

**LEWES DISTRICT COUNCIL
DRAFT
GYPSY AND TRAVELLER STRATEGY**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** The Council has adopted the following policy concerning persons of a nomadic lifestyle:-

The Lewes District Council accepts that the nomadic lifestyle chosen by Gypsies, Travellers and other persons with no fixed permanent address is their right and accordingly the Council has no wish to disrupt or discourage such a lifestyle. The Council however must balance those rights with the rights of other residents of the District and afford protection to any group or individual suffering harm or nuisance which may arise from conflicts of lifestyle.

- 1.2** In order to achieve the above policy and to effect the balance of interests the Council has considered the following Strategy and has set up the following procedures to assist in dealing with problems which may arise.

2 THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

The Traveller Population

- 2.1** In Britain there is a large and diverse minority of people to whom is given the collective title of 'Travellers'. They may come from one of the groupings of traditional travelling folk such as the Romanies who arrived in England during the 16th and 17th centuries or the Irish Travellers who arrived mainly in the last 150 years.

Alternatively they may come within the category known as 'New Travellers' or 'New Age Travellers' which appears to be the term popularly ascribed to all non-traditional Travellers, although their origins, lifestyle and motivations may be equally diverse.

- 2.2** This population who we call 'Travellers' remains largely unquantified. The Department of Environment Transport and the Regions asks local authorities to carry out a twice yearly count of Gypsy caravans. This gives some indication of the number of Gypsy caravans on authorised (public or private) and unauthorised sites on a set date in January and July. Because the count includes those people who fall within the legal definition of Gypsies – ie persons of a nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin who travel for the purpose of making or seeking their livelihood – the figures are notoriously unreliable. The returns from local authorities will invariably include some, but not all, new Travellers

within the area so that the national figures published represent neither an accurate total of the traditional Gypsy population nor a total of all Travellers but something in between. Since it can be difficult if not impossible for responding local authorities to assess whether New Travellers within their area fall within the legal definition their exclusion or inclusion within the returns may well be at the whim of the particular local authority.

- 2.3** In January 1998 there were 13,064 Gypsy caravans counted of which 2,584 were on unauthorised sites. A research study published by the Home Office and Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions in October 1998 states that estimates of New Traveller vehicles have ranged from 1,500 to 5,000.
- 2.4** However some sources believe the figures to be much higher. A publication issued by the Friends, Families and Travellers Support Group (a national Traveller support organisation) in 1996 believes that there may be as many as 10,000 traditional Travellers without a legal place to stay. They also suggest that there could be 50,000 – 100,000 New Travellers within the United Kingdom.
- 2.5** In summary it would appear that all published statistics on Traveller numbers need to be treated with some scepticism. The official count of gypsy caravans is certainly less than the total number of Traveller vehicles. Whilst Traveller support groups have put forward much higher figures as being more realistic there is no real statistical database to support this.
- 2.6** The reality however is that whatever the actual figures the demand for stopping places far outweighs the supply of authorised sites. Most of the permanent sites which have been developed over the past 40 or so years have been for Gypsy travellers and most of these are permanently full with little turnover. This leaves a large population of other Travellers with no prospect of finding a legal stopping place.

The Provision of Sites

- 2.7** The Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 gave local authorities discretionary powers to provide caravan sites for Gypsies. The Caravan Sites Act 1968 made this a statutory duty, placed on County Councils, Metropolitan District Councils and London Boroughs. In 1980 the then government gave financial support by way of full subsidy to local authorities who provided sites. The duty to provide sites and the financial support for site provision was withdrawn by the enactment of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. Local authorities currently therefore have no statutory duty to provide sites for Gypsies and never had any duty to provide sites for Travellers who did not come within the legal definition of a Gypsy.

2.8 The lack of sites nationally has been exacerbated by the successive closing off of stopping places traditionally used by Travellers. The response of many local authorities over the years has been to evict Travellers who have stopped on unauthorised sites and then to carry out physical works to prevent any future occurrence. This has sometimes had the effect of forcing Travellers to occupy more high profile sites where their presence can give rise to genuine complaint.

