

Decision Pathway – Report



PURPOSE: For noting

MEETING: Cabinet

DATE: 05 March 2024

TITLE	People Living in Vehicles in Bristol	
Ward(s)	<p>This report potentially affects all wards across the city. However, some wards may be more affected than others. Those wards with the highest reported numbers of people living in vehicles include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ashley, • Bishopston & Ashley Down • Easton • Horfield • Lawrence Hill • Lockleaze • St George West • Stoke Bishop. 	
Author: Tom Gilchrist	Job title: Private Housing and Accessible Homes Manager	
Cabinet lead: Councillor Kye Dudd, Cabinet Member for Housing Services and Energy	Executive Director lead: John Smith, Interim Executive Director Growth and Regeneration	
Proposal origin: Mayor		
Decision maker: Mayor		
Decision forum: Cabinet		
Purpose of Report:		
<p>The aim of this report is to present information, in the form of Appendix A 'Vehicle Dwellers – The Bristol Model', which informs the city of Bristol of the Vehicle Dweller community, to be used as reference in future decision-making processes.</p>		
Evidence Base:		
<p>Supporting evidence for this report has been collated in Appendix A 'Vehicle Dwellers – The Bristol Model'.</p> <p>This document formally covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the Council are working with vehicle dwellers • Background on people living in vehicles in Bristol • Demographics of people living in vehicles • Available powers in respect of the movement of vehicles • Problems and issues associated with living in vehicles • Health and wellbeing • Vulnerability • Encampments • Lack of identification and postal address • The increasing vulnerability of Vehicle Dwellers • Suggested ways of improving our work as a city with people living in vehicles 		

The document has been created as a result of the need to understand, support and manage the Vehicle Dweller community in Bristol over several years and collates information and statistics around Vehicle Dwellers. It sets out recommendations from the council services, including neighbourhood enforcement, to deal with Bristol's growing Vehicle Dweller community.

It includes opinions voiced by Councillors and members of the public on this subject. This document shares information about the vehicle dweller communities' needs, their contribution to our city, both historically and in the present day, and provides suggestions of support for the vehicle dweller community to ensure no one in our city is left behind.

The document also gives examples of the negative impact van dweller encampments are having on our city. We have managed these in line with established policy and powers to focus on high impact encampments. The document considers these examples and the effectiveness of our approach.

The Health Needs Assessment has highlighted the increasing vulnerability of Vehicle Dwellers, including severe health concerns and racial discrimination. Taking this into consideration, the report offers some further recommendations for officers, including the opportunity to continue to develop policy on how to consistently manage large squatted unauthorised encampments on council owned land, and sets out considerations for future policy development under Bristol's New Committee System.

People living in vehicles cannot be ignored. Vehicle Dwellers are citizens of our city and need to be respected and represented as such with equal access to services as would be available to any other resident or visitor to our city.

Cabinet Member / Officer Recommendations:

That Cabinet:

1. Note the current approach to Vehicle Dwellers in Bristol as set out in Appendix A 'Vehicle Dwellers – The Bristol Model' and the intentions set out therein, specifically:
 - a. The intention to investigate the provision of additional meanwhile and permanent sites across the city, including a new service site with service provision, to improve the health of people living in vehicles, which can be offered as an alternative option to people on unauthorised sites.
 - b. The intention of setting up of a Council officer's Task and Finish group to further explore issues and options around vehicle dwelling in Bristol, with a view to reviewing the Bristol City Council's Policy for Vehicle Dwelling Encampments on the Highway to explore inclusion of roadside parking, encampments, squatted sites and meanwhile sites.
 - c. The intention to deliver a training session for all elected members about vehicle dwelling in Bristol.
 - d. The intention to deliver a roundtable event to discuss the appendix document 'Vehicle Dwellers – Report and Recommendations' with key stakeholders.

Corporate Strategy alignment:

1. **ES2: Access to Employment** – Having a stable base will enable people living in vehicles to access better opportunities to apply for work and maintain a position within the employment market.
2. **HCW2: Mental Health and Wellbeing** – Traveller groups are known to have the worst mental health outcomes of any ethnic group. Mental ill health amongst cultural travellers has shown to be high (HNA, 2023). A meanwhile site base will allow stability from which to access support services.
3. **HCW 3: Poverty** – With the majority of vehicle dwellers citing lack of affordability of housing as their main reason for living in that way, the impact of social disadvantage on health has been noted.
4. **HC1: Housing Supply** – More meanwhile sites would allow an affordable and available housing option for a diverse group.
5. **HC3: Homelessness** – With vehicle dwelling seen as both a step up from homelessness and a final stage before it, the provision of meanwhile sites allows continued stability away from it.
6. **HC5: Community Participation** – A meanwhile site base will make sure that vehicle dwellers can actively participate in their community and in the life of the city.

