

Clarke Osborne – Statement for Cabinet Meeting 13th November 2013

It is unfortunate that I feel the need to make a presentation this evening but as a representative of the communities of Pensford, Publow, Stanton Drew and Stanton Wick and representing the concerns of many in your rural communities, I am back again to bring the matters of Gypsy and Traveller DPD to your attention.

You will appreciate, I am sure, that the almost unbelievable lack of progress in completing the DPD process and commencing the provision of permanent and transit pitches causes great concern to the thousands of residents who live within the vicinity of the 29 sites your officers and you have listed as having potential.

Despite the majority of the sites being clearly unsuitable and unsustainable you have again failed to undertake the very little work that is required to cull the list and concentrate effort and resource on those sites which have potential.

It is very disturbing that after this administrations launch of the DPD 21 months ago with a flurry of politically motivated statements, the hugely damaging blind and unfounded determination to see your then preferred sites through to planning applications we are here, looking at a policy left to rot with the hope that it will simply be forgotten.

It is sometimes expedient to leave Policies left in the long grass, but here your continuing lack of interest leaves communities exposed to unscrupulous developers and rogue landlords.

It is simply wrong to allow your officers to drive their own agendas and to try endlessly to justify clearly biased reporting in the name of what appeared to be a politically motivated desire to find pitches for travelling communities, whatever the consequences.

It is simply wrong not to call your officers to account when they cause so much damage after clear lack of proper investigation when promoting sites for your DPD. They must have known that the Stanton Wick site was not deliverable when it was suddenly promoted from near the bottom of your list to the top. Or did they make that recommendation? Was it made by members? This and other strange decisions need to be openly and honestly explained. Our commitment to our long suffering communities is to find the real answers and have people account for their actions.

It must be wrong for a Cabinet based administration to ignore the resolutions of its Scrutiny Committees (I have provided a copy of the minutes from the MPPDS of 14th May)

It cannot be acceptable to simply push delivery dates back 3 times and by over 2 years without a very good excuse. How did we get to Options Consultation November 14, Draft Plan May 15 and complete in January 2016!

Having opened the box, it cannot be acceptable to leave both settled and travelling communities in a state of limbo for over 4 years and, surely it cannot be acceptable not to stand up and say “we got it wrong”

The community from which I am mandated by majority has been damaged both financially and emotionally by this sorry saga and the litany of error and possibly worse that we have uncovered.

Our plea, again, is for you to provide resource and, drive some urgency and determination into the Gypsy and Traveller DPD, remove the clearly unsustainable sites from your list and move forward with your declared intentions at Lower Bristol Road. You will not be forgiven if this matter is not concluded on your watch.