3 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- 3.1 Travellers, as a social group, have traditions, cultures, norms and aspirations which are not necessarily identical to those of the settled community. However, the general approach of the law towards Travellers has been to apply principles and processes that reflect the norms and values of the settled community. For example the principles of trespass (protecting land by excluding others), nuisance (prohibiting what is considered an “unreasonable interference” with other people’s use of land) and the planning regulations (restricting development and unauthorised use of land). In the case of Travellers, the application of these principles involves the balancing of competing rights and demands which is not always easy to achieve. This balancing act is likely to become even more crucial when the Human Rights Act 1998 comes into effect in October 2000.
- 3.2 Most of the legislation and case law in the last 30 years has been an attempt to reconcile the need to protect the rights of land owners with the desire to enable travellers to continue a travelling lifestyle.
- 3.3 Since the coming into force of the **Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994**, local authorities have no duty to provide sites for travellers, only a discretionary power under **Section 20** of the **Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960**.
- 3.4 Separate from the issue of site provision is the issue of enforcement. Case law, starting with **R. v. Wealden District Council ex parte Wales (1995)** has established that local authorities have to have regard to “considerations of common humanity”. This phrase has not been clearly defined. However, it is generally taken to refer to the need to consider the welfare of travellers, including the need for shelter, health and education of children. These needs are referred to in the Department of the Environment circular 18/94 and the new Good Practice Guide issued jointly by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions and the Home Office in October 1998. The various options open to local authorities to regain possession of their land include directions under **Section 77** of the **Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994** and possession proceedings under County

Court Rules **Order 24** which has been preserved by Schedule 2 of the Civil Procedure Rules 1998.

- 3.5** Decisions of local authorities, whether they relate to the provision of sites or the eviction of Travellers, remain potentially susceptible to challenge by way of applications for judicial review in the High Court.
- 3.6** In the recent case of **R.v.Hillingdon LBC exp. McDonagh (1998)** the High court appeared to suggest that local authorities are not obliged to carry out welfare checks before issuing proceedings under Order 24 of the County Court rules. However, this has, to some extent, been overtaken by the publication of the Government's Good Practice Guide. The Guide, although not legally binding, is a relevant consideration and, as such, local authorities are obliged to have regard to it. The Good Practice Guide advises local authorities not to evict Travellers needlessly and to consider a range of measures, including site provision and toleration. Any decision that does not take this into account is potentially ultra vires.
- 3.7** The **Race Relations Act 1976** makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of race. In the case of **Commission for Racial Equality v. Dutton (1989)** the Court of Appeal ruled that "Gypsies" constitute a separate racial group for the purposes of the Act, but "Travellers" did not constitute such a group. Any treatment of Gypsies which is less favourable than that of the community generally may therefore amount to an unlawful discrimination.

Under **Section 71** of the Race Relations Act 1976, Local Authorities have a duty to make appropriate arrangements with a view to securing that their various functions are carried out with due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.

- 3.8** The introduction of the **Human Rights Act 1998** is also relevant. The Act, which will come into force in October 2000, incorporates the European Convention on Human Rights into UK legislation. Under the Act, public bodies, including local authorities, will be under a statutory duty to comply with the requirements of the Convention. The Convention, among other things, protects the right to respect for private and family life and the home (Article 8) and this applies equally to Travellers and to the settled community. Article 14 is also relevant and refers to the right to freedom from discrimination. Whilst the exact effect of this legislation remains to be seen it is widely expected to have a profound effect upon future decision making in relation to many rights issues, particularly as regards the law relating to Travellers. Given that rights under the Convention will be enforceable directly in the UK courts, it is

expected that Convention rights will be relied upon to challenge local authority decisions to evict Travellers.

