

# Report to the Council

**Committee:** Cabinet

**Date:** 26 June 2008

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor C Whitbread

**Item:** 11

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## 1. SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE - GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION - REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY SINGLE ISSUE REVIEW

### Recommending:

That a revenue District Development Fund supplementary estimate in the sum of £19,200 be approved for 2008/09 to meet the projected additional costs of engaging a consultant for a further three month period in order to:

(a) allow him to continue work on the Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan document; and

(b) prepare the Council's case for this year's Examination in Public and, if needed, to appear at the Examination to represent the Council.

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1. At its meeting on 25 January 2008, the East of England Regional Assembly approved a draft single issue review to the Regional Spatial Strategy (The East of England Plan) for submission to the Secretary of State. This review includes a draft policy setting out the level of provision for the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers on a district-by-district basis throughout the East of England. The policy requires this level of provision to be met by 2011.
2. A twelve-week public consultation on the review ran from 25 February to 16 May, and this was reported in the Council Bulletin on 7 March 2008. An Examination in Public of the review and of the public consultation responses is expected to be held in September this year. The draft policy will then be adopted by the Secretary of State as a direct replacement of Policy H3 of the East of England Plan which came into force on 12 May 2008. The adopted policy states 'Local authorities should make provision for sites/pitches to meet the identified needs of gypsies and travellers living within or resorting to their area. Pending the single issue review to this Regional Spatial Strategy on Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation needs, provision in local development documents and decisions on planning applications should be based on the latest available information on need within the region and local area, in the context of the urgent need to improve provision across the region.'
3. The draft policy requires the provision of at least 1,187 net additional pitches for gypsy and traveller caravans across the region. The District's contribution is an additional forty-nine where the existing number of authorised pitches is given as ninety-four (a 52% increase). Beyond 2011, provision across the region should be made for an annual 3% increase (to be calculated from the overall planned provision in 2011).
4. An officer-level response was sent to GO-East to meet the consultation deadline.

5. A consultant has been engaged to prepare the Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan document as directed by the Secretary of State. This should be ready for submission for its own Examination in Public by September 2009. The consultant was initially appointed on a three-month contract to ensure that early milestones were met so that the Development Plan document could be prepared in time for the timetable established by the Secretary of State. Early progress has been more than satisfactory, and a positive meeting has been held with GO-East officers to assess the timetable.
6. There is an obvious direct link between the work for the single issue review and the Development Plan document. It is proposed therefore to secure the services of the consultant to prepare the background work for the Examination in Public this September, in association with other Districts, and to present the case, if necessary, at the Examination.
7. We are proposing, therefore, that the consultant's current contract be extended to allow him to continue work on the Development Plan document as well as this year's Examination in Public. To undertake these tasks, his costs will exceed the budget available. Accordingly, we are seeking a supplementary estimate of £19,200.
8. We recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.