SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL – BEST VALUE REVIEW

Gypsies/Travellers and Unauthorised Encampments

1 Introduction - what do we do?

1.1.1 The Council is responsible for the removal of trespassers from its own land, by use of common law powers, or more frequently, by applying for a Section 78 Order under the ‘Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994’ (CJPO Act 94).

1.1.2 In either case, the Council must take into account the occupiers’ health, safety and welfare before deciding whether to tolerate or evict. Failure to do so, or to dismiss any justifiable reason why the trespassers should remain on a site, is likely to result in a court dismissing the case, or a case being brought to judicial review.

1.1.3 If an eviction order is sought from the magistrates or county court, those Gypsies/Travellers have the option to make representations if they wish to do so. SDC therefore seeks to use these routes of enforcement.

1.1.4 Other factors are taken into account, particularly with regard to the encampment location and whether it has an adverse affect on the locality, the land, or to the health and safety of the occupiers or to the local community.

1.1.5 If an unauthorised encampment sets up on land not in the Council’s ownership, SDC provides advice and investigates any resultant nuisance as it would in any other situation. SDC remains a point of contact for land owners, their agents, local residents/businesses, parishes and ward members, and/or other complainants, and seeks to ensure that all interested parties are kept up to date with each case – as recommended in Government guidance.

1.1.6 If the land trespassed upon is in parish/town council ownership, they as a public authority are required to follow procedures with regard to health, safety and welfare, as does the District Council. In such cases, SDC now carries out those enquiries on their behalf and provides basic legal advice, although the parish or town council is still responsible for taking legal action to evict – in their case, using the civil route only.

1.1.7 In cases of trespass on land owned by other public agencies, such as the Forestry Commission and similar, the Government has asked that local authorities carry out welfare enquiries on their behalf. SDC now seeks to provide this and other support to those agencies.

1.1.8 In many cases during the last eighteen months, the Council encountered groups of trespassers that fly-tipped waste, caused serious nuisance, and were alleged to have been involved in criminality. These encampments were high profile, resulted in civil unrest, and went some way to fuelling the negative image of Gypsies/Travellers and their lifestyles.
1.1.9 Much of the Council’s work in this field is proactive, seeking to improve inter-agency working, improving information sources, promoting Gypsy/Traveller culture, applying swifter enforcement procedures against those problem groups, and seeking alternative site provision as recommended in latest Government guidance.

1.1.10 The Council seeks to promote racial equality as required.

1.1.11 In the spring of 2003, SDC set up a system whereby local parish/town councils, neighbouring authorities/agencies, ward members and local businesses are alerted by email to any likely movement and consequent risk of trespass on their land or area. This has been well received by all and has gone some way to reducing those encampments that set up on inappropriate land, and enabling land owners to carry out temporary security works if required. This also enables the relevant agencies to track and monitor problem groups.

1.2.0 **Unauthorised Encampment Working Group (UEWG)**

1.2.1 SDC has been an active partner in the Kent County Council’s Unauthorised Encampment Working Group (UEWG) since 2001. The Group was responsible for producing the Protocol for Unauthorised Encampment on Local Authority Land in Kent and Medway, and included Gypsy/Traveller representation.

1.2.2 Following the successful implementation of the Protocol and the fact that Gypsy/Traveller organisations no longer attend meetings, it has been proposed to wind this group up and replace it with an internal group named the ‘Kent Unauthorised Monitoring Group’, in which SDC will have equal involvement. In order to retain contact with Gypsy/Traveller organisations, specific meetings will be called with KCC, local authorities and Gypsy/Traveller organisations, to consult them on procedures/good practice etc. This will ensure that we seek valuable input from the travelling community with regard to site and service provision.

1.2.3 The Protocol was developed to ensure a more consistent and structured approach to decision making about unauthorised encampments in Kent. The key aim is to assist public bodies to respond immediately and effectively to unauthorised encampments, and complaints about them, while ensuring that all parties are treated fairly in the process. Each of the participating organisations still has its own policies and systems of decision making. A full copy of the KCC Protocol is available from the Private Sector Housing Team.

1.24 *The Review Group felt that this was good practice.*

1.3.0 The last ODPM national survey recorded 14736 caravans in England, and of these 10757 were occupying permanent sites. Whilst there is a power for local authorities to provide municipal sites (usually exercised by county councils), a minority of Gypsies/Travellers own their own site. In the Sevenoaks District, there is one relatively large privately owned site comprising 12
plots, and a number of single/double plot sites. SDC is the freeholder of a permanent Gypsy site comprising 12 plots. There are a number of unlawful sites that are awaiting the outcomes of retrospective planning applications. The SDC permanent Gypsy site was run by KCC under contract until Sep 2003, however the KCC relinquished control at that time.

1.3.1 In 2001/02, there were 15 unauthorised encampments within the Sevenoaks District, and in 2002/03, there were 59 - an increase of around 300% on the previous year. The ODPM’s 'Managing Unauthorised Camping Operational Guidance' (consultation paper) records the average number of unauthorised encampments reported by local authorities as 22 per year. North-Kent authorities appear to be attractive to Gypsies/Travellers, especially in the spring and summer months.

1.4.0 The Protocol for dealing with unauthorised encampments referred to above seeks to ensure the various authorities deal with the problem in a sympathetic and consistent manner within the legal framework and observing the rights of all parties.

1.4.1 Until September 2003 therefore, the service was confined to dealing with unauthorised encampments within the Sevenoaks District. However, following the KCC’s decision to withdraw from managing the Gypsy site at Hever, SDC has been obliged to take on the management of that site.

1.5.0 SDC incurs other direct costs for land clearance, securing of vulnerable land in its ownership, and repairs of gates, fencing and other Council property. Forced evictions can result in additional costs i.e. removal of caravans/vehicles, and storage of personal property.

1.5.1 At present, there are no dedicated budgets for other costs associated with unauthorised camping, such as those detailed above. SDC will seek to establish these to enable close monitoring of all associated costs.

2.0 Challenge

2.1.1 National and Local Context/Policy

2.1.2 The legal provisions applying locally are set out in the KCC Protocol for Unauthorised Encampment on local authority land and in Kent and Medway (as referred to above).