4 THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 The emphasis of national policies towards Travellers has shifted over the years from site provision to enforcement and, recently, towards “toleration”. Local authorities had the power under the **Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960** to provide sites for Travellers. The **Caravan Sites Act 1968** imposed a duty on local authorities to provide caravan sites. The latter was repealed in 1994 when local authorities were given enhanced powers of eviction.

Circulars 1/94 and 18/94 of the DoE

- 4.2 At the same time as the **Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994** came into force, the government issued circular 18/94 regarding unauthorised Gypsy encampments. The guidance in this circular advises local authorities not to evict travellers where their presence is not causing any nuisance and suggests that they should provide basic facilities, such as water and refuse collection. It also advises local authorities to take their obligations under various legislative provisions (such as those relating to children, housing, education and health) into account. The approach in the Circular was in sharp contrast to the more draconian provisions of the Act itself and this gave rise to a number of court cases.
- 4.3 Circular 1/94 also requires local authorities to address site provision for Travellers in their local plans.

The Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions Good Practice Guide

- 4.4 Following extensive research and consultation the Department for Environment Transport and Regions and the Home Office issued a Good Practice Guide to managing unauthorised camping. The guide, in particular, emphasises the following points:
- a. **Local authorities should have an overall strategy towards Gypsy and Traveller issues, including needs assessment, site provision and service provision – as well as eviction policies, which should be developed with the local police force.**
 - b. **All local authorities should seriously consider identifying “acceptable” temporary stopping places.**

- c. **Local authorities should build planning aspects into their Traveller strategy and avoid the setting of criteria that in practice might prove too difficult to meet.**
- d. **Education and health services should be included in a local authority Gypsy and Travellers strategy.**
- e. **Local authorities and the police should have a written statement of their policies towards unauthorised encampment. This should be made available to the Gypsies and Travellers.**
- f. **Standards of behaviour expected of Gypsies and Travellers should be the same as those of the settled community.**
- g. **Local policies should make clear the circumstances under which the Gypsies and Travellers will be permitted to stay on an unauthorised site without eviction action being taken.**
- h. **When evicting unauthorised campers local authorities should, where appropriate, follow a route which requires a court order.**
- i. **The local crime reduction strategies should be used to deal with problems of crime and disorder arising from unauthorised camping.**

5 INFORMATION GATHERING

- 5.1 When considering the issues of Travellers and Gypsies and the consequences of those issues the Council and its officers need current and good information on which to base their decision making process. The whole subject is both complicated in terms of legal matters but also in moral and ethical terms affecting the lives of people involved.
- 5.2 The Council must be aware of the scale and nature of the travelling lifestyle, the needs of the travelling population and of the legal/ethical issues involved. As with any group of people living, working or visiting the District the Council has responsibilities for the health, safety and welfare of the travelling populations. To fulfil those responsibilities the Council must gather data on the following:
 - i) the nature and extent of the travelling population
 - ii) sites used within the District
 - iii) educational needs of the travelling population
 - iv) health and social needs of the travelling population

v) housing needs of the travelling population

- 5.3** In order to gather the above data the Council will participate in the DETR twice yearly census.
- 5.4** In addition Officers will regularly monitor encampments and liaise directly with Gypsies and Travellers to establish information on points iii) – v) above.
- 5.5** It is important that the Council and that includes departments within the Council do not operate in isolation. Many agencies can be involved with illegal encampments including District/Borough Councils, County or Unitary Councils, Police, the Health Authority and landowners. It is essential that all the parties involved including the Gypsies and Travellers and local residents are informed and involved.
- 5.6** Within the Council, interdepartmental cooperation and information exchange through established procedures is essential.
- 5.7** With external agencies the District Council's involvement with Forums such as the Brighton and Hove Travellers Forum provides useful information exchange across all agencies within East Sussex. The Travellers Forum can also provide a basis for consistency of approach between authorities to prevent problems being "passed around" unnecessarily.

