

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board  
**DATE:** 24 October 2024  
**REPORTING OFFICER:** Executive Director of Adult Services  
**PORTFOLIO:** Community Safety  
**SUBJECT:** Gypsy Traveller Warden Contracts  
**WARD(S)** Borough Wide

**1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform Executive Board of the present Romani traveller wardens role and contract renewal. The proposed contract will be for five years, offering three, plus one, plus one years to cover the period 2024 - 2029.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- 1) **The Executive Board note the contents of this report.**
- 2) **The Board consider and agree the proposed employment contract for the two traveller wardens.**
- 3) **Agree that the in-house wardens will continue to provide site management and support across the three council owned sites.**

**3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Halton Borough Council has three sites upon which pitches are made available for members of the Romani traveller community. Two are permanent sites: Riverview in Widnes and Canalside in Runcorn, and between them provide a total of 35 pitches. The third site is what is termed a transit site with 14 pitches, for members of the community who do not wish to live permanently in the area, and to accommodate those people who are initially in illegal encampments in the area.

3.1.2 Halton Borough Council (HBC) has a full time Romani and Traveller (GTLO Liaison Officer who is based at the Riverview residential site. He is responsible for the day-to-day management of the G&T Service including the G&T sites, unauthorised encampments, general enquires and complaints relating to G&T within Halton

3.1.3 In practice, HBC has a number of duties and responsibilities which impact on the lives of Halton's population including Romani people and Travellers: education, public health, community safety, and

equalities and social cohesion in all aspects of service provision.

- 3.1.4 As the success in working with and the social welfare of Travelling communities is fundamentally linked to the availability and quality of accommodation, including the HBC transit site, any degree of success for HBC in addressing health, education, employment and unauthorised encampments will be inextricably linked to the success in supporting the provision of authorised sites, both publicly and privately owned resulting in the fundamental need for HBC to provide a Gypsy and Traveller Service.

## **3.2 Site Wardens**

- 3.2.1 Presently there are two site wardens that cover the three sites. The wardens have been sub-contracted by the Local Authority for the past three years, which has proven successful.
- 3.2.2 The first warden is situated at Riverview, which is a permanent residential site, and the mobile warden is situated at the transit site, but also covers Canalside. The wardens also form part of the out of hours cover and address any urgent issues across the three sites.
- 3.2.3 The Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer will remain on site at Riverview to maintain a presence and deal with any issues. Riverview is an established site, as many residents have lived on site for a number of years, which offers stability.
- 3.2.4 The advantages of employing site wardens are to have a presence to effectively deal with any emerging issues, also offering.
- A more consistent and corporate approach
  - Provide a more cost-effective service.
  - Work directly with the GTLO across all three sites.
  - Remain at the transit site to tackle any issues.
  - Provide an out of hour's service across the three sites to deal with emergencies.

## **3.3 Purpose of the Service**

- 3.3.1 The purpose of the service is to provide site management and residential support to the Gypsy Traveller Community, in accordance with legislative and Local Authority guidelines. The site management typically involves-
- Ensuring the sites and the pitches are maintained, with repairs being commissioned as necessary to keep all facilities operational, e.g., the hard standing, fencing, etc. is maintained to a good standard.
  - Ensuring that the sites remain safe for residents and visitors.

- Collection of rent from residents.
- Collection of payment for utilities.
- Ensuring plots remain occupied.
- Managing a fair Allocation policy to ensure vacant plots are allocated based on need.
- Ensuring all residents agree to, and abide by, pitch licence agreements.
- Working to facilitate good relationships between the Romani and Traveller and settled communities.
- Acting to prevent misuse of site facilities and unauthorised residency.

### 3.3.2 **Service Ethos**

The following values shall underpin all that the service provider does in delivering the Service:

- A person-centred approach that values and respects each of the Romani and Traveller community as individuals.
- Providing services that are flexible and tailored towards the resident needs, which are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain appropriate.
- Collaborating effectively with statutory bodies and other agencies and stakeholders.
- Support each individual to overcome barriers and to achieve their own solutions.
- Sensitively catering for the residents' cultural needs, views and preferences.
- Ensure the site and its facilities are fit for purpose, to the regulated standards required by the Council.
- The warden will ensure that the residents' needs are assessed and met accordingly.