2.1.3 Monitoring and review of performance is a partnership arrangement. Information is gathered from relevant local authorities and a six-monthly report produced which highlights:

- number and locations (by district) with dates of unauthorised encampments.
- number of children accessing education.
- use of statutory powers to manage unauthorised encampments.
- cost of unauthorised encampments across Kent.
- issues arising.
2.1.4 Local authority Gypsy site

2.1.5 The legal provisions containing an enabling power to provide permanent and transit sites is with the ‘Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960’. In 1998, the Council decided to contract out the management of the Hever Road Gypsy Site to the Kent County Council. When the contract expired this year, an exercise was conducted with RSL’s (WKHA and Novas Overtures) with a view to externalising management of the service and improving the standard of management of the site. The outcome is dealt with fully in the ‘Compete’ section.

2.1.6 The Review Group looked at the cost of dealing with unauthorised encampments but it could only be seen in terms of officer time.

2.1.7 In 2002/03, approximately 90% of a housing standards officer’s time was spent on unauthorised encampments and site management.

2.2 2004/2005

2.2.1 In 2004/2005, the cost of managing the Hever Road Caravan Site will be: -

- Fly-tipping £7000
- Water £3750
- Pest control £250
- Fire contract £400
- Minor repairs £2000

Sub-total £13,400

Staff costs/support serv. £37,000

**Final total £50,400**

2.2.2 Income 2004/2005

- Site Licence Fees £23119.20 (assuming a 5% void rate)
- Electrical cards £8000 (repaid to supplier)

**Total £31,119.20**

2.2.3 Stage 1 of the Licence Fee increase programme will be implemented in January 2004, resulting in a potential increased income of £5616 in Year 1.
2.2.4 **2005/2006**

In 2005/2006, it is anticipated that the cost will be:

- Water/sewage £5000
- Pest contract £300
- Fire contract £500
- Minor repairs £2000

Sub-total £7800

Staff costs/ support serv. £37,000

**Final total £44,800**

2.2.5 **Income 2005/2006**

Site Licence Fees £27,750
(assuming a 5% void rate)

Electrical cards £8400 (repaid)

**Total £36,150**

2.2.6 Stage 2 of the Licence Fee increase programme will be implemented in January 2005, resulting in a potential increased income of **£4867.20** in Year 2.

2.3 **Permanent Gypsy/Traveller Sites**

2.3.1 The waiting list for plots at the Hever Site currently stands at 10. Hence the statistics relating to Gypsies/Travellers and unauthorised encampments bear little relationship with demand for permanent sites. They do however, act as an indicator regarding need for transit sites.

2.3.2 Permanent site standards together with transit site standards (which are much reduced) are set out in the ODPM publications ‘Local Authority Gypsy/Traveller Sites in England’ and ‘The Provision and Condition of Local Authority Gypsy/Traveller Sites in England’. Best practice dictates that these standards are adopted. Nevertheless, to maintain standards, on-going maintenance is a major factor and nationally results in an average annual bill of £13363 per authority. Costs range from £ 11800 -£17000. In 2002/03, KCC recorded a maintenance/repair bill of £23,231, and the Hever Site resulted in a deficit of £17,514.

2.3.3 **Local performance indicators are to be developed in respect of site management in light of the decision to retain the service in-house.**
2.4 **Local policy**

2.4.1 Whilst there is no specific SDC policy dealing with unauthorised encampments, the introduction explained the proactive work undertaken by SDC in this field resulting in a protocol being developed to ensure consistency of approach in Sevenoaks and across Kent.

2.4.2 *The Review Group concluded nevertheless, that it is the intention to develop a policy and the work carried out so far via the internal SDC Working Group, the UEWG and its successor group, is all part of that process.*

2.4.3 *The Review Group agreed to strengthen the SDC Gypsy/Traveller Working Group by placing ahead of service in charge of the group and widening its remit to include all Gypsy/Traveller related matters across the Council.*

3.0 **Consult**

3.1.0 The Housing Needs Survey, with a sub-survey of Gypsies/Travellers, is currently being undertaken by consultants.

3.1.1 A large proportion of the housing in Swanley is owned by the RSL, and figures indicate that a large proportion of the occupants are settled Gypsies and Travellers. The Council is liaising with the RSL’s to ensure that proper monitoring of these groups is undertaken.

3.1.2 There are 3 permanent public authority Gypsy sites on the District comprising 56 plots. There are also a number of private sites, the majority of those being single/double plots. There is therefore scope for extensive consultation with regard to unauthorised camping and Gypsies/Travellers aspirations and perceptions of the Council’s services. The BME Strategy produced in 2003 undertook some consultation which is being built on through the sub-survey of the Housing Needs Survey 2003/04.

3.1.3 There is an obvious difficulty in seeking the views of the transient groups, due to the random nature of unauthorised encampments and also the lack of willingness of many of those Gypsies/Travellers to provide information. Nevertheless, the task is being undertaken with a view to gathering as much information as possible, these groups’ views being of paramount importance to help develop a strategy and reduce unauthorised camping in the District.

3.1.4 The results of the sub-survey will be fed into the SDC Working Group with regard to further site provision, Council policy, and in determining content in the next Local Plan which is currently under review.

3.1.5 Complainants and parish/town councils were consulted with regard to SDC’s response and service delivery in relation to unauthorised camping. Results from those returned indicated that the overall service was good/excellent.

3.1.6 In 2003, Dome Consultants were engaged to carry out a Stakeholders Perception Study in respect of the Council’s housing service, including unauthorised camping and Gypsy/Traveller
site management services. The results for both services were blocked together and compared against an internal SWOT analysis. The detail is held in supporting reports but key findings resulting from consulting stakeholders from other local authorities and statutory organisations, registered social landlords and voluntary organisations are detailed below.

3.2 Statutory Organisations

3.2.1 The statutory organisations consulted referred to ‘strengths’ in the Gypsy/Traveller service as SDC being sensitive to the issues, and having researched the issue well, resulting in a high awareness of the associated problems.

3.2.2 As regards ‘weaknesses’, the same organisations mentioned their perception that it was questionable whether there was any real attempt to address the problem of unauthorised encampments on the part of the Council. In addition, multi-agency planning and inter-departmental agency working appeared lacking at both strategic and operational level. Finally, the condition of the SDC Gypsy site at Hever was sited as a weakness (at the time managed by KCC).

3.3 Registered Social Landlords (RSL’s)

The RSL’s sited no weaknesses, but they referred to the ‘strength’ of support the service gives to Gypsies/Travellers when they are housed by an RSL.

3.4 Voluntary Organisations

The voluntary organisations gave no feedback on this service which is surprising as Gypsies/Travellers are frequently found to be illiterate and therefore in need of assistance with forms, particularly housing benefit.