6. SITE PROVISION

- 6.1** Under the provision of the now repealed Caravan Sites Act 1968 the East Sussex County Council provided a transit site for Travellers and Gypsies at Southerham with Lewes District.
- 6.2** Although the legal requirement to provide the Southerham site has been removed the County Council still provides and Lewes District Council continues to manage the Southerham site.
- 6.3** The information gathered since the site was opened and the continued use of the site indicates that there is a high level of demand for this site.
- 6.4** Subject to the continued financial support from ESCC the District Council wishes to operate the Southerham site for the foreseeable future.
- 6.5** Southerham by its nature is intended for short term occupation only. It is recognised that certain gypsies and travellers although wishing to remain nomadic prefer to occupy sites for longer periods of time. In recognition of this the council has given planning permission and licensed two private Gypsy Caravan sites.

7 LAND USE PLANNING

- 7.1 The Local Plan specifies criteria for addressing Travellers and Gypsies needs. The Plan states planning permission will be granted for gypsy accommodation if the following criteria are met:
- a. the site is required for use by 'Gypsies' as defined in the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 as amended;
 - b. the site is not within a statutory protected area such as the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
 - c. the site does not have an adverse impact on any area with natural/wildlife/agricultural/archaeological interest;
 - d. the site is adequately screened from all vantage points and is not prominent in the landscape;
 - e. the site does not adversely affect the rural character of the surrounding countryside, particularly in local views;
 - f. compliance with other relevant District-wide Policies.

If the proposal meets the above criteria, the details of the site should conform to the following:

- g. conditions will be imposed prohibiting external lighting;
- h. all services to the site, such as water, power and foul drainage are positioned unobtrusively;
- i. conditions will be imposed limiting the noise emissions from electricity generators and any other generators of noise to within working hours;
- j. no permanent structures will be acceptable except for those required to comply with site licensing conditions. Any permanent structures proposed must be unobtrusively positioned in order to minimise visual impact.

8 HOUSING POLICY

- 8.1 Gypsies and Travellers will not be treated differently to any other person applying for housing or housing advice from the Council.

(i) Housing Register

Allocation to permanent rented accommodation be it Council owned or Housing Association is dealt with via the Housing Register. To qualify for acceptance onto the Housing Register a person(s) must have resided in the Lewes district for a continuous period of six months up to the date of application at a permanent address.

Other criteria applying is that the person(s) must not:

- have any housing related debts to this Council
- have been violent or abusive to Council staff or contractors
- have a history of anti-social behaviour

In reality, Gypsies and Travellers are unlikely to qualify for acceptance onto the Housing Register.

(ii) Homelessness

Any Gypsy or Traveller has the right to approach any Housing Authority to make a claim of homelessness or seek housing advice.

If an application is made to the Housing Needs Section, from the outset it has to be determined if the moveable accommodation is reasonable for the household to remain in and if there is a suitable alternative location.

To determine this, it is likely a site inspection by a Housing Needs Officer and probably an Environmental Health Officer will be necessary.

If it is decided the accommodation is no longer suitable then an assessment in accordance with homelessness legislation is made to determine if there is a priority need, whether the household has become homeless intentionally and if there is a local connection.

Furthermore, if a household has specific special needs, for example, learning and/or physical disabilities, mental illness or any other special reason, these will be taken into account in determining the Council's decision.

Should the Council accept responsibility for future rehousing then an application is made onto the Housing Register, irrespective of the time the household has resided in the district. Initially the Council is allowed to provide temporary accommodation for a period of up to two years.

In instances where it is determined that the moveable accommodation is adequate for the household's needs and there is somewhere for it to be suitably placed, there will be no duty for the Council to provide accommodation; only to offer advice and assistance.

9 POLICY STATEMENT AND PRINCIPLES

Definition

9.1 For the purposes of the Council's policy all subsequent references in this document to 'Travellers' includes Gypsies or other persons who have a nomadic lifestyle for all or part of the year.

