



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Update on the work of the Traveller Liaison Management Unit
Date:	16 March 2011
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen Director of Development ext 3470
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	To advise Members of the Development Committee of the work of the Traveller Liaison Management Unit (TLMU). The Traveller Liaison Management Unit was established in the late 1980s as a Unit within the Community Services Section. The TLMU was set up to address the adverse living conditions of the Traveller community.
1.2	Up to 130 Traveller families were living on unauthorised sites on the Glen Road in the Andersonstown area of the City with no access to toilet or washing facilities and water was provided by two unofficial stand-pipes. All accepted service delivery norms within the settled community had been denied to this community including health, education, housing and employment opportunities.
1.3	It was considered that accommodation was the key to address all of the shortfalls that affected this community and BCC were invited by the DOE Minister to become a member of the Advisory Committee on Travellers (ACT).
1.4	ACT was to be the Ministerial overseeing body to address the disadvantaged position of the Traveller community with a specific remit for Traveller site accommodation. BCC agreed to address the disadvantaged position of the Traveller community and to participate in a Traveller site development programme with 100% capital funding from the DOE Special Programmes Branch .

2	Key Issues
	<u>Key Legislative and Governmental Input 1997 to 2010</u>
2.1	<p>The TLMU was at the forefront of lobbying on Traveller related matters and all key issues addressed had Council support and approval.</p> <p>In 1999 the DOE Minister stood down from ACT. This would have left a void however BCC Councillor Fred Proctor in partnership with other Councils formed the Local Government Partnership on Traveller Issues (LGP) in 2000 which continues to collectively represent Councils' views on Traveller matters .</p>
2.2	<p>The Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 was key legislation which identified the Traveller community as an ethnic group. This affords Travellers' legal protection in the delivery of goods and services against any form of discrimination or racism.</p>
2.3	<p>Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires Councils' to promote equality of opportunity and good relations .</p>
2.4	<p>Targeting Social Need / Promoting Social Inclusion Report on Travellers (PSI) 1999 was a key report which identified the severe disadvantaged position of the Traveller community . The Report set out 33 key recommendations for statutory service providers to comply with however ongoing reviews note that many agencies continue to fall far short of their stated responsibilities.</p>
2.5	<p>2003 Housing (NI) Bill which requires the NIHE to provide the Traveller community with a range of specific accommodation including Transit, Permanent and Emergency Sites as well as social and grouped housing schemes .</p>
2.6	<p>The Unauthorised Encampments (NI) Order 2005 empowers the PSNI and NIHE to address the issue of unauthorised encampments by the Traveller community. The legislation also requires the NIHE to make available Transit and Emergency site arrangements to ensure transient Travellers are not disadvantaged by the Order.</p>
2.7	<p>2010 Task Force Report on Traveller Education, which was instructed by the Education Minister and overseen by the NI Dept. of Education</p>
2.8	<p>2010 The Traveller All Ireland Health Study is a key report on Traveller health issues .</p>
2.9	<p><u>Comment</u> The TLMU in partnership with LGP are satisfied that all necessary legislation is in place to ensure parity in the provision of services to the Traveller community however there are agencies that still fall short of the norm with regard to their services to the Traveller community and it should be noted that litigation is now a real possibility to address failures in the system.</p>
2.10	<p><u>Key Challenges</u> Prior to the introduction of the Housing (NI) Bill 2003, the NIHE opined that the provision and management of Traveller Sites in NI should remain with District Councils'. The TLMU in partnership with LGP lobbied extensively to challenge the position of the NIHE on the grounds that it would be discriminatory against the Traveller community.</p>

