

REPORT TO: Executive Board Sub

DATE: 16th October 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Health and Community

SUBJECT: Traveller Transit Site – Pitch Charges

WARD(S): Daresbury

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To agree the charge to be made for occupation of pitches at the new Traveller Transit site in Warrington Road, Runcorn.

2.0 RECOMMENDED – that the Board agree a charge £11 be set initially for a period of six months, and that a further report be then brought to Board to review income against costs in the light of operational experience.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 At its meeting on the 25th September the Board considered a report on proposed charges for occupation of the transit site, but decided to defer a decision on the matter pending further consideration of potential costs to the Council given uncertainty about some of the operational costs.

3.2 In the interim quotations have been obtained for costs associated with the drainage system, which was the single biggest area of uncertainty, and the forecast budget has been amended accordingly.

3.3 The Appendix summarises the cost implications for the Council of a range of potential charge rates and occupancy rates. Occupancy rates cannot be guaranteed but it is not unreasonable to assume that a 90% rate can be achieved. At that level a charge of £11 would cover annual operational costs save for £619.

3.4 Charge rates for private caravan sites vary considerably depending on location and facilities, but for comparison a number of basic private sector caravan sites have been identified in Cheshire, Flintshire and Shropshire with rates averaging £7-9 per night. Higher rates from £15 upwards tend to reflect additional on-site facilities such as launderettes, swimming pools and tennis courts etc.

3.5 It is therefore proposed that a charge £11 be set initially for a period of six months, and that a further report be then brought to Board to review income against costs in the light of operational experience.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Although there is not currently a separate budget head for costs incurred in dealing with unlawful encampments, conservative estimates provided by relevant Departments suggest the costs over the period April 2005 to March 2007 averaged £117,000 per annum. This facility should enable those costs to be significantly reduced, representing an overall saving to the Authority.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

Offering Travellers a safe place to stay for a reasonable period should improve access to education.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

As above.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Travellers have a reduced life expectancy compared to national rates. Stays at the transit site will afford Travellers the opportunity to access health and social care services more readily.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Roadside encampments are inherently unsafe, and reducing their occurrence through the provision of the transit site will reduce those risks.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

Proactively managing the problem of unlawful Traveller encampments will lessen the concerns of businesses in the area, particularly those on the industrial estates that historically have seen most encampments, and help to persuade them to remain and develop in Halton.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There is a risk that if the charge is set too high it will be unaffordable, the site will be underused and potentially lead to increased numbers of unlawful encampments which can be difficult and expensive to

manage. However the existence of the site does enable Police powers to be used more effectively, which may mitigate this risk.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 The provision of a well managed, safe, sanitary site to accommodate transient Travellers is consistent with the Councils equality and diversity policy.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

<u>Document</u>	<u>Place of inspection</u>	<u>Contact Officer</u>
Not applicable		

APPENDIX

Forecast net cost to the Council

Daily charge	Occupancy rate		
	100%	90%	70%
£10	£1,670	£4,878	£11,294
£11	- £3,062	£619	£7,982
£12	- £7,794	- £3,640	£4,669
£13	- £12,526	- £7,898	£1,357