City Benefits:

Improving our understanding of the needs of people living in vehicles and working with them, we benefit the city by:

1. National leadership by supporting vehicle dwellers.
2. Continued reduction in numbers of vehicles at the roadside across the city
3. Building on the relationship established between Bristol City Council and the vehicle dwelling community
4. Sites awaiting development could be occupied as ‘meanwhile’ sites and would benefit from security on sites and their planning application.
5. Health and safety: Provision of fresh water and waste disposal. There is a strong evidence base showing that travelling communities are known to have amongst the poorest health outcomes and lowest life expectancy of any communities within the UK. A site that provides basic amenities as well as allowing registration with health professionals will help demonstrate that the Council is doing all that it can to meet the basic needs of and social responsibilities towards all communities.
6. Provide safety for vehicle dwellers away from the side of the highway.
7. Reduction in enforcement costs to Bristol City Council and better use of Council officers’ time as there will be less people to “move on”.
8. Providing an alternative location for vehicle dwellers to go to when they do have to be “moved on” from the public highway.
9. Providing a self-supportive environment and a place where services can come to support people with mental ill health and substance misuse issues.
10. Reduce safeguarding risk issues to vulnerable adults, children and young people. (At present, there are only a very small number of children and young people known to be living with vehicle dwellers, but in such circumstances, a dedicated site will be safer for them than at the kerbside).
11. Less vehicle dwellers on the streets leads to less complaints received by members of the public and the approval of residents to have vehicles directed away from their neighbourhoods.

Consultation Details: This document has been through the Decision Pathway process and will be considered at Cabinet on 5 March 2024.

Background Documents:

Bristol City Council (2020). *Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment* – July 2020. [file \(bristol.gov.uk\)](http://bristol.gov.uk)

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2006). *Guide to effective use of enforcement powers; Part 1: Unauthorised encampments*. Home Office: London. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/unauthorised-encampments-using-enforcement-powers>

Revenue Cost	£	Source of Revenue Funding	
Capital Cost	£	Source of Capital Funding	
One off cost <input type="checkbox"/>	Ongoing cost <input type="checkbox"/>	Saving Proposal <input type="checkbox"/>	Income generation proposal <input type="checkbox"/>

Required information to be completed by Financial/Legal/ICT/ HR partners:

1. Finance Advice: Whilst there are no financial implications arising from this paper, the outcomes of the recommendations will likely have some financial impact. Ongoing financial advice will be provided once the Task and Finish group is formed and the work around drafting the policy begins. Finance comments will also be provided in any report seeking approval of any such policy.

Finance Business Partner: Martin Johnson – Interim Finance Manager Housing and Landlord Services, 19 February 2024

2. Legal Advice:

S.8 Housing Act 1985 as amended by s.124 Housing and Planning Act 2016 requires local authorities to periodically assess the accommodation needs of people in their area including vehicle dwellers. This report sets out the legal powers available to the local authority to provide for vehicle dwellers in addition to the legal powers to move and control vehicle dwelling encampments.

Legal Team Leader: Kate Meller, Solicitor, Team Leader, 26 February 2024		
3. Implications on IT: I can see no implications on IT regarding this activity.		
IT Team Leader: Alex Simpson, Lead Enterprise Architect. Bristol City Council - Policy, Strategy and Digital, 26 February 2024		
4. HR Advice: There are no HR implications associated with the paper.		
HR Partner: Celia Williams, HR Business Partner – Growth and Regeneration, 26 th February 2024		
EDM Sign-off	John Smith, Interim Executive Director Growth and Regeneration	23 February 2024
Cabinet Member sign-off	Councillor Kye Dudd, Cabinet Member for Housing Services and Energy	23 February 2024
For Key Decisions - Mayor's Office sign-off	Mayor's Office	5 February 2024

Appendix A – ‘Vehicle Dwellers – The Bristol Model’	YES
Appendix B – Details of consultation carried out - internal and external	NO
Appendix C – Summary of any engagement with scrutiny	NO
Appendix D – Risk assessment	NO
Appendix E – Equalities screening / impact assessment of proposal	YES
Appendix F – Eco-impact screening/ impact assessment of proposal	NO
Appendix G – Financial Advice	NO
Appendix H – Legal Advice	NO
Appendix I – Exempt Information	NO
Appendix J – HR advice	NO
Appendix K – ICT	NO
Appendix L – Procurement	NO