- The Council accepts that individuals have the right to choose a nomadic lifestyle. However, this does not mean that those people following this lifestyle should cause nuisance or harm to others or damage to the environment or natural habitat.
- The Council discourages trespass on its own or anyone else's land. All communities and individuals have rights and responsibilities to comply with the law and to expect protection within the law. The Council will not condone criminal behaviour of any kind and will work with other agencies to enforce the law appropriately to the circumstances.
- The Council will not interfere with the rights of individual landowners to take possession proceedings in respect of private land.

9.2 In recognition that nationally there is limited provision of stopping places or transit accommodation, every unauthorised encampment will be considered in relation to its individual circumstances and this strategy. The Council will at all times act in a humane and compassionate fashion. The following criteria will be taken into account in reaching a decision on eviction:-

- a. Health and safety – whether the encampment causes an obstruction or hazard to road users or otherwise threatens the health and safety of the local community or the Travellers themselves.
- b. Whether the encampment causes an unacceptable nuisance to nearby residents by reason of size, location, nature or duration, or conditions giving rise to statutory nuisance.
- c. Whether nearby residents and/or the local community are being subjected to anti-social or criminal behaviour from Travellers residing within the encampment.
- d. Whether there is a significant risk to public health.
- e. Whether the encampment seriously interferes with access to or management of adjoining land or property.
- f. Whether the encampment causes, or is likely to cause, damage to the Council's land or property or

prejudice its use by employees or tenants of the Council or, in the case of car parks, users of those facilities. There will be a presumption against toleration of encampment on the Council's car parks.

- g. Whether the encampment is too large for its location or is causing unacceptable damage or impact upon the environment or the policies for its protection as incorporated in the Development Plan.
- h. The health and welfare of the families on the site including any immediate needs.

10 NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND WELFARE SERVICES

- 10.1** There is no evidence to suggest that additional permanent residential sites are required in the District other than, perhaps, in individual cases but it is acknowledged that Travellers passing through the District have no legitimate sites to go to other than Southerham. The needs of such Travellers must be taken into account having due regard to the Council's Policy Statement and the legal framework.
- 10.2** Before commencing proceedings on any action for eviction the Council will undertake an assessment of Travellers' needs in accordance with the policy statement and having due regard to the advice contained in Circular 18/94. The Council's officers will liaise with the Social Services and Education Departments of the East Sussex County Council and, as necessary, with the Health Authority, with the consent of the travellers concerned. Information will be obtained by interview or questionnaire and Travellers will be offered an information sheet containing contact particulars.

Education Services

- 10.3** The Traveller Education Service is jointly funded by Central Government and the County Council and exists to support the educational needs of all Traveller children 'residing in or resorting to' the area. This includes supporting children from visiting fairs and circuses. The Traveller Education Service will help families new to the area to find a school place and can support both children and schools to achieve successful integration of Traveller children into the new school. The Traveller Education Service can provide some on site pre-school activities and will support distance learning arrangements when appropriate. When children move on the Traveller Education Service may liaise with a new Education Department to provide continuity of provision if requested by the parent(s).

Health Services

10.4 Travellers have an equal right to mainstream health services and in order to support access to health, special facilities will sometimes be provided. In the case of the protracted occupation of Phie Forest, Crowborough, a mobile facility was provided by the local NHS Trust to give information about primary and secondary health care services and to deliver services to the site. The Council's officers work closely with the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control of the Health Authority on health related issues.

Social Services

10.5 The Social Services Department provides a wide range of services both for adults and for children and their families from a number of locations.

This Department is not a universal service provider but a service which responds to requests from for example –

- Professional colleagues
- Individuals in need of a service
- Members of the public, eg relatives/neighbours

Travellers have the same eligibility for services as people in settled communities.

Housing Services

10.6 The Housing Department provides housing advice to anyone seeking assistance and will assess the circumstances and needs of any person claiming to be homeless, or threatened with homelessness.

