

## **TRAVELLERS HOMELESSNESS - REQUEST FOR CONTRIBUTION**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To consider a request from Mid Beds District Council for financial assistance towards a test case regarding accommodation for homeless travellers.

### **2 REQUEST DETAILS**

- 2.1 For several years, Mid Beds District Council has been engaged in an enforcement case regarding the occupation of private land owned by travellers without planning permission. The High Court has ruled in favour of the Council in respect of injunction proceedings for the removal of the travellers from the land.
- 2.2 The travellers are now pursuing a Judicial Review about the Council's offer of temporary accommodation under homelessness law. The travellers claim that this is not suitable and that they require land in which to station their caravans. Mid Beds District Council has told the travellers that there are pitches on existing traveller's sites available and also that bricks and mortar accommodation would be made available as the Council's interim response to its homelessness duty.
- 2.3 The main spokesman for the travellers concerned has been appointed as a representative for all travellers in the UK reporting to the United Nations. Action through the European Court of Human Rights is now proposed.
- 2.4 Mid Beds District Council calculate that the cost of the work they have carried out and committed, excluding Officer time, is already £443,000, and they are requesting financial contributions from other local authorities towards the costs of the Judicial Review which will, in effect, be a test case on this issue.

### **3 COMMENTS**

- 3.1 Council is currently engaged in planning enforcement action to deal with contravention's similar to those described by Mid Beds District Council, this case is potentially of direct interest to this Council, and Members may feel it is appropriate to provide some support to Mid Beds District Council so that a judgement can be obtained. This may assist the Council in considering future actions.

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**4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The cost of any contribution can be met from provisions made in the 2002/03 budgets.

**5 RECOMMENDATION**

- 5.1 It is proposed, that the Committee **RESOLVES**

That £1,000 be donated to Mid Beds District Council towards the cost of the Judicial Review regarding their offer of recommendation to homeless travellers. (HHHCC)

G P Woolhouse

Head of Housing Health and Community Care

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**Background Papers:**

None

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