3.5 Internal SWOT Analysis

3.5.1 This analysis was conducted in 2003 after the DOME exercise. Key strengths were listed as:

- there is a post holder dedicated to the subject of Gypsies/Travellers.
- urgent issues are prioritised.
- flexible team approach allowing a swift response to unauthorised encampments.
- inter-agency working much improved via membership of UEWG.
- links to Community Development and Community Safety Partnership.
- mediation and negotiating skills.

3.5.2 The Review Group therefore concluded that: -
3.5.3  Weaknesses were listed as follows:

- lack of consultation.
- lack of ethnic monitoring.
- time consuming and immediate enforcement action required/demanded.

3.5.4  Opportunities were listed as:

- educate the public regarding the level of service to be delivered.
- develop a consultation process.
- improve exchange of information between local authorities and external agencies.
- update procedure documents.

3.5.5  Threats were listed as:

- enforcement a high risk to personal safety of staff.
- enforcement of site licence and planning conditions abnormally problematic on the licensed site at Hever.
- difficult to control costs due to attitude of some members of the Gypsy/Traveller client group.
- high stress levels involved and often reflected in staff turnover.

3.6  Action taken in response to the DOME Report and SWOT Analysis and/or ongoing initiatives.

3.6.1  Unauthorised Encampments

SDC has been an active partner in the Kent Unauthorised Encampment Working Group (UEWG) since 2001. This Group was responsible for producing the Protocol for Managing Unauthorised Encampment on Local Authority Land in Kent and Medway. In addition, the action which will be taken upon reports being received of unauthorised encampments within the District, be they on SDC or other land, is set out on the Council’s web site and in a publicly available leaflet (Appendix B).

3.6.2  Hever Road

Management of the Hever Road Gypsy Site was restored to SDC in Sep 2003 after KCC decided to relinquish control of the site. There followed an exercise to externalise the management of the site with West Kent Housing Association. Costs came in substantially above expectations and it was demonstrated to members that the management role could be done equally well in-house and at half the salary costs within the WKHA submission. At the time of writing this report, this function has been undertaken as emergency item by existing staff being diverted to this function until a suitable candidate is found to undertake the site management and Gypsy/Traveller liaison role. Members have agreed to fund the permanent post which will cover the management of this site and deal with unauthorised encampment work.
3.6.3 The Review Group thought this was the correct way forward along with the Corporate Working Group.

3.6.4 Memorandum of Understanding and North-Kent Encampment Response Group (NKERG)

3.6.5 In 2002, the NKERG was set up to develop a Memo of Understanding (MoU) between the relevant agencies. Members include North Kent Police, KCC, and three of the north Kent LA’s. The aim of the group was to develop an MoU which would set out each agencies roles and responsibilities to encampments (in line with the KCC Protocol and local policies) and to help legally safeguard each agency, as well as providing a joint decision making process (Appendix A).

3.6.6 The MoU includes a media strategy which aims to ensure correct and appropriate information is given to the public, and to ensure the press do not provoke unnecessary ill feeling amongst the community – something that has happened in the past.

3.6.7 Those local residents and businesses etc., which are affected by an unauthorised encampment will be advised of what each agency is doing, to lessen any unrealistic fears amongst the community and to ensure the matter is dealt with in a fair and balanced way to all concerned.

3.6.8 The MoU was finalised in Oct 2003 and will be signed by all parties in Jan 2004. Once the MoU is adopted, a meeting will be set up with the North-Kent parish/town councils and ward members to ensure they are aware of the various roles and responsibilities in relation to unauthorised encampments.

3.6.9 The Review Group was informed that, until that time, each agency made irregular visits and carried out their investigations separate from their partner agencies, and with no real co-ordination, resulting in an ineffective approach to unauthorised camping.

3.6.10 The Police Area Commanders’ Group has now cleared the MoU, paving the way for it to be rolled out across Kent. It is therefore likely that the MoU will now be adopted in the West-Kent Police area, which covers the South of the Sevenoaks District.

3.6.11 As part of the Best Value Review, visits were made by officers (team leaders and heads of service) to three other local authorities that were selected as being broadly comparable to Sevenoaks DC in terms of their characteristics and size and good practitioners in the housing field. These authorities were Tonbridge & Malling BC, Rushmore BC and Mole Valley DC and visits were carried out during summer 2002. These authorities form part of the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) Benchmarking Group, of which SDC is also a member.
3.7 Additional Consultation

3.7.1 In Sep 2003, SDC met with the KCC Contact Centre and the KCC Gypsy Unit to finalise works to implement the proposed ‘Kent Unauthorised Encampment Information Line’. Phase 1 will go live in Feb 04. This will help to provide residents and the travelling community, both locally and throughout Kent, with information concerning encampments, services, and/or availability on sites. It will also provide a central point of contact.

3.7.2 In the summer of 2003, SDC met with KCC to help develop a countywide database which was designed so that all encampments in Kent can be recorded on a central remotely-accessed system, and eventually referenced to the National Street Gazetteer (BS7666). This and other such work is undertaken by a technical sub-group of the UEWG, which SDC is a member of.

3.7.3 In August 2003, SDC met with the ‘Sussex Travellers Action Group’ to discuss site provision and other Gypsy/Traveller issues.

3.8 Transit Sites

3.8.1 SDC visited Crawley BC in Aug 2003 to look at their proposals for transit sites in their District, and continues to work closely with KCC with regard to site provision in this and neighbouring local districts.

3.8.2 It has been recognised that there is a need for a series of transit sites throughout Kent, and at least one in the Dartford/Swanley area. That area being the most frequently used by the travelling community, and it being close to the main routes (M2, M20, M25).

3.8.3 SDC does not have any land suitable for this purpose.

3.8.4 SDC recognises that securing land simply results in encampments setting up elsewhere, so it has been seeking alternative sites in the area and other site provision possibilities (i.e. transit sites and emergency stopping places).

3.8.5 The ‘Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003’ has now come into force. And S60 to S64 of that Act now become S62A to S62E of the ‘Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994’. S62 permits the Police to evict unauthorised campers without having to meet the criteria required before a S61 can be invoked. And S62 applies to highways, contrary to S61 powers. However, S62 powers are reliant on there being suitable alternative accommodation within the local authority’s area to which those trespassers can be directed. It has yet to be confirmed if suitable accommodation in a neighbouring district, for example, would warrant the use of these powers.