11 PROCEDURE FOR EVICTION OF UNAUTHORISED ENCAMPMENTS

11.1 Although Sections 77 and 78 of the new Criminal Justice Act give quite clear powers to Local Authorities, the advice within circular 18/94 continues to emphasise that these powers should be used with discretion. Paragraph 9 states that:

“The Secretary of State continues to consider that Local Authorities should not use their powers to evict Gypsies needlessly. They should use the powers in a humane and compassionate fashion and primarily to reduce nuisance and to afford a higher level of protection to private owners of land.”

The Circular emphasises the obligations placed on Social Services departments under the Children Act 1989 and Local Housing Authorities under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1985. The attention of local Education Authorities is also drawn to the requirement to make arrangements for the education of Traveller children.

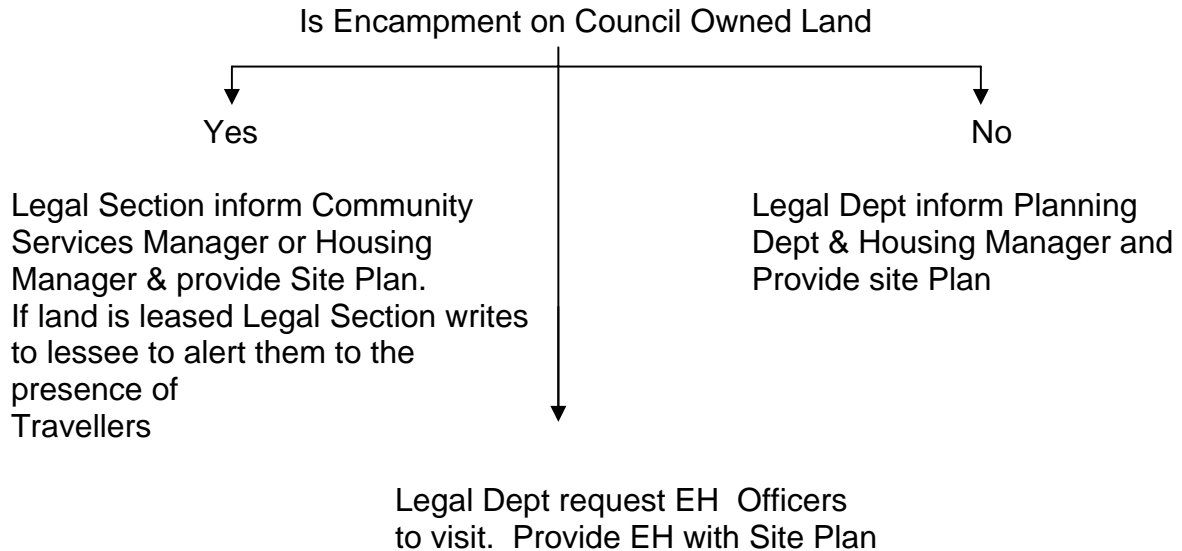
- 11.2** It is quite clear that it would be inappropriate for the District Council to carry out eviction or prosecution against Travellers as a matter of course. It is necessary for the Council to establish clear policies in the enforcement of this legislation to ensure that the Authority acts within government guidance and in line with this Strategy document and acts in a consistent manner.
- 11.3** The Council in its current policy for enforcement normally requires private landowners to take action to secure the removal of Gypsies from their land. This policy was introduced because it was quite clear that landowners were relying exclusively on the District Council to take enforcement action to clear unauthorised campers without making any attempt to re-secure sites. The result of this was an ever escalating requirement on the District Council to carry out enforcement action. It is strongly believed that this policy should be retained to ensure that landowners accept the responsibilities to maintain their sites in a secure manner and carry out their obligations as owners.
- 11.4** **The Council will normally expect owners or occupiers of land to take action to secure the removal of unauthorised campers from their land.**
- 11.5** It is quite clear that it would not be appropriate for a private owner to take action in all cases. This is particularly true in matters of mass trespass and therefore the current policy of the Council set out below should be retained.
- 11.6** **The District Council will consider taking enforcement action on those sites where ownership cannot be identified or where the Director of Planning & Environmental Services, following consultation with the Interim Cabinet member with responsibility for the Environment and local member(s), feels that action by the District Council is more appropriate.**
- 11.7** **The District Council will not normally carry out enforcement action against travellers occupying highway land. This should be reserved for the East Sussex Council as Highway Authority.**

Initial Receipt of Complaint/1st Action

11.8 Complaint received by any department passed to Environmental Health (EH) for logging on Computer Complaints system.

11.9 EH inform Legal Section. Legal Section ascertains whether land is owned by the Council. Check with Estates. Ask Estates for site plan of the land in question.

