

Decision maker:	Acting Director for Economy and Place
Decision date:	6 August 2019
Title of report:	Modernisation of existing traveller sites
Report by:	Licensing, travellers and technical support service manager

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

Bircher, Bromyard Bringsty, Wormside, Arrow, Saxon Gate, Hope End

Purpose and summary

To seek approval to begin works to carry out modernisation and upgrade of the traveller sites owned/managed by the Council.

The six sites and 53 pitches require works to carry out further improvements.

The proposed works include, improvements to fencing, doors, electric meter and supply upgrade, improved security on sites, play areas and general site repairs identified in the stock condition survey.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) the modernisation of traveller sites and pitches as detailed at Appendix 1 be approved at a cost of not more than £490,354.**

Alternative options

1. Approval is not given;

This option is not recommended as the council could fail in its duty contained in the Mobile Homes Act 1983. Site owners (the council) are required to ensure that their sites are kept in a good condition by maintaining pitch bases, utilities, amenity blocks and shared amenities. This option is not recommended as without a planned schedule of improvement works the sites could fall into disrepair.

Key considerations

2. The required modernisation will ensure that the council continues to offer good quality accommodation and attract new applications for vacant pitches.
3. The improvements to the electrics on all sites will result in fewer call outs by electrical trip out. New meters will enable residents to purchase electric credit from local shops and supermarkets rather than relying on officers visiting the sites to sell electric cards.
4. The site improvements will enhance the aesthetics of the sites and ensure that they do not cause detriment to the local communities where they are sited.
5. The improvements to the pitches were requested by residents, in particular improvements to the doors. The current doors are warped and require constant repair.
6. The works have been prioritised with information provided by residents, property services and the gypsy & traveller officers who visit the sites. By collating this information, it is hoped that the best use can be made of the money to satisfy residents and reduce the maintenance costs for property services. The replacement of doors and electric meter upgrade works will be undertaken via the council's maintenance contract with BBLP and the refurbishment works will be procured in line with the council's contract procedure rules; this is likely to be through a suitable framework or an open procurement process. The specific route will be determined in consultation with the commercial services team.

Community impact

7. This project supports residents of council owned sites to live safe, healthy and independent lives, and supports the choices available for persons not wishing to live in 'bricks and mortar'.
8. Better provision of improved accommodation and an increase in plots available will enhance traveller children's lives. Stability in accommodation enables facilities to be accessed more easily.
9. Development of good quality accommodation supports the 'secure better services, quality of life and value for money' element within the Corporate Plan.
10. If the council were to seek alternative management/ownership arrangements for the traveller sites in the future, getting the properties into an improved condition, would make such a transition more feasible.

Equality duty

11. This decision provides additional opportunity for persons from the gypsy traveller community to have more accommodation choice.
Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Resource implications

12. There is an approved provision of £910,354 in the capital programme in 19/20 for Gypsy and Traveller Pitch development and the planned modernisation spend of £490,354 falls within this programme of work. The balance of £420k is to be used creating three new pitches at current sites and is subject to a separate decision.
13. Table below details spend in 19/20 in regard to this modernisation works, this work is all funded by corporate borrowing and therefore there are no revenue implications of this work. If the sites can be satisfactorily refurbished for less than £490k then excess capital will not be drawn down. Likewise, if the £490k cannot be entirely spent during the financial year 2019/20, then the residual costings will be re-profiled into later financial years in accordance with the council's procedures for this.

Capital cost of project – This is being funded Corporately	2019/20 £000	Total £000
Refurbishment works recommended by Stock Condition Survey – various works including re-surfacing pitches, fencing, fire safety works.	336	336
Door replacement	70	70
Electric meter upgrade	35	35
Project costs	49	49
TOTAL	490	490

Funding streams	2019/20 £000	Total £000
<i>PWLB – HC Funded</i>	490	490
TOTAL	490	490

14. A business case is attached as Appendix 1.

Legal implications

15. This is an executive function and a non-key decision. Such decisions under the Constitution are delegated to the Chief Executive under Part 3 Section 3, on to officers in exercise of its functions in Part 3 Section 7 (officer functions) and subsequently to named officers under the Directorate Scheme of Delegation for Economy and Place. The Acting Director for Economy and Place has the authority to act on behalf of Herefordshire Council in respect of all regulatory, environment and waste services.
16. Herefordshire Council, as with other forms of social housing and as a landowner under the Mobile Homes Act 1983, has statutory obligations to ensure that sites for mobile homes within their ownership, including traveller sites are maintained in good repair. Site owners are required to ensure that the sites are kept in a good condition by maintaining pitch bases, utilities, amenity blocks and shared amenities.
17. Paragraph 22 (e) and (f) Mobile Homes Act 1983 requires the site owner (the council) to consult with pitch occupiers and/or residents groups about any proposed improvements to the site. Care must be taken to ensure when undertaking improvement works to ensure that the needs of disabled persons are prioritised, in accordance with duties under the Equality Act 2010.
18. There are no other legal considerations

Risk management

19. In summary the main risks if the work is not undertaken are as follows:
 - a. Future reduction in income from rental;
 - b. Increase pressure on maintenance budget;
 - c. Continued challenge regarding the condition of the sites.
20. The main risk to this project if it goes ahead is that there would be an over spend to the planned costings, although this will be carefully managed through the council's project management procedures and processes.

Consultees

21. Consultation has taken place through the drafting and extensive consultation for the Planning Traveller Sites Development Plan Document (DPD) over a two-year period. The works proposed by this report were therefore selected from the results of that process which took on board the views of the traveller community. Part of the consultation process also involved direct consultation with the residents from the sites and this report supports many of these proposals as well.
22. Ward members have been consulted. The ward member for Bircher expressed support for the proposals and there were no other comments or objections.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Business case for capital bid

Background papers

None identified