending:** Anais Traure-National Bargee Travellers Association; Andrew Bailes - Boater community; Angela Mahoney - Tower Hamlets; Angie Emmerson - Hackney council; Anna Hoare - University College London; Ben Johnson – Islington council; Ben Vickers – Camden council; Brenda Downes -Lewisham Irish Centre; Charlotte Morphet -Waltham Forest council; Christina Kerrigan -Traveller Movement; Ciara Whelehan – Redbridge; Clemmie James – LGT; Cynthia Egweh- Hounslow council; Darren Richards – GLA; David Landau – Redbridge Equalities Council; Debby Kennett - LGT; Debra Levison – GLA; Deirdre McGrath – GLA; Eileen Maughan - Haringey ;Eileen Mongan – Hackney; Ellie Royle; Emma Warburton; Evelyn Carpenter- Barking and Dagenham council; Farah Elahi – GLA; Gemma Egan-Perkins- Traveller Movement; Geraldine Lindsay - LGT; Gudrun Andrews – LLDC; Ilinca Diaconescu – LGT; Iman Achara - Partners in Integration Network; Jackie Hyland- Choices Kent; Jemma Wheler; Joe Collinson - Bexley council; Julia Hurley - Croydon council; Karen Montgomerie- Greenwich council; Ken Bean -Barnet council; Keung Tsang- Hackney council; Lisa Mahoney -Tower Hamlets; Margaret Nolan – Richmond; Marian Mahoney -Tower Hamlets;Martina McDonagh – Haringey; Mary Maughan –Hackney; Mena Mongan-LGT; Michael Ridge-Haringey Council; Miranda Waterworth -Ealing council; Natalie Wood -Bexley council; Nathalie Wilson- Surrey County Council; Pat O'Donnell -Kensington and Chelsea ;Paulina Serumwma-Obul - Mobile Homes Investment; Rachel Smalley - GLA ; Rebecca White; Richard Bennett - LGT Trustee; Robert Davy - Enfield council; Rubeena Amanullah -Southwark Council; Sian Berry-GLA; Tal Kleiman - Kingston council; Teresa Mongan-Hackney ;Tom Copley- GLA; Tracie Giles-LGT

**Chair:** Tracie Giles

#### 1. Introductions

**2. Minutes from last meeting** – the minutes from the October 2017 meeting were approved

#### 3. Setting the scene

•History of planning for Gypsy and Traveller sites – Tracie gave a presentation of the last 50 years of policy and planning for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation since the 1968 Caravan Sites Act to the present, highlighting community led campaigns and involvement in policy at national and London wide level

•Key issues and evidence – Ilinca gave a presentation on the evidence collected across London over the last years related to loss of council site provision, Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs, the very limited provision of new pitches and barriers to site delivery

**4. London Plan presentation** – Darren Richards and Rachel Smalley, GLA gave a presentation on the new Draft London Plan explaining the role of the London Plan, the consultation process and providing an overview of the Good Growth Policies and Policy H16 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation.

In addition, Debra Levison gave a short overview of the Mayor's Affordable Homes funding which is available for new sites and refurbishment of existing sites

**5. Draft London Plan discussion** – participants had the opportunity to ask questions of the GLA team and discuss the policy on Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. The notes were recorded and compiled into a response submitted as part of the consultation – see below

**6. Next steps** – Mena Mongan, LGT introduced the postcard response to the draft London Plan created together with members of the Gypsy and Traveller community which was distributed across London. Hundreds of Gypsies and Travellers signed and sent in this response.

## **London Gypsy and Traveller Forum**

**1 March 2018**

### **Response to the Draft New London Plan**

#### **Policy H16 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation**

*The London Gypsy and Traveller Forum aims to improve the lives of Gypsies and Travellers in London, particularly in relation to their accommodation needs; and to promote their rights as Londoners, to equal treatment. It does this through exchange of information, discussion, promotion of good practice, challenge of poor practice, and advice to the GLA, the London Mayor and all other London authorities.*

*The Forum is open to London Gypsies and Travellers, organisations representing them, council officers, elected representatives, service providers and other interested individuals and organisations who live or work in London, and who support and are prepared to work towards the above aim. The Forum was established in September 2004 and meets on a quarterly basis at the City Hall when possible.*

The Forum's response to the Draft London Plan is based on the discussion we had at the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2018 at City Hall.

There is support for the new definition of Gypsies and Travellers in the London Plan, however there were concerns expressed regarding how this will be taken up in Local Plans.

Policy H16 was considered to go in the right direction, but not strong enough to ensure the actual delivery of new sites. Many participants, particularly members of the Gypsy and Traveller community expressed disappointment at the lack of ambition of the policy. The disparity between the general housing policies and the Gypsy and Traveller accommodation policy was also noted – in terms of the evidence base, approach to delivery and monitoring.

In the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment land is earmarked for 65000 new homes, but this does not include land for Gypsy and Traveller sites. Councils are under pressure to build all the new housing, which leaves very little available land for any new pitches. Members of the Gypsy and Traveller community across London gave examples of how no land has been identified in their local authority development plans, despite this being required by national planning policy. Community members have repeatedly made suggestions and submitted site proposals to their local councils but this has not resulted in any real change. The London Plan should require councils to identify land and have a rolling 5-year supply of land updated annually, in line with the general housing requirements.

Using the 2008 GTANA figures as a ten year identified need is not necessarily the best approach, as some councils had identified a very low figure. However, the 2008 GTANA mid-point is a reasonable indication of backlog need and should be used as a target in the London Plan for speedy delivery over the next 5 years. The GLA should commission a new London wide study in line with the housing evidence base within the next 5 years to have an up to date assessment of need.

Given the failure of successive governments to adequately address the needs and human rights of Gypsies and Travellers, this London Plan should be driven by delivery. A comparable approach to housing delivery should be taken in the London Plan – through securing new pitches in larger residential schemes, supporting housing associations, charities and developers to make provision for Gypsies and Travellers, so they are not pushed onto the worst pieces of land which are left over from plan making that is driven by housing.

There should be ways for the Mayor to hold local councils to account if they do not deliver on their targets and identified need. New pitch delivery should be included as a Key Performance Indicator in the Monitoring chapter.

There are cases of very significant local opposition to Gypsy and Traveller site delivery – for example in Lewisham there were two petitions signed by hundreds of people to oppose the allocation of land for three new pitches. The Mayor should send a message through the London Plan that discrimination against this community is not acceptable.

There are concerns about the Affordable Homes Fund as this is a limited amount of money and councils and registered providers will apply only for housing delivery if they are not actively supported to deliver Gypsy and Traveller sites.

The London Plan should also support the provision of private sites. Although these are less common in London, there are a few Boroughs where community members have been able to buy low cost land in the Green Belt. The Plan should allow for some flexibility on Green Belt land where councils are unable to identify other suitable locations.

The London Plan is deficient as none of the policies address the accommodation needs of Travelling Showpeople and Bargee Travellers or houseboat dwellers.

The London Plan cover illustration – the map of London – should include caravan sites and boaters' communities in recognition that London's diversity needs to be inclusive of different types of accommodation.