	<p>It was considered that all the accommodation requirements of the Traveller community including site provision was the responsibility of the statutory housing provider (NIHE) and this position was supported by an Equality Impact Assessment carried out by DSD Housing Division. Following the DSD / EQIA, the Minister conceded that the NIHE should continue to be responsible for all Traveller accommodation including Traveller site provision and management. This reversal of the proposed RPA transfer is recognised as a significant achievement both for the benefit of the Traveller community and also from a Council perspective.</p> <p>2.11 Prior to the introduction of Reform of Public Administration (RPA) 2010, there was an attempt to transfer to local government the responsibilities for Transit, Emergency and Co-operated Traveller sites and responsibility for the management of the Unauthorised Encampments (NI) Order 2005. The TLMU worked in partnership with LGP and NILGA to lobby against this position with success, the DSD Minister agreed that all Traveller accommodation should be provided and managed by the NIHE.</p> <p>2.12 Following the transfer of the Council's Traveller sites to the NIHE in 2003, the then Director of Client Services instructed an independent review in the form of an EQIA of Council's work with the Traveller community in Belfast. The result of the EQIA was to retain the TLMU and the post of Traveller Liaison Officer (TLO) with a revised Job Description. Support from Community Services would continue to assist in project work with the Traveller community and support the Traveller support organisations .</p> <p>2.13 In 2004 the Traveller Outreach Office was destroyed in an arson attack however the TLMU in partnership with several Council Departments quickly reinstated a more appropriate temporary building which is still operational today. This Outreach Office is the hub of our direct work with the Traveller community and is also extensively used by key agencies to interface with the Traveller community.</p> <p>2.14 The TLMU in partnership with An Munia Tober (AMT) were successful in a bid to the Big Lottery which enabled the provision of accommodation for AMT to provide an After Schools Programme as well as a facility for many other Traveller development activities and this was operational in 2007 .</p> <p>2.15 <u>Current Challenges</u> The priorities noted in the developing business plan for the 2011/12 service are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to review all related matters re RPA and respond as necessary - Continued membership of, and support to, the Local Government Partnership on Traveller Issues - Membership of NAGTO and use same to promote good practice in NI . - With Legal Services, to keep under review the requirements of Site Licensing re the 1963 Caravans Act - Review the Terms of Reference and membership of the existing Inter-departmental Traveller Liaison Group to align with the unit business plan, and agree priority work plan. - To ensure a city wide partnership approach to Traveller support, consider rational and options for a pilot Inter Agency Traveller Group (membership to be at senior officer level) for presentation to Committee. - Continue to promote the innovative Outreach Initiative from the Outreach Office on the Glen Road
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<p>2.16</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To develop and promote appropriate training programmes - Continue to support Traveller Focus Week which is an all Ireland event which promotes Traveller issues and celebrates their culture . - Ensure Council compliance with all relevant matters relating to Travellers. - Assist the PSNI in their bid for Peace 3 funding to promote a project under Policing a Shared Society with specific reference to policing the Traveller community as agreed November 2010 committee. <p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>The BCC TLMU, is recognised as the lead Council in NI when dealing with Traveller issues and over the years the TLO has established a standing amongst the key service delivery agencies and also with the Traveller Support Networks in NI, ROI and GB. The TLO is also the only NI Council representative on the National Association of Gypsy and Traveller Officers and he has found this contact to be extremely positive in his work. This successful approach is supported through our partnership work with the LGP, NILGA and NAGTO.</p> <p>It is essential to continue to monitor Government and Agency initiatives relating to the Traveller community and where appropriate challenge. Recent experience demonstrates that without effective consideration and challenge Councils may inherit responsibilities that would have significant implications on resources and finance .</p> <p>While there have been improvements in the lifestyle of the Traveller community, they continue to be the most disadvantaged ethnic group within our society and suffer the worst statistics in areas of health, education, specific accommodation and employment: a situation which would not be acceptable for any group within the settled community. In order to continue to maximise the impact of our limited resource, it is important that the initiatives, networking and partnership approach already established are continued and extended where possible.</p> <p>The Traveller community are entitled by law to access all statutory services in an equitable fashion as enjoyed by the settled community and there is a responsibility on Councils to promote equality of opportunity and good relations under Section 75 of the NI Act 1998. BCC can demonstrate effective leadership in its approach to the needs of the Traveller community.</p>
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3	Resource Implications
3.1	There are no additional resource implications over that agreed in budget estimates.
3.2	Asset and Other Implications: Note report and possible implications for the future which will be kept under review.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	The TLMU complies with the conditions as set out in Section 75 of the (NI) Act 1998 and actively promotes the same .
4.2	The TLMU was subject to Equality Screening and a full independent Equality Impact Assessment

