

London Gypsy and Traveller Forum - 13 October 2016

City Hall, Committee Room 4

Minutes

Attending: Tom Copley – London Assembly, Sue Mutter – LB Redbridge GRT Education, Iman Achara – Partners in Integration Network, Cllr Christopher Kennedy – Hackney Council, Dominick Mennie – LB Croydon Spatial Planning, Kathleen Ryan – Southwark Travellers Action Group, Abi Angus – Traveller Movement, John Wilson – Peabody, Mike Doherty – Travellers’ Times, Shanthi Gunsekera – GLA Diversity and Social Policy, Rose Palmer – RB Kensington and Chelsea, Brenda Downes – Lewisham Irish Centre, Lisa Buttigieg – Tower Hamlets, Tracie Giles – Newham/LGTU, Ilinca Diaconescu – LGTU, Debby Kennett – LGTU, Clemmie James – LGTU, Rachel Smalley – GLA Planning, Daisy Symes – Kingston University, Manpreet Kenda – RB Kensington and Chelsea Planning, Cynthia Egweh – LB Hounslow, Billy Smith – Newham, Michael Ridge – LB Haringey, Michelle Stewart – Octavo Croydon

Apologies: Lindsey Chatralia – LB Hounslow, David Landau – Redbridge Equalities and Communities Council, Nathalie Wilson – Surrey County Council, Jenni Berlin – Traveller Movement, Joanna Gregson – Traveller Movement, John Lett – GLA Planning

Chair: Tracie Giles

1. **Welcome and introductions**
2. **Minutes from last meeting – DK**

The minutes from the March 2016 Forum meeting were agreed.

3. **London Gypsy and Traveller Manifesto**

- **Our concerns and demands**

ID introduced the London Gypsy and Traveller Manifesto and presented the key concerns and demands on accommodation, health, education and employment. The slides can be found [here](#).

Following the March Forum meeting, LGTU produced a short film encouraging Gypsies and Travellers to vote in the Mayoral and London Assembly election, which can be watched [here](#).

- **Shanthi Gunsekera, Senior Policy Officer**
GLA Diversity and Social Policy - New Mayor, new opportunities for London’s Gypsies and Travellers? – Engaging with the Mayor and his team

SG - brief introduction of the GLA Diversity and Social Policy team which works closely with Matthew Ryder QC, the new Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Social Mobility and Community Engagement. They are in the very early days as Matthew Ryder just started at the GLA the week before. His portfolio will focus on tackling inequalities, bringing Londoners together and increasing civic engagement. He is very interested to have a strong evidence base. There is also interest from the Mayor of London to have an ambitious Equality Strategy. The community engagement element of this new post is very important and there will be a review

across the GLA on how they engage with different communities. They are keen to hear from the Gypsy and Traveller community on how best to do this.

Q&A

- Need to stress that you can't include communities if you don't house them appropriately. The new planning definition of Travellers is problematic and it's unclear how councils are putting this into practice. The definition is in breach of Equalities legislation and it is likely there will be a legal challenge. Being questioned on your culture so much has an impact on people's mental health and identity.
- Need to get across importance of consistent approach across the whole of London, rather than each borough doing things differently
- SG: there are aspects of Matthew Ryder's work where he can have a direct intervention and others where he will have to work with other, for example Jules Pipe the Deputy Mayor for Planning
- Children's education and wellbeing are affected by being in temporary accommodation and going through evictions
- We need a timeframe for action
- SG: While it is very early to commit to anything, the Forum is welcome to write to Sadiq Khan and Matthew Ryder
- What is the process for reviewing the Equality Strategy and can the Forum be involved from the formative stages rather than being consulted later on? SG to take back this question to her team.

4. We are Londoners too – where do Gypsies and Travellers fit in the Mayor's Homes for Londoners initiative?

- **Community reflections from the ground –site provision and regeneration across the boroughs**
- **Newham:** Parkway Crescent site – there are ongoing concerns about the management of the site and standard of repairs ; the Mayor of Newham has made discriminatory comments regarding Travellers; the accommodation needs assessment figure is now 0 due to the new planning definition. The whole area is going through regeneration and property prices are rising; the site is very low density and is becoming more attractive to non-Travellers who see it as affordable accommodation and are looking to rent pitches from the community. It was felt the long term security of The site is possibly in more danger than before the Olympics
- **Hackney:** New site allocated in LLDC Local Plan and owned by TfL but as far as we are aware no agreement on how to move forward with the delivery of the site. Need for joined up thinking between the different arms of the GLA
- **Redbridge:** The council owned site is now managed again by a community member and some parts of it have been refurbished. There is a historical link of current residents to the area and

the council is committed to the site. There has been a rise in unauthorised encampments. Will take the negotiated stopping idea to the council again.

- **Haringey:** ORS are currently doing an accommodation needs assessment. Drop in sessions for housed Travellers 31st October-1st November; organisations invited to outreach session. There have been a few unauthorised encampments over the summer, one moved to Hackney. ORS interviewed them.
 - **Greenwich/Tower Hamlets:** Unauthorised encampments on Peabody owned land, but these were not recorded by ORS. GLA spending 2m on unauthorised encampments this year. Private landlords don't have a responsibility to record unauthorised encampments.
 - **TG:** enormous amount of unauthorised encampments especially on the outskirts of London; feels like 30 years ago
 - **Lewisham:** usually 1-2 unauthorised encampments/year, but last year there were 20 and the groups were large. The police don't want to serve Section 61 because it's expensive. People are homeless, in temporary and emergency accommodation. The needs assessment is for 6 new pitches. There is now a consultation on 2 pieces of land to provide up to 5 pitches.
 - **DK:** the Mayor needs to have a strategic role regarding unauthorised encampments. LGTU & Leeds GATE wrote jointly to Sadiq Khan . Negotiated stopping was also mentioned in the Housing Committee recommendations to the Mayor. Other important issues are the delivery of new site allocations and the protection of existing sites.
 - **Southwark:** Old Kent Road Opportunity Area includes 3 Traveller sites, and of them will be badly affected. The council won't give people any clarity on what is going to happen. Ilderton Road site is on an embankment which is falling apart and people will have to be moved in the next few months, but the council can't find any land. People don't want to be in temporary accommodation and they don't know if they will have the right to return to the site.
- **Taking things forward - report from LGTU Planning seminar: policy recommendations and next steps**
Presentation can be found [here](#).
 - **Tom Copley, London Assembly Member and deputy chair of the Housing Committee – How can the Assembly support Gypsies and Travellers on accommodation issues?**

TC agreed to take forward a number of actions:

- send Housing Committee letter from investigation to new Mayor and ask for a response
- write to Mayor of Newham regarding the accommodation needs assessment
- raise issue of other accommodation needs assessments with a 0 need (Old Oak and Park Royal, Greenwich)
- raise negotiated stopping model with James Murray
- raise issue regarding LLDC and TfL. Welcomed submissions to Housing Committee investigation on TfL land and affordable housing.
- write to the Equalities and Human Rights Commission in relation to the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment/ Strategic Housing Market Assessment

- seek commitment from Mayor to protect existing sites, in line with commitments for other tenants in regeneration areas
- arrange to book the London Living Room for a Gypsy and Traveller event