

REPORT TO: Executive Board Sub Committee
DATE: 27th May 2010
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Adults and Community
SUBJECT: Traveller Transit Site
WARD(S): Daresbury

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To advise the Board of the budget outturn for the Traveller transit site at Warrington Rd, Runcorn following its first full year of operation, and in turn to inform a review of the present charging levels.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That

- 1) the Board agree to maintain the current daily pitch charge at £11.00, to be reviewed with other Council fees/charges in March 2011, and**
- 2) any decision to increase pitch provision be deferred pending the outcome of the Partial Review of the NW Regional Spatial Strategy.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 At its meeting on the 24th September 2009 the Board received a report setting out the running costs for the transit site after the first six months of operation, so that the Board could determine whether or not the daily charge rate was appropriate. Given there was still some uncertainty about some of the costs the Board resolved:

- (1) to review the current charging arrangements in respect of the transit site;
- (2) a feasibility study to extend the site be undertaken;
- (3) a further financial report be submitted to the Sub-Committee when the winter data was available; and
- (4) a further update report be submitted to the relevant Policy and Performance Board.

3.2 After a full financial year of operation there is now greater clarity about the running costs for the site, although there will always be variations year to year due to fluctuations in occupancy rates. For the year 2009/10 an overall occupancy rate of 69% was achieved (excluding the

Warden's pitch), and the resulting budget outturn is shown in the Appendix.

- 3.3 The column headed 'budget' includes the revised budget estimate reported to Board on the 24th September 2009, which at that time was based on an anticipated occupancy rate of 60% and forecast a deficit of £1,723. This is compared to the actual for the year, which shows a small surplus of £1,451. It is therefore proposed that the charge rate remain at £11 per day for the coming year.
- 3.4 In accordance with the Board's wishes, the feasibility and cost of extending the current site has been explored, and it is considered there is potential to create a further 4 pitches at an estimated cost of £170,000. However it is suggested that any decision to expand the site be deferred for the present due to the following:
- a) As a transit site the present facility is meeting demand, with occupancy of the transit pitches averaging 62% during 2009/10. There is therefore no need for additional transit pitches. The facility is also breaking even financially.
 - b) As provision for permanent residential occupation, the present site lacks adequate provision for individual washing/bathing facilities, and extra cost would be incurred over and above the figure quoted in 3.5 to provide these, in the region of £30,000.
 - c) The draft proposed target for Halton was to provide 45 new pitches between now and 2016, although the partial review of the NW Regional Spatial Strategy has not yet finalised the targets for new residential pitch provision for each local authority. If the finally determined target is anything approaching this figure, then larger sites will be needed.
- 3.6 A report will be submitted to the next meeting of the Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board highlighting the contents of this report by way of a progress update.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Since the site opened in February 2009 there have been just 4 very short term unauthorised encampments, the last being in November 2009. This represents a significant saving to the Council in staff time and eviction/clean up costs compared to previous years. The improving position has been welcomed by local businesses on the industrial estates that were historically most affected, and Halton's approach has been praised by the Police and neighbouring authorities.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

The Council's Traveller Education Consultant regularly visits the site to arrange temporary local schooling, helping to maintain an educational environment for the children of families using the site.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

None.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Arrangements are now in place for families using the transit site to access dental and medical services, with visiting health staff and temporary registrations at local GP surgeries. These services will help to reduce the inequality of service access that Travellers normally encounter.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Roadside encampments are inherently unsafe, and the reduction in unlawful encampments achieved through the provision of the transit site has reduced that risk.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 N/A.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 The provision of a well managed, safe, sanitary site to accommodate transient Travellers is consistent with the Council's equality and diversity policy.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

<u>Document</u>	<u>Place of inspection</u>	<u>Contact Officer</u>
Not applicable		

APPENDIX

	<u>Budget</u> <u>2009/10</u>	<u>Actual</u> <u>2009/10</u>
EXPENDITURE		
Electricity	6,963	6,536
NNDR 2009/10	2,595	2,595
Warden	13,000	13,000
Cleaning Materials	250	475
Empty Septic Tank	4,900	3,500
Water	2,844	8,002
Maintenance	1,000	239
Refuse Collection	3,076	3,076
Annual electrical safety check	500	0
Insurance	71	71
Telephone	100	146
TOTAL	<u>35,299</u>	<u>37,640</u>
 INCOME		
Rent	31,636	36,532
Electric prepay cards	1,940	2,559
TOTAL	<u>33,576</u>	<u>39,091</u>
 <u>NET EXPENDITURE</u>	<u>1,723</u>	<u>-1,451</u>