

**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC MEETING ON MONDAY 10<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2018 TO DISCUSS THE  
UNAUTHORISED ENCAMPMENT ON HALL PARK**

<b><u>Item.</u></b>	<p>Attending: Damien Parker, St Edmundsbury Borough Council, Leisure and Cultural Services Manager, Mark Ellis, Community Police Officer; Councillors Philip Reeve (Chair), Peter Fisk, Maggie Dunn, Kate Trevitt and Matthew Parker; Clerk Linda Harley; 69 members of the community.</p>
<b><u>1.0</u></b>	<p>Damien Parker reported on the series of events leading to the eviction of the travellers from Hall Park Green:</p> <p>St Edmundsbury Borough Council received notification that a group of 13 caravans, including children, had arrived on the green at Great Barton at around 5.30pm on Friday 10th August.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actions over the weekend period included: switching on the street lights throughout the night, informing the Norfolk &amp; Suffolk travellers liaison group, the Police visited the site on several occasions.</li> <li>• First thing on Monday morning, 13<sup>th</sup> August, Damien Parker visited the site to serve an initial letter upon the travellers which set out the facts that the site is Council owned, it's not suitable for camping and requesting that they leave the site.</li> <li>• On Monday afternoon a welfare check was undertaken to ensure that there were no health issues with the Travellers which would require medical attention.</li> <li>• On Tuesday morning St Edmundsbury Borough Council held the stakeholder meeting, the findings of the health check was considered as were the Police reports and following that a decision to pursue eviction was made.</li> <li>• Shortly after the meeting officers served the section 77 notice on each of the occupants/caravans, giving them till 10am tomorrow morning (16th August) to leave the site.</li> <li>• If the travellers fail to leave the site by 10.00am tomorrow morning lawyers will contact the court to secure a court hearing to try and obtain a section 78 notice (which gives us the power to forcibly evict).</li> <li>• St Edmundsbury Borough Council is required to inform the travellers of their intent to escalate the matter to court (because they have a right of appeal) so a further notice will be served informing them of the court date hearing. This notice will be served as soon as is practically possible after a date has been secured (tomorrow).</li> <li>• Assuming the section 78 Notice is granted by the court (the likely scenario), it will be served on the travellers ASAP. The 78 Notice will determine the time by which they must vacate the site.</li> <li>• If the travellers do not comply with the section 78 Notice, St Edmundsbury Borough Council will look to enforce the order.</li> </ul>

- Once the travellers have vacated the site St Edmundsbury Borough Council staff will visit the site to undertake whatever cleansing is required.

#### **Issues in general**

- There is a natural expectation from the community for us to act swiftly to move on encampments when they arrive on our public open spaces – St Edmundsbury Borough Council always try and do so but it is to the detriment of the work that they would have otherwise been progressing.
- Most people are reasonable and accept that it is a temporary inconvenience.
- Like society in general not all members of the travelling community are the same.
- The practicalities of evicting large encampments by force is incredibly resource hungry and can enflame further ASB – The Police have powers to do this immediately under section 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, but this is rarely progressed because they need to ensure that they have the necessary resource to hand and need to justify that its proportionate.
- We have in place an injunction forbidding encampments on named sites in Bury St Edmunds where we were able to evidence a consistent problem. The single encampment that we've had at Great Barton would not justify an application for an injunction order. This is a costly exercise and sufficient evidence must be provided to show this is an ongoing problem for the specific site.
- Surrounding the boundary of every site that has ever been the subject of an encampment is impractical and in many instances undesirable. The Great Barton site has a large boundary.
- Access points to maintain Public Open Space is essential and the access points (gates) will always remain the weakest links.
- There are no quick wins and as a responsible authority we have to have regard for the health of the travellers. Unfortunately there are few tolerated sites to which travellers could be signposted so we must look to take repossession. These actions follow an established protocol for Norfolk and Suffolk, for dealing with such instances.

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#### **Questions**

It was not known where the travellers came from or where they were going to.

Hall Park Green is unfortunately an ideal site for an encampment.

It would be physically impossible to barrier this green open space.

Travellers can still access the site even with barriers and an injunction. The injunction only makes it quicker to evict them from the site. A welfare visit would still need to take place.

With Moreton Hall, the group returned even though the injunction was in place.

Any gates need to have a large enough opening to get a fire engine through.

The cost of the clear up (including 11 tonnes of green waste) was £1556 plus expenses to third parties (court costs etc) of £226. This does not include police and St Edmundsbury Borough Council officer's time.

The Community Police Officer confirmed that the travellers resulted in an increased police presence with patrols every 30-60 minutes on the evening they arrived and liaison with the travellers. As far as the police were concerned, the situation was well handled and they did all they could within legislation. The size of the area meant that the access couldn't be blocked.

Communication within the community worked well.

The travellers will not be prosecuted for the litter left behind.

Residents were advised not to employ them and pay cash as they are unlikely to have any public liability insurance.

Could the Hall Park sign on the A143 be removed? – to be discussed at Parish Council meeting.

The policy for street lighting is to switch off between 12 and 5 am. The streetlights are still on overnight on Hall Park.

There were 3 recorded crimes following the encampment.

A national problem that needs to be dealt with at national level. The Clerk will contact Jo Churchill MP for a copy of the letter she was sending to the Minister regarding unauthorised encampment sites.

Residents expressed their thanks to Damien and his team at St Edmundsbury Borough Council and to the Parish Council for keeping the residents informed.

The meeting finished at 8.30pm.

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