

Audit Committee – 24th September 2009

5. The Process to Acquire Land for the Purpose of Gypsy and Traveller Provision

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Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to seek members approval to amend the Financial Procedure Rules regarding the adoption of a specific process to be applied in the case of acquiring land, valued at £50,000 or below, for Gypsy and Traveller provision.

Recommendation

That Audit Committee recommend Council to approve the amendment to Financial Procedure Rules section 13.2.

Background

The Council has successfully bid for central government grants to provide sufficient money to develop a Gypsy and Traveller site acquisition fund, and so achieve provision through the purchase of suitable sites. In 2008/9, following a successful bid, central government allocated South Somerset £970k for the refurbishment and provision of new sites and pitches. Part of this successful bid was for £150k specifically requested to acquire an existing site with planning permission and a further £100k was awarded (with an additional £50k being made available from SSDC) as a land acquisition fund.

The policy as attached at Appendix A outlines a process for small purchases of land for gypsy and traveller provision. All purchases will require either a portfolio holder report for purchases under £50,000 or District Executive approval for those over £50,000. The policy will enable a quicker response to be made to opportunities that arise on the open market.

The Financial Procedure Rules

Rule 13.2 states “No arrangements shall be made for the acquisition or disposal of land and buildings where the value is estimated to exceed £10,000 (with the exception of transfers of housing or parking land to RSL’s), without first gaining the approval of the District Executive and meeting any requirements stipulated by the District Executive. If the proposal is not within the approved Capital Budget, the District Executive will make a recommendation”.

This rule will require amendment to make an exception for purchase of gypsy and traveller provision of up to £50, 000 as follows:

“No arrangements shall be made for the acquisition or disposal of land and buildings where the value is estimated to exceed £10,000 (with the exception of transfers of housing or parking land to RSL’s, and the provision of gypsy and traveller land under £50,000 with a budget provision), without first gaining the approval of the District Executive and meeting any requirements stipulated by the District Executive. If the

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proposal is not within the approved Capital Budget, the District Executive will make a recommendation”.

A new paragraph then needs to be inserted to add “Requests for the purchase of land for gypsy and traveller provision valued at under £50,000 must follow the agreed policy for such a disposal. Approval is required of the Portfolio Holder – Health, Housing and Social Inclusion. Any transfers outside of the agreed policy or where the gypsy/traveller land is valued at £50,000 or more shall seek District Executive approval”.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

Background Papers: *Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Strategy 2006-2009*