3.8.6 Therefore, until a transit site/emergency stopping place is established, the Police will be unable to use S62 powers in the Sevenoaks District.
3.8.7 The Review Group identified that SDC has visited a number of parish councils to advise on securing vulnerable land against trespass. This is seen as an important part of a strategy to reduce unauthorised encampments in unsuitable locations, both for that of the travelling community and the local community. Works have since been carried out to secure a number of vulnerable sites in the District. However, it was felt that sharing a transit site with at least one other neighbouring local authority may be the way forward.

4.0 Compare

Comparisons were dealt with by virtue of the above involvement with the countywide network (UEWG), which placed SDC at the leading edge of Gypsy/Traveller issues and management protocol.

5.0 Challenge

5.1.1 In December 2003, the Council met with the West Kent Housing Association (WKHA) to identify ways in which it could promote their service ‘West Kent Floating Support’ which assists vulnerable members of the community. The meeting focused on Gypsies/Travellers, they being the largest minority in the District. It was subsequently agreed to hold a joint-agency training session in early 2004, to help raise awareness amongst relevant officers from both organisations. SDC now actively promotes this service to residents of the Hever Road Gypsy Site, settled Gypsies/Travellers, and those residing on unauthorised sites.

5.1.2 The Review Group thought that this was a good way to provide a joined-up service and to ensure that Gypsies/Travellers are consulted equally with others in the District. They agreed that a joint-agency training session should be arranged in early 2004, to help raise awareness amongst relevant officers from both organisations.

6.0 Compete

6.1.1 Benchmarking is not practical in relation to unauthorised encampments (The nature and size of districts affects the frequency of Gypsy/Traveller visits and the level of enforcement and resources required to deal with them in a given period). SDC suffers more than most of its neighbours as shown by the following statistics concerning unauthorised encampments: -
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<th>2001/02</th>
<th>2002/03</th>
<th>2003/04 (to date)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sevenoaks DC</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dartford BC</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gravesham BC</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonbridge and Malling BC</td>
<td>No stats available</td>
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6.1.2 It was decided to expose the Hever Road Gypsy Site management contract to external competition. Novas Overtures were invited to bid for the service but declined. WKHA was also invited to bid for the service, which came in at approximately £90,000. SDC now has additional staff resources to manage the site, resulting in a saving of approximately £30,000. The decision was taken to retain management of the site in-house and improve the service to licence holders at Hever Road, manage unauthorised camping effectively, and provide an improved proactive response in respect of licensed mobile home sites (See twin paper dealing with Mobile Home Sites).

7.0 Improving performance

7.1.1 The Review Group identified a number of areas for improvement during the review process, as set out below:

7.1.2 To extend the SDC Working Group to cover all Gypsy/Traveller related issues, and lead by a HoS.

7.1.3 Set up dedicated budget codes in order to calculate the total expenditure for dealing with unauthorised camping.

7.1.4 To formulate and implement a policy and strategy for dealing with unauthorised camping.

7.1.5 Local performance indicators are to be developed in respect of site management in light of the decision to retain the service in-house. Nevertheless, it is the intention to develop a policy and the work carried out so far via the SDC Working Group, the UEWG and its successor group (Kent Unauthorised Monitoring Group), is part of that process.

7.2.0 The following work has already been undertaken during the course of the Best Value Review, supported by the Review Group:
7.2.1 Unauthorised Encampments

7.2.2 SDC has been an active partner in the Kent Unauthorised Encampment Working Group (UEWG) since 2001. This Group was responsible for producing the Protocol for Unauthorised Encampment on Local Authority Land in Kent and Medway. In addition, the action which will be taken upon reports being received of unauthorised encampments within the District, be they on SDC land or other land, is set out on the Council’s website and in a publicly available leaflet (Appendix B).

7.3 Hever Road

7.3.1 Management of the Hever Road Gypsy Site was restored to SDC in Sep 2003 after KCC decided to relinquish control of the site. There followed an exercise to externalise the management of the site with West Kent Housing Association. Costs came in substantially above expectations and it was demonstrated to Members that the management role could be done equally well in-house and at half the salary costs within the WKHA submission. At the time of writing this report, this function has been undertaken as emergency item by existing staff being diverted to this function until a suitable candidate is found to undertake the site management and Gypsy/Traveller liaison role.

7.4 Memorandum of Understanding and North-Kent Encampment Response Group (NKERG)

7.4.1 In 2002, the NKERG was set up to develop a Memo of Understanding (MoU) between the relevant agencies. Members include the North-Kent Police, KCC and three of the North-Kent local authorities. The aim of the group was to develop an MoU which would set out each agencies roles and responsibilities to encampments (in line with the KCC Protocol and local policies) and to help legally safeguard each agency, plus provide a joint decision making process (Appendix A).

7.4.2 Until that time, each agency made irregular visits and carried out their investigations separate from their partner agencies, with no real co-ordination – resulting in an ineffective approach to unauthorised camping.

7.4.3 The MoU includes a media strategy which aims to ensure correct and appropriate information is given to the public, and to ensure the press do not provoke unnecessary ill feeling amongst the community – something that has happened in the past.

7.4.4 Affected local residents and businesses etc., will be advised of what each agency is doing, to lessen any unrealistic fears amongst the community and to ensure the matter is dealt with in a fair and balanced way to all concerned.

7.4.5 The MoU was finalised in Oct 2003 and will be signed in Jan 2004. Once the MoU is adopted, a meeting will be set up with the North-Kent parish/town councils and ward members to ensure they are aware of the various roles and responsibilities in relation to unauthorised encampments.
7.4.6 The Police Area Commanders’ Group has now cleared the MoU, paving the way for it to be rolled out across Kent. It is therefore likely that the MoU will now be adopted in the West-Kent Police area, which covers the South of the Sevenoaks District.

8.0 Environment

8.1.1 The Council’s Gypsy and Gypsy Site activity at Hever Road aims to:

- seek to maintain the built environment by monitoring site conditions and effecting improvements.
- improve health by improving access to Gypsies/Travellers on SDC’s Gypsy site to health care and housing benefits and basic amenities.
- reducing inequality.
- by adopting a protocol to deal with unauthorised encampments to maintain local environments and minimise the environmental impact of unauthorised encampments.

