

Ref Item 14 – Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) – Statement by Clarke Osborne

My name is Clarke Osborne, I am a member of the Stanton Wick Action Group and make this statement both personally and on their behalf.

I would like to begin by saying that the group and the individuals within it are not racist, have not and will not engage in comments or presumptions regarding Gypsy and Traveller communities and their way of life. We take exception to the referral by officers and members that this could in any way be part of our reasoning in regard to this matter.

We are not politically motivated and have been dismayed at the constant referral, throughout this process to the Conservatives or the Previous Administration. It is not productive and belittles what is a very important process, the outcome of which will have a lasting effect on thousands of lives.

We as a group have, since late April this year spent many hours and a good deal of money in attempting to inform and persuade this Cabinet.

Despite all of our efforts we have arrived at this meeting with report from officers which is lacking in substance, attempts to give excuses for the challenged errors of the past and proposes to further this chaotic and miserable process by badly tinkering with what is fundamentally flawed and without merit.

The proposal to drop the Scoring Matrix is ill conceived and likely motivated by the eagerness not to have decisions and reasoning questioned by the public. You surely realize that this process is, at the end of the day, one of comparison of alternatives. A well considered and accurately used scoring matrix is the accepted tool for this purpose.

Your officers say that the Scoring Matrix was confusing. It was not. It was just badly conceived, incorrectly scored and ignored in the final comparative analysis. Don't blame the system, just the input and management of it.

This report reinforces our assertion that this entire project has been flawed in its strategy, flawed in its delivery, flawed in its evaluation and damaging to the settled communities, the traveller communities and BaNES reputation.

The proposals to adjust the process and have what they call a process "stock take" are entirely without merit. The proposals, far from correcting the errors of the past actually plan to further confuse, cause stress to communities both settled and travelling and continue this chaotic and knee-jerk policy making.

This administration has so far, ignored the detailed and professional arguments put forward at 2 Cabinet meetings, 2 consultation sessions, one unprecedented Special Council meeting, over 1,000 letters and response forms, a petition representing almost 95% of the settled community, a pre-action letter of claim and an application to challenge in Judicial Review and most damning, the recommendations of their own Scrutiny Panel.

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You have been disingenuous in justifying your need to continue this process as a link to your Core Strategy and have resolutely turned our representations into a political fight. You will recall the special council meeting where the resolution saying that you had listened to the presentations was printed before the meeting started.

Has BaNES listened? – No

Does BaNES care for its settled rural communities? – No

We ask you to stop this flawed and damaging process now and start again, learning from your mistakes.

To make a mistake is forgivable, to make the same mistake twice is not.