

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board  
**DATE:** 2 July 2015  
**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Communities  
**PORTFOLIO:** Physical Environment  
**SUBJECT:** Charges for New Traveller Site  
**WARD(S):** Daresbury

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To seek approval for the setting of pitch and water/sewerage charges at the new Traveller site in Warrington Road, Astmoor, Runcorn.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Executive Board approve**

- 1) The initial pitch rent for the new permanent Traveller site at Warrington Road, Astmoor be set at £75.00 per week and the water/sewerage charge at £11.60;**
- 2) Future increases of the pitch rent be calculated in line with the Homes and Communities Agency 'Affordable Rent' regime; and**
- 3) Future increases of the water/sewerage charge be set on a cost recovery basis.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Construction of the new Traveller site at Warrington Road, Astmoor is nearing completion and it is now necessary to establish the charges that will be applied.

3.2 Construction of the site has in large part been funded by the Homes and Communities Agency and it is a requirement of the funding that pitch rents are set under the 'Affordable Rents' regime which permits them to be set at up to 80% of market rents.

3.3 There is little published information on Traveller sites from which to calculate this but Property Services have undertaken some comparative analysis of caravan and Traveller sites in neighbouring authorities. This suggests a rent of around £75 per week would equate to 80% of the typical market rent. It is therefore proposed to set the charge at this level.

3.4 Future annual rent increases will be restricted to CPI + 0.5%, with the rent for subsequent tenants having to be reassessed each time a new

letting takes place. This is to ensure the rent continues to reflect no more than 80% of the market rent.

3.5 The weekly charge for water and sewerage is to be set on a cost recovery basis. It is proposed to set the initial charge at £11.60 per week which is the current charge at the Riverview site in Widnes. The charge will then be varied in future years to reflect actual costs incurred in the preceding year.

3.6 The combined rent and water charge for the new site at £86.60 is comparable to the weekly charge for the adjacent Transit site which is £86.80. This will enable the site to be self-financing.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None identified.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 A draft budget has been prepared which suggests operation of the site will be cost neutral assuming a 95% occupancy level is maintained.

#### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

The provision of an affordable site offering a permanent place for Travellers to stay should improve access to and engagement with educational services.

##### **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

None identified.

##### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

Travellers have a reduced life expectancy compared to the settled community. The provision of a permanent place to stay will afford Travellers the opportunity to access health and social care services more readily.

##### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

Roadside encampments are inherently unsafe, and reducing their occurrence through the provision of this new site will reduce those risks.

## **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

Proactively managing the problem of unlawful Traveller encampments will lessen the concerns of businesses in the area, particularly those on the industrial estates that historically have seen most encampments, and help to persuade them to remain and develop in Halton.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The main financial risk is that the site will not be self-funding if occupancy levels are not maintained at 95%. Given the known demand for the pitches this is unlikely but cannot be guaranteed.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

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

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

None.