9.0 Equality

9.1.1 The service to residents in respect of unauthorised encampments is available to all.

9.1.2 However, there is limited site availability at the Hever Road Gypsy Site, but few persons register at any one time to go on the waiting list. The site management service is available equally to all residents. The BME survey includes Gypsies/Travellers and has undertaken consultation with these groups. This information will be enhanced by the Housing Needs Survey 2003/04. The SDC is also liaising with RSL’s (particularly WKHA, which manages the Housing Register) to ensure effective monitoring of BME groups, including Gypsies/Travellers (see Best Value report for the Housing Register).

10.0 E-Government

10.1.1 The website contains information concerning unauthorised encampments and is in the form of frequently asked questions, enabling readers to report an unauthorised camping situation to the proper authorities. Or to enable the reader to take appropriate action if their land, or land they are responsible for, is encamped upon.

Further information is to be added when additional services are implemented (e.g. Kent Unauthorised Encampment Information Line and countywide database).

11.0 Action plan

11.1.1 To identify costs in respect of Gypsies/Travellers to assist in benchmarking (para 6.1.3). (Jan 05)
11.1.2 To extend the SDC Working Group to cover all Gypsy/Traveller related matters, and to be lead by a HoS (para 2.4.3 & 6.1.2).
(Jun 04)

11.1.3 To formulate and implement a policy for unauthorised camping (para 2.4.2 & 6.1.5).
(Sep 04)

11.1.4 To secure remaining vulnerable SDC land (para 3.8.4).
(Mar 05)

11.1.5 To support KCC in implementing and developing various countywide systems and information sources (para 3.6.3).
(Ongoing)

11.1.6 To sign the North-Kent Response Group MoU and to seek to ratify same in West Kent Police area (para 3.6.7).
(Mar 04)

11.1.7 To employ a Traveller Liaison Officer to manage the Hever Road Gypsy Site and deal with unauthorised camping and to provide support to the TLO from within the Team (para 5.1.1).
(Mar 04)

11.1.8 To develop local performance indicators in respect of the Gypsy/Traveller Site Management function (para 2.1.7 and 6.1.5).
(July 04)

11.1.9 To work with neighbouring local authorities to identify suitable land for a transit site.
(Mar 06)

11.1.10 Arrange a joint-agency training session (SDC/WKHA) to raise awareness of Gypsy/Traveller issues amongst relevant officers from both organisations, and to improve joint-working procedures and links.
(Apr 04)

11.1.11 To ensure the BME Survey and Housing Needs Survey findings are fed into the Local Plan Review (para 3.1.7).
(Jul 04)
Appendix A

North Kent Encampment Response Group
Memorandum of Understanding

Introduction

Since 2001 there has been a noticeable increase in the number of unauthorised encampments, especially during the summer months, within the countryside, towns and on commercially owned property in the North Kent Area. Previous experience has shown that there has been a difficulty in identifying which agency or landowner is involved in reacting to specific encampments. There is the potential for inconsistent decisions to be made about each encampment and in identifying what the most appropriate course of action might be.

This has partly been due to the different legislation that each agency has to comply with. However, it has sometimes resulted in misunderstandings between agencies and landowners, which can result, very quickly, in public confusion about roles and responsibilities of different agencies.

The countywide protocol on the management of unauthorised camping, agreed by the Kent Association of Local Authorities on 11 July 2002, specified the establishment of “Encampment Response Meetings”. It said:

“In cases regarded as exceptional by any of the parties to this protocol, an Encampment Response meeting may be called by any party where they have good reason to fear serious crime or disorder or emergency arising, or know that it has been experienced, and they will identify those other agencies to be invited to such a meeting. The other parties must include local authority, and police and health representatives, as a standard minimum to be invited.

The Encampment Response meeting, which would be established on similar lines to the Kent Emergency Group, would be specifically tasked to:

1. Decide which agency should lead on the issue
2. Discuss and agree actions by each agency (in discharging obligations under the Wealden Judgement and any subsequent key case law)
3. Agree time scales for action.”

An Encampment Response meeting may also be called where the above circumstances are likely to arise, but where one or more of the following arises:

• “There are considerable numbers of complaints being made to one or more of the agencies
• It would assist communication between agencies for it to occur, for example because a number of agencies are involved with the case or it involves complex issues
• Questions are being raised by elected representatives about why no eviction action is being taken or planned”

The purpose of the ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ (MOU) within North Kent is to provide an agreed tactical strategy which underpins the Kent Protocol and the various procedures each partner has to adhere to. This will allow for a co-ordinated and coherent approach to the management of future encampments within the North Kent area.

This document is not legally binding, nor is it meant to replace any existing individual policies or procedures. However, it will demonstrate fluent and consultative decision-making processes and provide some consistency in any enforcement actions required. The key aim is to demonstrate that through collaborative planning and communication, as many impact factors are identified as possible. Furthermore it recognises that, depending on the circumstances surrounding an encampment, the lead agency may change between police and local authorities, by agreement.

As with other similar documents, this Memorandum of Understanding should be viewed as a ‘living document’ reviewed on regular and agreed dates to ensure continuing compliance with emerging protocols, case law and legislation. This document will be disclosable should there be a civil or criminal challenge brought against any or all of the partners.

North Kent Encampment Response Group

The North Kent Encampment Response Group (NKERG) will consist of representatives from Kent County Council (KCC), Sevenoaks District Council (SDC), Gravesham Borough Council (GBC), Dartford Borough Council (DBC) and North Kent Police (NKP).

Each of the above will be considered to be a partner agency within the Group and referred to as such throughout this document. The Representative from each partner agency will be chosen by their respective organisation but should, however, be of an appropriate position or rank to speak on behalf of their organisation on at least a tactical level.

Appropriate representatives from other organisations and groups such as Local Parish Councils and adjacent statutory agencies could be invited to attend a specific meeting. It may be advantageous that such representatives attend or send in comments and contributions to:

- ensure that all encampments are visited and that all possible efforts to find the landowner, if it is difficult, are made by public agencies;
- identify specific issues around a particular site that would benefit from being addressed as an enhanced Group;
- identify any problem areas that may impact on the choice of enforcement process;
- identify vulnerable locations in the near vicinity;
- identify any other issues that will impact on the decision of the Group;
• provide appropriate information, in accordance with established procedures, to local representatives and support agencies to enable them to support those persons who feel their interests have been invaded by the unauthorised encampment.

The essence of this document is that any of the partners can call a meeting of the Group, with a minimum standard of attendance being the relevant Local Responsible Authority (LRA) and the Police. It would, however, be prudent for other partners to be invited as any enforcement process is likely to impact on a neighbouring partner’s area of responsibility.

