

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

17 May 2010

Report of the Director of Health and Housing

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 COLDHARBOUR GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITE

Summary

This report updates Members on the progress of the Coldharbour Project Board which is investigating various proposals for refurbishing and enhancing the current site in Aylesford.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 The Housing Act 2004 requires local housing authorities to include Gypsies and Travellers in their accommodation assessments and to take a strategic approach, including drawing up a strategy demonstrating how their accommodation needs will be met, as part of the wider housing strategy. The aim is to ensure that plans properly reflect the needs and aspirations of all sectors of the community.
- 1.1.2 Members will recall that the four authorities of Tonbridge and Malling, Ashford, Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone commissioned a four district study in 2005/06 of the housing needs and aspirations of Gypsies and Travellers who are housed or living on authorised or unauthorised sites within the study area. This led to the completion in 2007 of the Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA), describing the pitch shortfall for the borough and wider sub region.
- 1.1.3 In 2007 Communities & Local Government (CLG) announced their "Site Refurbishment Grant" for Gypsy & Traveller schemes. Subsequently a Project Board was established comprising senior officers from KCC and the Council's Housing and Planning teams with a mind to exploring the submission of a bid to access this funding to expand or refurbish the existing Coldharbour site in Aylesford.
- 1.1.4 Currently the Coldharbour site consists of eight double pitches, but the Project Board is seeking to expand the provision to 18 double pitches on a wholly new site immediately to the west of the existing one.
- 1.1.5 The final design was formulated after extensive technical and other studies along with a detailed consultation process with local Members. The layout was subjected to a critical assessment in terms of overall cost, but maintains all the

core themes, such as the use of the existing access road, a commitment to return the existing site to a landscaped green area, and the layout and height of the northern perimeter fencing. A planning application for the site was made by KCC, which was successful, and a subsequent bid for funding was made to the HCA (Homes and Communities Agency) in round two of the grant programme.

- 1.1.6 Unfortunately the Minister's February announcement on the funding bids revealed that Coldharbour had been unsuccessful in that round. The initial feedback we have received is that the four bids seeking the highest level of grant submitted nationally (of which Coldharbour was one) were perceived to give insufficient value for money.
- 1.1.7 The final bid round to access the remaining £32million available from the HCA's Site Refurbishment Grant closed on 30 April. The Project Board submitted a revised bid for Coldharbour in this round, and worked hard to bring further value engineering savings to the scheme, whilst not compromising the critical core design issues resolved during the earlier consultation phases.
- 1.1.8 The Council has agreed to contribute up to a maximum of £10k towards the latest bid submission costs.
- 1.1.9 As part of the revised bid the Project Board has met with the new HCA team responsible for the administration of the grant funding, and taken them on site to meet the current Coldharbour residents and view the proposed site first hand.
- 1.1.10 Officers will update Members on the progress of the revised funding bid at further meetings of this Board.

1.2 Legal Implications

- 1.2.1 None arising from this report.

1.3 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.3.1 None arising from this report.

1.4 Risk Assessment

- 1.4.1 None arising from this report.

Background papers:

contact: Chris Knowles

Nil

John Batty
Director of health and Housing