11.10



11.11 EH Officers visit site. Mark and identify all vehicles on Site Plan. Interview all Travellers present and compile pro-forma in respect of each interview. Copy of pro-forma attached. EH to be accompanied by either officer from Community Services/Housing or Planning.

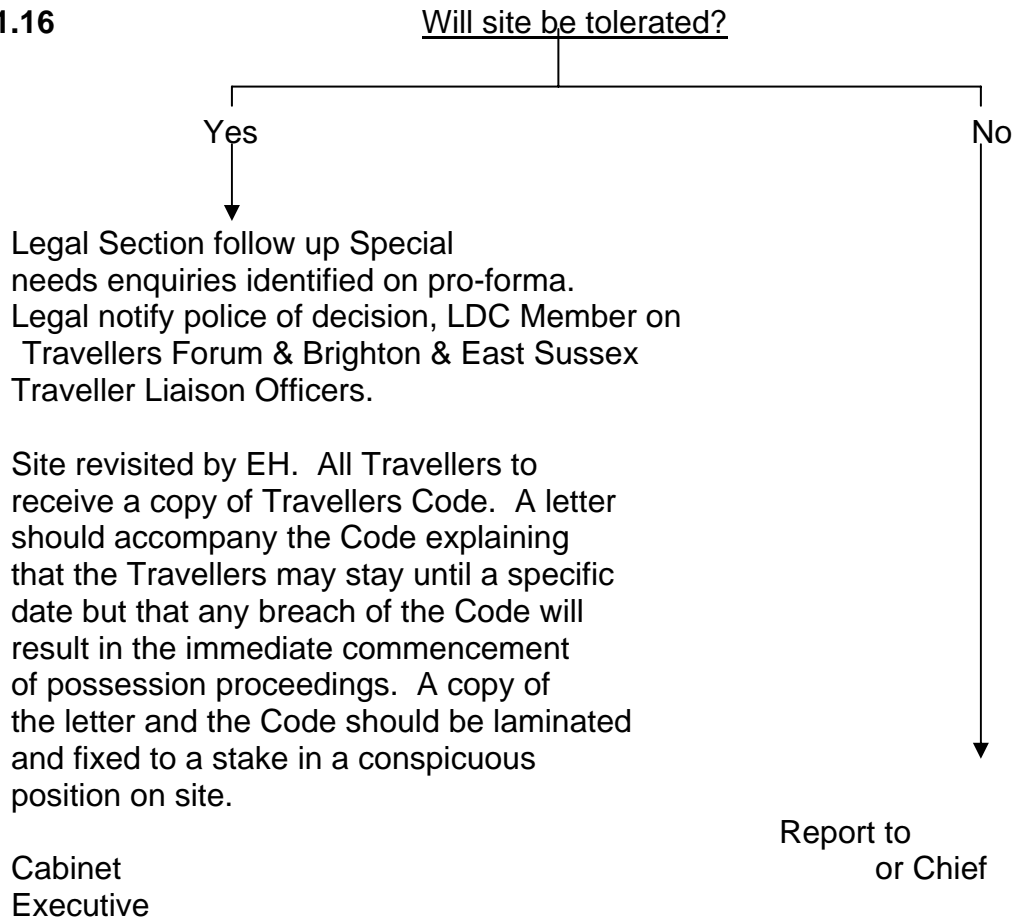
11.12 Immediately following site visit hold meeting between Legal, Health Manager & EH Officer, Planning/Community Services/Housing Officer to assess condition of the site, size of encampment and information recorded on pro-formas. Decision taken whether to tolerate the encampment for 30 days or not. Refer to policy guidelines on toleration in Council's Strategy. Refer also to Circular 18/94 and Good Practice Guide and the Convention Rights contained in the Human Rights Act 1998.

