

# Chichester District Council

CABINET

16 April 2024

## Gypsy Traveller Liaison Role

### 1. Contacts

**Report Author:**

Pam Bushby, Divisional Manager Communities,  
Tel: 01243 534801 E-mail: [pbushby@chichester.gov.uk](mailto:pbushby@chichester.gov.uk)

**Cabinet Member:**

Tracie Bangert, Cabinet Member for Community Services  
Tel: 01243 375782 E-mail: [tbangert@chichester.gov.uk](mailto:tbangert@chichester.gov.uk)

### 2. Recommendation

2.1 **That Cabinet agree the release of £50,000 from reserves to fund a Gypsy Traveller Liaison Role (as described in the Appendix) for the 24/25 financial year.**

2.2 **That the post is included in base budget from 25/26 (subject to review).**

### 3. Background

3.1 There is an identified need across the Council for a liaison officer. Tensions currently exist between the travelling and settled communities which could be ameliorated by the role of a liaison officer. Officers regularly receive complaints about the Gypsy and Traveller [G&T] community causing Anti-Social Behaviour [ASB] and fear within the settled community. Currently the Council have no dedicated resource to investigate these complaints. There is also a gap in knowledge around G&T family groups, their connection to the local area and the needs of our wider G&T population. This role would help to inform the Development Management process and facilitate engagement with other Council services to identify and meet identified needs. The Council is also aware that the G&T community can be subject to discrimination which goes largely underreported. This role would offer support around reporting such incidents and ensuring that any racially motivated activity is dealt with appropriately.

3.2 The role of a Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer would provide a link between all Council services and the transient population which continues to grow within the District. This role would seek to engage with the G&T Community around key issues such as planning, licencing, health, and wellbeing. It could also liaise with other support services including those specific to the G&T community such as Friends, Families and Travellers. It would develop and maintain relationships within the G&T community and identify G&T leaders to facilitate improved communication between their community, the settled community and CDC. The role would be a single point of contact (SPOC) to liaise with Parishes and countywide services. This would include Sussex Police and West Sussex County Council [WSCC]. In particular, adult and

children's social care and education. Also, the WSCC G&T liaison team about the WSCC managed sites and unauthorised encampments.

- 3.3 As a local authority the Council has a duty to promote good race relations, equality of opportunity and community cohesion in our policies and practises. This duty covers all racial groups including Gypsies and Irish Travellers who are a recognised ethnic group. This role would demonstrate our commitment as a Council to fulfil that duty.

#### **4. Outcomes to be achieved**

- 4.1 Having a role that can bridge the gap between the Council, settled community and the G&T Community would potentially:
- Provide stability of contact with the travelling community.
  - Provide information to support the Council deliver of its functions. For example, supporting communities, policy development, determination of applications and planning enforcement.
  - Improve relations between the G&T and settled communities and reduced tensions.
  - Improve the health and wellbeing of our G&T communities.
  - Provide a SPOC for Police, WSCC and the G&T community to raise issues and share information.
  - Create savings around multiple officers' time spent dealing with G&T issues and allowing them to prioritise other work.
  - Savings may also be achieved around a reduction in Development Management G&T appeals and consultancy costs relating to future G&T need assessments.

#### **5. Proposal**

- 5.1 To utilise reserves to fund a Gypsy Traveller Liaison role for the first year which will be a permanent role within base budget after year 1 and reviewed after year 2.
- 5.2 This role will sit in the Communities and Customer Services Division and be managed by the Community Engagement Manager.
- 5.3 This role would complement the work of Council services/roles that currently engage with the G&T community and which give support where necessary.

#### **6. Alternatives that have been considered.**

- 6.1 To maintain the Councils existing arrangements. To continue to be reactive to the actions of the G&T community. To continue to use extant resources and incur unplanned expenditure particularly in relation to planning appeal work.

#### **7. Resource and Legal Implications**

- 7.1 The role will cost an estimated £50,000 per annum, the first year of which would come from Council reserves and subsequently from base budget.

## 8. Consultation

- 8.1 There is no statutory need to consult around this role. But it has been discussed with relevant Council departments and with West Sussex County Council Traveller liaison team. If this role is agreed, then officers will consult with support services for G&Ts to ensure the role is culturally sensitive and that the job profile reflects this. Ensuring we recruit the right person in this role is imperative. This is because they will need to have a sound understanding of the G&T culture and needs.

## Community Impact and Corporate Risk

- 9.1. G&T's are often a marginalized community. The aim of this role is to foster an inclusive environment where our G&T community are accepted as part of the wider community and suspicion and fear on both sides can be dispelled. This will reduce community tensions and provide better understanding between all parties. In addition, health inequalities will be addressed as the G&T community will be supported and encouraged to access health and wellbeing services. Educational attainment could also be improved within the G&T community through liaison with the West Sussex Traveller Education team.
- 9.2. There is a risk that the G&T community will not engage, and the situation will not improve. But we hope that by setting the role within the Communities team that risk will be mitigated, and the role will be seen as supportive and non-enforcing. In the initial stages, there is a risk that tensions could increase and that confidence in the Council reduces. This is because it will take time to break down barriers within the G&T community; to tackle perceptions and to manage the expectations of the settled community.
- 9.3 The role is broad and complex so will be carefully managed with regular supervision.

## 10. Other implications

	Yes	No
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder:</b> this role could positively support both settled communities and Gypsies and Travellers to reduce community tensions around Gypsy Traveller sites	x	
<b>Climate Change and Biodiversity:</b>		x
<b>Human Rights and Equality Impact:</b> Gypsy Travellers are a protected group and this role will be a positive demonstration of our commitment to supporting this community to be treated fairly and in accordance with their rights.	x	
<b>Safeguarding and Early Help:</b> should there be any safeguarding concerns identified these will be raised by the role holder in accordance with our safeguarding policy.	x	
<b>General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR):</b>	x	
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b> this role would help Gypsy Travellers access health and wellbeing services which they currently may not.		x

## 11. Appendices

IPPD Gypsy & Traveller Liaison role

## **12. Background Papers**

None.