

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 1 NOVEMBER 2007

REPORT OF THE OPERATIONS MANAGER COMMERCIAL

(Author: Gordon Partridge, Principal EHO)

WATTON HORSE FAIR

- **Summary:** This report summarises the result of the monitoring of Watton Horse Fair on 1 & 2 September 2007.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Watton Horse fair has been running since 1971 on various sites around the fringes of the town. The Fair currently occupies land on Thetford Road and is held on two occasions in the year, May and September. The Fair itself takes place over one day with participants being allowed on site from 10 am the previous day.
- 1.2 The fair includes horse sales, an equine paraphernalia market and associated trade and catering stalls. The Fair is open to members of the public.
- 1.3 Following debate at the Overview and Scrutiny Commission officers from Breckland council were asked to attend and monitor the event with particular regard to the stationing of caravans on the site. Officers from Private Sector Housing monitored the site on Saturday 1st and Sunday 2nd of September and a Health and Safety Enforcement Officer attended on the 2nd.

2. KEY DECISION

- 2.1 This is not a key decision

3. COUNCIL PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The matter raised in this report falls within the following Council priorities:
 - A safe and healthy environment
 - A well planned place to live which encourages vibrant communities
 - A prosperous place to live and work

4. FINDINGS

- 4.1 Monitoring on the evening of Saturday the 1st indicated that there were 58 caravans and 1 tent overnighting. The bulk of these were on a field that was used for overflow car parking on the Fair day but a small number were on the Horse Fair site and were co-located with various stalls. These numbers were counted on the Sunday confirming their overnight stays.
- 4.2 All of the residents were spoken to and handed a Traveller Information Pack which included advice on expected behavior whilst on site. These were generally welcomed and Breckland Council was complimented on it's generally enlightened attitude towards Gypsies and Travellers.
- 4.3 10 mobile toilets had been provided on site split into 2 blocks following advice from Officers. A pair of toilets was located at the nearest juncture of the Horse Fair site and Wayland Wood in addition to the 8 located near to the mobile bar.

- 4.4 No planning infringements were identified.
- 4.5 Consultation with Norfolk Constabulary units on site indicated that there were no problems on the site overnight Saturday to Sunday.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 In planning terms the use of the land is considered *de minimus* and therefore no planning permission is required.
- 5.2 There was *prima facie* evidence to indicate that there was a breach of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 in that none of the exemptions contained in Schedule 1 to the above Act were applicable to the use of the land. There was no evidence that the breach was giving rise to any problems.
- 5.3 In accordance with Breckland Council's Enforcement Policy the owner of the land on which the Horse fair takes place has been advised, in writing, of the breach and asked to advise the Council on how he will remedy the situation. At a meeting between the Principal EHO and the owner of the land and operator of the Horse Fair verbal assurance was given that the land owner would seek a certificate of lawful use for the Horse Fair which would be deemed to be Planning Permission if granted; (at the time of the writing of this report no written undertaking has been received). That would then require the awarding of a licence under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 to regularise the use of the land. Conditions may be attached to any such licence.
- 5.4 The landowner has been advised that such an application should be submitted in a timely fashion to allow the regularising of the Horse Fair before it next takes place in May 2008.

Footnote: Recommendation complies with the following :
Equal Opportunities, Section 17, Crime & Disorder Act
1998, and Human Rights Act 1998