5	Recommendations
5.1	Committee are asked to note the contents of the report

6	Decision Tracking
Further to Committees consideration of the report:	
Time line: April 2011 Reporting Officer: Catherine Taggart	

7	Key to Abbreviations
LGP : Local Government Partnership on Traveller Issues	
NAGTO National Association of Gypsy and Traveller officers	
DSD : Dept for Social Development	
PSI : Promoting Social Inclusion	
AMT : An Munia Tober	
PSNI : Police Service of Northern Ireland	
ACT : Advisory Committee on Travellers	
DOE : Dept of the Environment	

8	Documents Attached
Appendix 1: TLO Brief Summary of Responsibilities	
Appendix 2: TLMU summary of achievements	

Appendix 1:

The Mission Statement:

To improve the quality of life of the Traveller community and strive to empower the Traveller community to take informed decisions that have a positive impact on their lives

Traveller Liaison Officer : Brief Summary of Responsibilities

- To be the Council's lead Officer on Traveller issues
- To maintain and update a data base on Traveller issues
- To respond to Traveller related publications
- Assist and advise all Council Departments on Traveller issues
- Provide assistance for Rate Payers on related matters
- Develop and present Traveller Awareness / Anti Racism Training both internally and externally
- Maintain Traveller Outreach Office
- Capacity building work with the Traveller community
- Be the Council's representative on all appropriate working groups
- Participate in Unit and Departmental Management teams
- Provide Committee Reports as and when required
- Represent BCC on the National Association of Gypsy and Traveller Officers (NAGTO)

Appendix 2: TLMU summary of achievements

The following is a summary note of the key BCC achievements in support of the needs of the Traveller community in the city:

- Key member of the Ministerial appointed Advisory Committee on Travellers
- TLMU developed a Traveller site programme for Belfast
- Promoting NI Traveller issues an national level via membership of NAGTO
- Instrumental in setting up the Local Government Partnership on Traveller Issues
- In 1990 the Council provided and managed two temporary serviced Decanting Sites at Glen Road and Colin Glen which accommodated sixty families .
- By 1993 the Council's Site Provision Programme provided two 21pitch Permanent Serviced Sites and a 10 pitch Transit site at Glen Road Heights and Colin Glen Park
- Post 1994 the majority of Traveller families within the City had access to serviced pitch arrangements provided and managed by the Council .
- Established a successful Outreach Office on the Glen Road and continue to promote the Outreach Initiative to all key service providers and the Traveller community.
- Successful Big Lottery bid in 2006 which has provided a facility to promote a Traveller After Schools Project and other development projects managed by An Munia Tober and supported by Community Development officer.
- Successful high level challenge prior to the introduction of the 2003 Housing (NI) Bill which ensured the NIHE would be responsible for all Traveller accommodation including Traveller sites. Failure of the said challenge would have resulted in Councils' being responsible for the provision and management of all Traveller site requirements.
- A second successful high level challenge in 2010 with respect to the Reform of Public Administration which attempted to transfer all non permanent Traveller sites from the NIHE to District Councils. Again failure of this challenge would have had significant implications both financially and staffing for BCC and other Councils.
- Developed a series of Traveller Awareness / Anti racism Training Programmes which have been delivered both internally and also externally on request .
- Produced a DVD Training Prompt (Think Traveller) which has been distributed world wide on request with very positive feedback
- In partnership with BCC Community Safety Unit have established a Community Safety Traveller Group which has inter-agency input .
- Support for a young Traveller to join the Council's Youth Forum.