11.13 Ratify decision with District Solicitor and Head of Environment & Health.

11.14 If decision is not to tolerate and site is particularly sensitive or if immediate and intolerable damage/nuisance is being caused either to the land or local residents, contact the local Police Inspector and ask whether the police will use their powers under Section 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. Refer first to Section 61 to see whether the pre-conditions for using Section 61 apply.

11.15 If the police will not act and toleration is not an option, check the pro-formas to see if any special needs have been identified, ie premature babies, pregnant women, illness, mechanical breakdown, special schooling etc. Make enquiries of doctors/health visitors who have been named in the pro-formas. Also contact Traveller Education at the County Council to obtain further information on any children with special education needs.

11.16



The steps described in paragraph 11.15 above should be taken if it appears that the travellers will not be moving on at the expiry of the toleration period.

11.17 Cabinet decide to seek removal of unauthorised encampment.

- i) Legal to prepare letter to Travellers explaining why decision made and informing them of Southerham facility.
- ii) EH to deliver letters personally to Travellers.
- iii) EH to regularly check availability of space at Southerham.
- iv) Legal dept to commence possession proceedings. Legal notifies Community Services, Environmental Health & Housing Services.

- 11.18** Obtain possession order.
- 11.19** Legal to notify Housing Department as soon as possible.
- 11.20** The Policy is to secure removal as soon as possible. Travellers to be visited and notified as soon as possible of Court decision. Legal Department to make arrangements with Bailiffs, Brighton Recovery and Police.
- 11.21** Community Services to make sure Southerham clean and available and to make arrangement to secure site after removal.
- 11.22** EH Officers to attend eviction with Community Services.
- Community Services secure site.

12 THE WAY FORWARD

- 12.1** It is clear that no local authority can resolve the issue of Travellers in isolation and that a regional or national approach is needed. The guidelines produced by the Home Office and Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions may prove to be a useful tool for Travellers and Travellers' support groups to mount legal challenges against those local authorities that are not following acknowledged good practice in their dealings with Travellers, but there is no other incentive given to local authorities to comply. Indeed those that provide sites or pursue policies of toleration could initially become a magnet for Travellers seeking refuge from the more draconian policies being pursued elsewhere. Thus there is a built-in inertia that may cause some local authorities to go slow or to mark time in their policy development. Unless progress is made, however, the expensive and inhumane cycle of continual eviction from one place to the next will be perpetuated.
- 12.2** The Council will therefore continue to seek to contribute to thinking and policy formulation at a national level and will press for a national approach with appropriate funding and with effective sanctions available against those local authorities that do not follow agreed policies and practices.
- 12.3** The Council will seek for local authorities to work together in order –
- To exchange information about the pattern of Traveller movements within the area so as to be able to make a reasoned assessment of local need;
 - To discuss and develop best practice to be commonly adopted over as wide an area as possible;

- To lobby for a national approach with appropriate funding from Central Government.

12.4 To this end the Council participates in the Local Traveller Forum made up of all the local authorities within East Sussex. The Forum has been meeting on a regular basis since October 1997 and is seeking to expand its membership and to form links with other similar forums elsewhere.

12.5 Such initiatives will assist individual local authorities to manage the issues presented by the presence of Travellers within their own area and will contribute to a better understanding of those issues amongst residents, Councillors, Council Officers, Police Officers, Travellers and Travellers' support groups. In order to make substantive progress, however, the need for a national approach with Central Government funding remains paramount. Only in this way will it be possible to ensure that all local authorities are making an appropriate contribution towards matching the assessed needs of the Traveller population with the national supply of authorised sites and tolerated stopping places.