Best Practice in Managing Unauthorised Encampments

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ACPO Lead for Gypsy & Traveller issues

ACPO Lead

- Took over portfolio – Jan 2011
- ACPO Working Group since 2007

Workstream Leads for…

- Building Confidence in Policing
- Developing Fair and Consistent Approach to G/T issues
- Tackling Criminality
- Domestic Abuse

Working Group Original Purpose…

“To work towards developing normal community relations between Gypsies and Travellers and settled communities.”

Working Group Current Purpose…

"The purpose of the police is to protect people from harm. To this end this group will encourage the provision of sufficient accommodation on small, properly managed sites, with access to health and education services, which we will police according to need."

Where did we start from?

- Lack of engagement
- Mutual distrust
- Hostility
- Prejudices
- Cultures
- Other priorities

What did we do about it?

- Accept how serious it was
- Have a joined up view of what we are trying to achieve
- Support each other
- Prioritise in line with what we are trying to achieve
- Accept that we are in this for the long term and stay committed to it

UE Guidance

- ACPO Unauthorised Encampment Guidance originally published January 2009, minor revisions November 2009.
- Further revision made and to be published shortly
- Feedback since launch positive from Police, Gypsies and Travellers and legal representatives.

UE Guidance

- Lead role for decision making should rest with the local authority
- Balance needs of all parties
- Eviction should NOT be the default action
- Issues of behaviour (criminal, anti-social or nuisance) in combination with the impact on the landowner and settled community are crucial

UE Guidance

- Sufficient powers to evict already exist (CJPO 1994)
- Used only when behaviour etc is inappropriate or impact of encampment is unacceptable
- **Shortage of sites issues highlighted in the guidance**

Possible eviction when…

- Local amenities deprived to communities or significant environmental impact
- Local disruption to the economy
- Other significant disruption to the local community or environment
- Danger to life
- Need to take preventative action

Guidance also states…

“The mere presence of an encampment without any aggravating factors should not normally create an expectation that police will use eviction powers. This should be communicated to the public, landowners, local authorities, and other agencies. If a decision is made to use police powers to evict then the rationale for the decision should be clearly set out and recorded.”

The Solution…

- Local Authorities to be proactive in the development of new sites and encampment management
- Site provision will reduce unauthorised encampments (and developments – growing issue)
- If sites exist, police will be able to use Sec 62A (if required)
- Much easier to “police” communities when you know who / where they are

The Solution…

- Sites will be self funding – Gypsies & Travellers will be paying appropriate local taxes for services
- Community tensions reduced
- LAs work made much easier in same circumstances

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