At the commencement of each meeting, the ‘Lead’ partner will be agreed and a ‘Chair’ nominated. The ‘Chair’ will be responsible for ensuring that each meeting is minuted and that minutes are circulated to each partner agency. As described above, the ‘Lead’ partner may well change during a particular process, however, for accountability purpose it may well be advisable for the ‘Chair’ to remain with the identified person from the initial meeting. Where there are large sites KCC may wish to assume the role of ‘Chair’ as it is likely that other LRAs within Kent will need to be consulted.

The Response to Media Enquires is referred to later in this document. Consideration should be given to the attendance of the relevant Media Officers at each meeting, particularly where enforcement is being considered or the dynamics of a site dictates increased public/media interest.

Where enforcement action has taken place, following a NKERG meeting, a debrief will be called by the Lead agency to review the operational and media issues that arose during this phase. This gives the Group an opportunity to including any good or negative practice in the considerations for your future actions and in line with the Office of Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), Operational Guidance document.

Although the pattern for encampments is evolving, it is recommended that in addition to each partner being able to call a NKERG meeting to address a particular site, it would be beneficial to hold at least two meetings annually which are likely to be in February and October. This will allow for;

• a strategic review of actions carried out throughout that year;
• identification of ‘Good Practice’ to be passed to all partners and other interested parties;
• research on further ‘Good Practice’ being identified and agreed;
• action plans for preventative work being identified;
• a review and amendment of the MOU as required.

**Site Visits**

**Police**

When the establishment of an unauthorised encampment is notified to Police by members of the public, an initial site visit and assessment of the following will be made and recorded:
- Number of caravans;
- Number of associated vehicles;
- Approximate number of personnel;
- Assessment of current site condition and damage caused.

The relevant partner(s), when known, and the landowner (if known, and which may include a public agency) will be contacted as soon as practicable to agree a joint agency visit, as appropriate, and to commence the decision making process for potential enforcement.

**Districts and Borough Councils**

When a new site is notified to a District or Borough Council, they will notify the other members of the NKERG immediately to ensure that the above is carried out, if it has not already been done. All further visits to be agreed between the relevant partners, and the purposes and outcomes to be recorded accordingly.

**Kent County Council**

When a new site is notified to KCC, including through the Encampments Hotline, they will notify the other members of the NKERG immediately to ensure that the above is carried out, if it has not already been done. All further visits to be agreed between the relevant partners, and the purposes and outcomes to be recorded accordingly.

*Private*

In most cases the Police will be responsible for notifying the other members of the NKERG of the setting up of encampments on privately owned land. However, should other members of the Group receive notification of a site they are not aware of, they will notify the other members of the Group immediately.

Attendance of personnel during any enforcement process will be discussed with the Police in advance, to enable risk assessments to be completed and the appropriate level of resources secured.

**Procedures**

All partners in the NKERG have now agreed the ‘Protocol for Management of Unauthorised Encampments on Local Authority Land in Kent and Medway’ document. In addition to this, each partner has its own internal procedures requiring certain actions and recording of these processes.

The ability of any of the partners to respond efficiently and effectively to an encampment relies upon the identification of Landowners from a very early stage. Once this has been confirmed, then the relevant procedures should be followed and the consultation process should begin to focus on any appropriate avenues of enforcement.
It is the responsibility of each partner to ensure that their actions, and the recording of the same, are compliant with the Articles contained within the Human Rights Act 1998. Legal advice should be sought from the relevant Legal Departments as appropriate. Further documents such as those produced by Government Departments, the OPDM and Association of Chief Police Officers will necessitate a formal review of all documentation, policies and procedures currently being used by each partner, as well as the Memorandum of Understanding itself.

**Accountability**

Each partner will remain responsible for their own internal audit processes and therefore their own accountability. However, to ensure full compliance with the Human Rights legislation, each partner should bring to the attention of other partners possible cases of non compatibility with any of the ordinances or procedures referred to in this MOU or the MOU itself.

**Exchange of Information**

The meetings will allow for the appropriate sharing of information that has been gathered around a particular encampment. Each request for information must be considered by the Group on its individual merits and be compliant with the Data Protection Act 1998 and Section 115 Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

**Response to Media Enquiries**

This section of the document looks to set out principles and guidelines to ensure that the information given to the media from all participating agencies is clear, accurate and timely.

A standard press pack has been developed to help set out the general process on reported encampments and to emphasize the following points:

- The options open to all involved.
- The areas in which the participating agencies work together.
- Appropriate process of monitoring the impact on both the surrounding community and travelling community by the police, and the local authority.
- Public safety will remain the priority throughout the process.

All agencies are asked to inform each other of any media enquiries. This will help to ensure that everyone is able to respond quickly and effectively. General articles that reflect the amount of work undertaken by all agencies and which provide an opportunity for a preventive message to be put forward should be encouraged. Although all care should be taken that any comments made comply with relevant race relations policies and are not inflammatory toward any particular agency or section of the community.

The North Kent Encampment Response Group will aim to provide accurate and timely information about the landowner, number of caravans, action to be taken etc to the relevant press.
officer as soon as practically possible. They should also keep officers informed as and when the situation develops so that information being given to the press is accurate and up-to-date.

**Media presence at Encampments**

The presence of media and general public at enforcement may increase the potential for disorder and therefore any details regarding time and date of evictions **should not** be given out prior to the event. Public safety should always be the first consideration by all agencies.

In the event of details reaching members of the press or general public in advance, particularly regarding any large encampment, any agency aware of the possibility of a public or media presence should seek to inform all other agencies. This is to enable the enforcing agency to factor this into the health and safety risk assessment beforehand.

In the event of media attending an enforcement it should be made clear to them that filming or reporting on the site itself is entirely a decision for the landowner and the media should be encouraged to seek permission beforehand.

**Hot Line**

The Encampment Hotline is due to be established in late Summer 2003, based within the KCC Contact Centre. It will welcome reports of any encampments within Kent. It will link closely to the Force Communications Centre (for all reports of incidents or crimes) and the various Out of Hours Services.

All reports of encampments will be forwarded to the relevant agencies, whether reported by telephone or e-mail to the Hotline.

The Hotline will supply leaflets by post or e-mail, and provide immediate answers where possible to queries. More complex questions will be passed to the Police or KCC Gypsy Unit or other specialist officers immediately.

**Communication**

The decision to leaflet drop local residences and businesses that are directly affected by encampments will be the LRA responsible for its geographical location. These leaflets should make the public more aware of how the procedures work and indeed what powers are available and will assist all parties involved by reducing the number of enquiries made by the public.