### 3.3.3 **The Service**

In accordance with the contract specification, Halton Borough Council would assume responsibility for the management of the council owned sites. The Contractor will manage and support the Romani families / individuals, residing at the council owned sites, which will include:

- On site attendance and daily inspections
- Maintain and monitor health and safety on the site,
- Maintaining a safe environment and arranging for rectification work when required.
- Site inspections to determine signs of damage and maintaining communication with the Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer and Property Services.

- Maintaining site management records.
- Licence fee collection, including advising residents, facilitating support, and liaising with other Council services to resolve problems.
- Supporting the Council with licence site fee and rent arrears collection.
- Licence/Tenancy management through liaison with new and existing residents.
- Identifying and acting on licence breaches and working with partner organisations.
- Providing a responsive repair and maintenance service to the utility blocks and communal areas
- Manage void pitches, to ensure vacant pitches are appropriately and promptly occupied.
- Site management to ensure the site remains clean and tidy,
- Managing site improvements where funding is available.

3.3.4 Halton Borough Council will remain responsible for arranging site improvements or developments, and appointing building contractors for any major works required at the site.

### **3.4 Warden Contracts**

3.4.1 The local authority has subcontracted the two wardens to provide site management for the past three years, which has proven successful. The proposal to continue with the existing service provision and offer a five-year contract will maintain stability and trust across the three sites.

3.4.2 During the later years, other Local Authorities have recruited none traveller officers to manage their sites. This has led to serious issues, and consequently, sites were closed.

3.4.3 The warden contracts will initially be for three years, further offering the option to extend by two further years, subject to performance and will be reviewed annually. The combined contract value for the two wardens will be £ 48,876 annually and a combined cost of £244,380 across the five-year period.

## **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no policy implications.

## **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The continuation of the warden service will provide a more cost-effective service to the Local Authority. As the service is

subcontracted, the wardens are therefore, deemed self-employed, so there are no additional financial implications for the local authority.

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

### **6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

The wardens are on site to provide additional support to residents and families and signpost them to the relevant services to address any health and wellbeing issues and promote sustainable living.

### **6.2 Building Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**

There are no implications arising from the contents of this report.

### **6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

There are no direct implications for young people, as the wardens are situated on site and address any tensions or concerns raised, informing the relevant officers if further involvement is required.

The Riverview site has additional provision that is used for young people and their families, to provide education and informative sessions, which are supervised by the wardens to address any concerns.

### **6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those who are Most in Need. Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

The on-site warden provision supports all residents across the three sites to tackle inequality and ensure the right support is made available to address all issues.

The wardens role is to be available and address any issues on site. This will also include supporting residents to access all the relevant services and signpost them accordingly to address both health and housing needs.

### **6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future**

There would be no direct implications across the warden contractual roles.

### **6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community.**

The wardens strive to ensure that the Romani Gypsy Travellers are supported to integrate within the community.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

The identified risk would be to further outsource the service and employing none traveller officers. The consequence could result in unrest and further tensions across the sites.

## **8.0 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

8.1 No additional implications arising from this report. The contract extension and continuation of the site management service will provide stability and trust across the three sites.

## **9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

## **10.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION**

10.1 The proposal to extend the wardens employment contract will ensure a consistent approach and stability across the three traveller sites within Halton. As the wardens are situated on site, this offers an out of hours service.

## **11.00 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

11.1 Due to previous issues raised, it would not be advisable to consider further service options or employing none traveller wardens, as this would prove more costly and could result in serious issues across the three sites.

## **12.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

12.1 The contract implementation date will be 1<sup>st</sup> November 2024 for a period of three, plus one, plus one years.

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

13.1 None under the meaning of the Act.