

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL GYPSY & TRAVELLER PITCH NEEDS - LAND IDENTIFICATION
Notice of a Public Meeting at Magor Baptist Church at 7pm Wednesday 02nd August 2023

Further to the Public Meeting of Magor with Undy Town Council at Undy Church Hall on 17th July 2023 and Monmouthshire County Council 'Peoples Scrutiny Meeting' at County Hall on 19th July 2023 County Councillor Frances Taylor (Magor West) reports that on Wednesday 26th July 2023 she attended a Cabinet Meeting of Monmouthshire County Council where and to considerable disappointment Cabinet did not accept in full the recommendations of the Scrutiny Meeting recommendation in respect of the parcels of land identified.

The Scrutiny Meeting recommendations were to reject the proposals to consult on the five pieces of council owned land and put forward option 3 which read: **To not recommend any of the pieces of land to cabinet to formally consult upon.**

The principal reasons upon which that recommendation was based:

- Multiple concerns about the integrity of the process, perceived inconsistencies, and erroneous information.
- Site specific feedback from residents, communities and their representatives.
- Detailed contributions from local elected members.

Cabinet member Sara Burch informed the meeting that the areas of land at Mitchel Troy and Monmouth were no longer considered suitable on grounds of access and removed from the process, but that the sites in Magor with Undy required "further work" to identify suitability to be specified as Gypsy & Traveller Pitches.

Councillor Taylor has requested a meeting with the cabinet member and an officer of Monmouthshire CC to ascertain exactly what that means. She has also re-affirmed her representations made at the Peoples Scrutiny Meeting concerning the land identified at Magor and Undy and the flaws in the process which has wrongly identified the suitability of the sites.

It is important that the community is aware that – **there are no decisions as yet.** There is no decision to go out to consultation even, but as the views of Scrutiny Meeting have not been taken on Councillor Taylor has been in receipt of multiple contact from the residents and feels it prudent to ensure as many people as possible have the facts and can make responses as they wish which is why Councillor Taylor has convened a public meeting.

In the interim Councillor Taylor shall attempt to gather as much information and fact to impart to residents and enable them to develop their own responses, should they wish and which can then be sent to relevant people such as members of the cabinet.

These responses will be most powerful if they concentrate on the real issues at hand, the process – the site descriptions, the RAG ratings and site-specific material, planning considerations, ecology issues, highway access and green Infrastructure etc.

Councillor Taylor would like contact from any local residents with expertise in planning, highways , ecology etc, their expertise would be most welcome.

Councillor Taylor also wishes to highlight that she has received emails of support from residents living adjacent to the proposed sites in Monmouth and Mitchel Troy (now removed from the process) who also believe that the process was poor, seriously flawed and concerns have been raised about what people feel to be a lack of democratic due process.

Below is the Statement from the cabinet member Sara Burch on behalf of Cabinet which has been released to the media.

Monmouthshire Council's cabinet today announced that consultation on the selection of potential sites for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation will be deferred to allow more consideration, following feedback about the shortlisted sites at last week's People Scrutiny committee.

Council-owned sites in Mitchel Troy and Manson Heights which were shortlisted for consultation have been deemed to be unsuitable for this use due to access and other issues, while shortlisted sites in Magor and Undy require more investigation to ascertain their suitability for any future development.

Monmouthshire has an assessed need for 13 long term pitches for Gypsy and Traveller households to be included in the Local Development Plan for the County, along with land allocations for new homes and employment sites.

As no proposals have come from the Gypsy and Traveller Community or from local landowners at this stage, the Council has again appealed for owners of potential sites to come forward as well as a call to all residents of Monmouthshire to propose potential sites. In tandem with this appeal, is continuing to explore appropriate sites on Council-owned land.

Councillor Sara Burch, Cabinet Member for Inclusive and Active Communities said: "We have an obligation to provide a very small number of pitches as part of our renewed commitment to providing affordable housing in Monmouthshire. I am grateful to the members of the Scrutiny Committee and to Councillors from all parties who engaged in the shortlisting process. We are committed to providing successful small sites where members of the Gypsy and Traveller community can settle, work, and send their children to school."

The Council has confirmed that there will be a consultation process launched when sites have been identified for inclusion in the Replacement Local Development Plan. Before any site can be built planning permission will need to be secured, and there will be consultation with potential residents and the local community at every stage.

If you would like to suggest a site for consideration please contact HousingRenewals@monmouthshire.gov.uk by 23rd August 2023.

As before, the papers for cabinet can be accessed at the below link and as with all Council meetings can be watched post the event. Scroll down and find the Watch the Meeting <https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=144&MId=5222>

One of the requests at the Town Council meeting from residents was to try and equip people to make consultation responses based on material planning matters so this is what we will try to do.