It is unlikely that this procedure will be required for every encampment; therefore consideration should be given to the following:

- What are the impact factors that would necessitate this procedure?
- What parameters are used for the extent of the geographical area to be leafleted?
Consideration should be given to a request for assistance from Kent County Council in identifying homes and businesses for the leaflet drop using GIS.

Where ever possible other partners in the NKERG particularly the Police, should be informed of the timing and location of the leafleting, to ensure that necessary preparation can be put in place to respond to calls arising from this distribution. Where the location of the site is close to two LRA boundaries, then consideration should be given to a joint process to minimise cost and impact on services.

Use could also be made of “Around Kent” and similar publications to publicise leaflets and other information.

Consideration should also be given to including other agencies and organisations such as Parish Councils, Neighbourhood Watch to enhance the breadth and scope of communicating information to areas surrounding an encampment.

**Preventative Action**

Taking preventative action at a vulnerable location is a simple but invaluable process, which can reduce the likelihood of unauthorised encampments at new and repeatedly targeted locations. A quick response to securing a location after eviction is vital to preventing further encampments in the future.

The majority of private landowners affected last year have now received letters with preventative action advice. This should assist in reducing the number of vulnerable locations in the future. This is everyone’s responsibility and should locations be identified, appropriate action should be taken to reduce the possibility of an unauthorised encampment being established. Additionally any such location should be notified to the Police as quickly as possible to enable assessment for any potential enforcement procedures to take place.

**Signatories:**

Kent County Council: Date:

Sevenoaks District Council: Date

Gravesham Borough Council: Date:

Dartford Borough Council: Date:

North Kent Police: Date:
Unauthorised Encampments
A document to answer your frequently-asked questions

This leaflet is designed for anyone who has questions about unauthorised encampments within Kent and Medway. Various people live in caravans, mobile homes or vehicles on land they do not own, and without the agreement of the owner. Most are Gypsies or Travellers. Some travel long distances from their home base. Some only move locally. Some are working as they travel. Some are not. Some have lived all their lives on the road. Some cause difficulties to others, as they travel. Some do not. A few cause great difficulties to other people, out of all proportion to their numbers. All should be judged by how they behave towards landowners and others, not by a stereotype or single view that others may have of Gypsies or Travellers generally. But, whatever the past history and tradition, encamping on someone’s land without their consent is unlawful in itself. In certain circumstances, it is not just a breach of civil law, but also criminal law.

Public authorities in Kent are landowners themselves, manage land and must consider the rights and responsibilities of everyone living in the county. Public authorities have a duty to inform and assist everyone, as best they can. This leaflet is designed for everyone living in, or travelling through Kent.

Why do some Gypsies/Travellers make unauthorised encampments?

Kent is crossed by the major motorways M25, M20, M2 and M26. Many Gypsies/Travellers find work here including tree felling and pruning, laying tarmac, roofing, gardening and other general building or clearance work.

Whilst the subject is current and emotive in Kent, Gypsies/Travellers have a basic right to this way of life providing that they do not cause nuisance or anti-social behaviour. This has to be balanced with the rights of the public to quietly enjoy private and public land.

Do the Council or Police have a duty to move Gypsies/Travellers when they are camped without the landowner’s permission?

No. The powers given to local authorities and the police are discretionary and can only be used when certain conditions exist. This leaflet sets out those conditions and what you should expect of the Council and Police. These agencies do use their powers but have to ensure that the powers are used lawfully. Failure to comply with both civil and criminal procedures would render council and police officers liable to successful challenge in the courts, proving very costly, and could potentially result in the temporary loss of those powers.
The duty of the Police is to preserve the peace and prevent crime. Trespass on land by itself is not a crime – it is a civil matter. Prevention of trespass is the responsibility of the landowner, not the Council or the Police.

**Aren’t all Gypsies/Travellers just roving criminals?**

No. As in any community, the behaviour of the whole group can be marred by the actions of the few. The anti-social and criminal aspects of the local Gypsy/Traveller community relate to a small minority. However, often the efforts of the Police to deal with and detect related offences, are hindered by an unwillingness of people to come forward and offer the evidence needed to arrest or summons offenders. Very often, Gypsies/Travellers become the object of unfounded criminal complaints and the Police have to ensure that the levels of proof are maintained equally for all. The Police will and do deal with crime committed by Gypsies/Travellers when there is a complaint and evidence to support it.

**When will the authorities move Gypsies/Travellers?**

The main legislation relating to unauthorised camping by Gypsies/Travellers is Section 61 and 77 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. That legislation is bound by various interpretations from the courts and guidance notes from the Government. These guidance notes do not allow or tolerate anti-social or criminal behaviour and such behaviour actually speeds up the processes of the Police and Council in using the powers.

**What is Section 77?**

This is the power used by the Council where Gypsies/Travellers move onto its land with the purpose of residing there in vehicles.

Section 77 allows the Council to require the Gypsies/Travellers to leave, if appropriate. In addition, council officers can require the Gypsies/Travellers to remove their vehicles and property. It becomes an offence (with no power of arrest) for the Gypsies/Travellers if they fail to leave the land and remove their property within a reasonable time, or if they return to that land within three months. Special consideration exists for Gypsies/Travellers who have an illness, an emergency or a vehicle breakdown. Local authorities have responsibilities to make welfare enquiries and to take account of considerations of common humanity whatever the powers used. All decisions by public bodies must be ‘proportionate’ and accord with the Human Rights Act.

Having made a requirement as above, under Section 77, if the Gypsies/Travellers fail to comply with the direction to leave, the Council can apply to the Magistrates’ Court under Section 78 of the Act to make a Court Order for the Gypsies/Travellers to leave with their vehicles. If such an Order is granted, it authorises council officers to enter the land and remove the property (caravans/cars etc.) to a safe place. To obstruct council officers executing such an order is an offence (with no power of arrest). The Council will try to recover costs from the trespassers in such circumstances.
All landowners (including local authorities) can recover possession of their land by using a county court, if their land is occupied by someone without their consent.

**Out of hours**

There are no special out of hours arrangements because public authorities in Kent have no duty to take immediate action by themselves.

**Why don’t the Police get involved with trespass?**

Trespass on its own is not a criminal offence (i.e. an offence for which the Police have any powers), it is a civil matter. However, each unauthorised encampment is closely monitored and all circumstances surrounding the actions of the Gypsies/Travellers are taken into account when the use of Section 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 is being considered by the Police. Once the use of this power has been activated, failure by the Gypsies/Travellers to comply with the requirement made by the Police to leave, or that particular group return to the same land within three months, they commit another offence for which there is power of arrest.

