

Agenda Item 17 Appendix 1

Mr John Barradell
Chief Executive – Brighton & Hove City Council
King's House
Grand Avenue
Hove
BN3 2LS

2nd June 2011

Dear John

I am writing formally to request that a scrutiny review be undertaken into the Council's policy on gypsies and travellers and other unauthorised uses of council land and property.

Unlawful encampments are a huge source of tension between the settled community and those involved in the encampment. Given that one of the Council's key strategic priorities is to improve community relations, this is an area which cannot be ignored.

It is also an area of rapid recent change in relation to the national policy agenda with, in particular, the abolishing of South East Plan targets for new pitch numbers and the emergence of new planning and enforcement guidance as part of the new Localism Bill process.

There has also been a change of policy locally with regard to encampment protests, for example, on council park land at the Old Steine. I believe that the implications of this change of policy on the local economy and tourism are serious and have not been properly thought through. As such, I believe this would benefit from being part of the proposed scrutiny review.

The Council's Traveller's Strategy was last updated in 2008 and, given these recent developments, I believe the time is now right to undertake a thorough review.

I believe that such a review should involve, amongst other things, the approach to enforcement, the potential for permanent traveller sites in

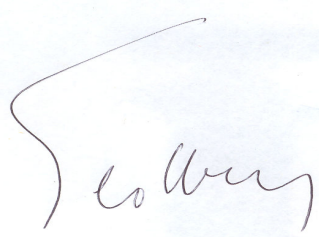
the city, the legal position and use of byelaws, the role and approach of the Police and how health, education and other outcomes can be improved for traveller families.

I believe that this request meets the criteria for scrutiny reviews as set out in Part 6 (section 4.2) of the Council's Constitution. In particular:

- This is clearly an issue which is of huge importance to the City, both to the communities themselves and in relation to the public expenditure incurred and public land involved. It also relates clearly to the Council's strategic priorities and the implementation of its policies.
- There are significant potential benefits of carrying out a scrutiny review in terms of improving community relations and reducing incursions onto public land and associated costs.
- I believe that an independent scrutiny review is the most appropriate avenue available to examine the complex issues this raises. There are other agencies involved in this apart from the Council – Sussex Police being the obvious one – and a scrutiny review would allow them to fully contribute. A letter to a Cabinet Member Meeting, for example, would not allow such a degree of cross-sector collaboration and partnership working.

I trust that you will forward my request to the relevant Scrutiny Committee Chairman and I would be more than happy to address that Committee to expand upon the points I have raised here.

With all good wishes

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Geoffrey Theobald', is written over a light blue circular stamp. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Cllr. Geoffrey Theobald – Leader of the Opposition