In order to investigate criminal activity, written evidence from witnesses must be provided to police and an agreement to support any subsequent prosecution.

**What is Section 61?**

Section 61 can only be applied by the Police. It can apply when two or more people are trespassing on land to reside there and the landowner has taken reasonable steps to require them to leave (and they have failed to do so). In addition, one of the following also has to apply:

- Damage has been caused to the land or property, or
- Threatening/abusive/insulting behaviour has been used against the occupier, his family or agent, or
- The trespassers have six or more vehicles (includes caravans and cars).

Any enforcement of Section 61 requires considered resourcing (i.e. the number of police officers required to take successful action may not be immediately available), and it may appear that no action is being taken. However, when appropriate, and when safe action can be taken, enforcement will take place.

**When do the Police consider using Section 61?**

The local Police will consider using their powers in the following situations:

- When there is disruption to local business, schools or hospitals.
- Where significant damage has been caused to the property e.g. forced entry.
• Where there is evidence of arrestable offences being committed by the trespassers.

• Where there is a tolerated site to which trespassers can be directed.

• Where any of the trespassers have used threatening behaviour.

**What do Councils (KCC, Medway, Districts) do?**

Some councils have carried out works to protect a number of vulnerable council owned sites, and continue to protect others as they are identified. Councils are continually trying to establish closer links with other agencies to ensure that any problems relating to unauthorised encampments are dealt with as swiftly as possible. A long term solution may be to provide ‘Transit Sites’ where Gypsies/Travellers can be directed. Councils will consider this in their future Development Plans. The Government is providing funding for such sites in 2003/4 and possibly beyond.

**What can I do if Gypsies/Travellers camp on my land?**

You or your solicitor can go to a county court and obtain an order granting you possession of the land. Further details can be obtained by contacting the local county court. Alternatively, you can log onto their website to download the necessary application forms (see back page).

**What if I decide to allow Gypsies/Travellers to stay on my land?**

Unless you have obtained planning permission for a caravan site, or you are a farmer and they are helping you with fruit picking etc., you could be breaching the planning regulations.

**I have seen Gypsies/Travellers camping on the side of the road and on Council land. What can the Council do?**

If the Gypsies/Travellers are causing a problem, they will be moved on as soon as reasonably possible. If they are not causing a problem, the Government has asked that the site be tolerated for a short period. Each case is considered on its own merits. In all cases, the site is visited by various agencies and every effort made to try and keep the site tidy.

**I own land and want to know what I can do to stop Gypsies/Travellers camping on it?**

Gypsies/Travellers have to be able to pull caravans onto a site, so any of the following will assist in making an encampment more difficult.

• Ploughing the land so that vehicles cannot enter.

• Digging ditches and/or making earth embankments.

• Reducing access width and/or headroom by the use of barriers.
- Placing securely locked gates across the entrance.

- Using the land for some purposes that makes it unsuitable to live on.

Where a site is used frequently for unauthorised encampments, such action may become essential in order to avoid breaching planning and other rules.

**If I see Gypsies/Travellers behaving anti-socially or unlawfully, what can I do?**

Every witnessed crime or act of anti-social behaviour should be reported to the Police. Nuisance may be reported to local authority environmental health departments. Only then can those organisations consider use of the powers they have. Please make sure you report everything to the official number for the organisations, even if you also tell a local councillor, parish council or others about them. The Police Force Control Centre should issue an incident reference number if you just wish to have an incident logged. Similarly a proper response should be given if you are reporting a crime in progress. If you are unhappy about becoming involved with the Police in this way, a council representative can listen to you and pass the information on to the Police on your behalf. Alternatively, you can ring Crimestoppers on 0800 555111.

Intimidation, threatening behaviour, vandalism or other related crime will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Any such incidents should be reported to the Police.

Whoever you ring, please make a note of the name of the person you talk to, any reference number they give you, and the time and date of the call.

**What about the rubbish left by some Gypsies/Travellers?**

Local authorities, the Police and the Environment Agency are seeking ways of using existing legislation to deal with these anti-social and often expensive problems. Private land owners are responsible for the removal of waste if on their land. Certain waste requires special treatment. If in doubt, contact the Environment Agency Hotline on 0800 807060.

**I still have some queries or questions. Who can help?**

There is a single Kent Police force, with policies, practices, and procedures on this subject.

Kent County Constabulary  
Tel: 01622 690690

Kent County Council is strategically responsible for Highways, Education, Social Services, Trading Standards, Strategic Planning and a variety of other services across the Administrative County (not the Postal County) of Kent, except the Medway Towns (formerly Gillingham and Rochester-upon-Medway Council area).
Twelve district councils cover the same area of Kent, between them, as KCC. They are responsible for environmental health, local planning and housing - though much housing is now managed by housing associations.

Kent and Medway Health Authority cover the same area as KCC and Medway Council.

Sevenoaks Hospital
Tel: 01732 470200

There is a Protocol for the Management of Unauthorised Encampment on Public Land in Kent. Two organisations who assist Travellers and Gypsies took part in the drawing up of the Protocol. They are:

- **The Gypsy Council**
  8 Hall Road
  Aveley
  Essex RM15 4HD
  Tel: 01708 868 986

- **Friends, Families and Travellers**
  **Community Base**
  3 Queens Rd
  **Brighton**
  East Sussex BN1 3XG
  Tel: 01273 234777

All agencies may have different personnel dealing with Gypsies/Travellers. Kent Police, local authorities and other public bodies work closely together, to ensure that all decisions and actions are consistent and within the law.

**Further useful contacts**

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<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>Website</th>
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<tr>
<td>Crimestoppers</td>
<td>0800 555111</td>
<td><a href="http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org">www.crimestoppers-uk.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Environment Agency</td>
<td>0800 807060</td>
<td><a href="http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk">www.environment-agency.gov.uk</a></td>
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<td>Tun Wells County Court</td>
<td>01892 515515</td>
<td><a href="http://www.courtservice.gov.uk">www.courtservice.gov.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dartford County Court</td>
<td>01322 629820</td>
<td><a href="http://www.courtservice.gov.uk">www.courtservice.gov.uk</a></td>
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If you have any comments regarding this guidance booklet, please contact the Private Sector Housing Team on 01732 227281.