

Exeter City Council Strategic Scrutiny Committee

Issue to be considered by Strategic Scrutiny Committee: ***Unauthorised Encampments***

Impact of Unauthorised Encampments	Exeter currently has no designated stopping places or transit sites for Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) communities. This lack of provision leads to frequent unauthorised encampments across the city, creating tension with the settled community and increasing enforcement and clean-up costs. Current enforcement-led approach often results in short-term displacement rather than sustainable solutions, and can negatively impact welfare, education, and community relations.
Potential solutions	Adopt a Negotiated Stopping Approach: - Introduce a structured negotiation process instead of immediate eviction or tolerance. - Agree on length of stay, site rules, and responsibilities with families (e.g., waste disposal, no fires, animal control). - Identify temporary stopping sites to use with negotiated stopping on low-impact council land to reduce legal costs and improve compliance. This can be very cost effective by using portaloo hire only when needed, and utilising rubbish collections, which the city already have in place. This approach has been proven to significantly reduce the often huge clear up costs at the end of a stay on land that is unsuitable. - Strengthen welfare support and work more aligned with partners. Further information can be found here: Negotiated Stopping Leeds GATE
Work, activity, projects and initiatives currently undertaken by my organisation	A current task and finish group which includes Exeter City Council, aims to align by agreeing on a data collection sheet when visiting unauthorised encampments. This will establish a baseline of consistent evidence across 4 local authority areas and the county council, to support future transit-style pitch need. However, this has not yet been rolled out.
Any other information you may feel is of use to the Strategic Scrutiny Committee	The county council already collects information on the number of UEs across its own land in each district area. Last financial year 2024/25, DCC saw a total of 14 unauthorised encampments on land within the Exeter city boundary. This does not include Exeter's own numbers, many of which turn up on playing fields and parks. Whilst it will take time to evidence the need for transit style accommodation, in reality, we all know, that need already exists due to the number of UEs that are seen by both the city council and the county council each year. In the meantime, the city council could identify 2

	temporary stopping areas (one each side of the city) and pilot the negotiated stopping approach. Apologies that I cannot be there in person to answer any questions. I am available for future discussion, should you require it, with some notice.
--	---

Issue to be considered by Strategic Scrutiny Committee: Unauthorised Encampments

Organisation providing evidence: Devon County Council

Officer providing evidence: Travelling and vulnerable communities officer.

Date: 15 January 2026

Exeter City Council Strategic Scrutiny Committee

Issue to be considered by Strategic Scrutiny Committee: ***Unauthorised Encampments***

Organisation providing evidence: Devon and Cornwall Constabulary

Officer providing evidence: Inspector David Turner

Date: 29/12/2025

Impact of Unauthorised Encampments	I have attached a separate document that details the numbers and basic overview of all reports to police from 2024 to November 2025 at Exeter Arena, Hamlin Lane, Wonford Leisure Centre/Ludwell Valley Park. All of these would have required some form of police action or attendance. It has to be noted that some encampments have very little impact on us, with few or no calls made to others. Other can be more or significantly impactive. Utilising police powers or enforcing breaches of the civil injunctions are also significant, with planning and significant resource need to effectively enforce.
Potential solutions	Our Design out crime officer has meet with council staff in the past and is happy to do so again, to provide some target hardening solutions.
Work, activity, projects and initiatives currently undertaken by my organisation	We are currently working with the council in providing evidence for a civil injunction to be considered.
Any other information you may feel is of use to the	

Strategic Scrutiny Committee	
------------------------------	--

Exeter City Council Strategic Scrutiny Committee

Issue to be considered by Strategic Scrutiny Committee: ***Unauthorised Encampments***

Organisation providing evidence: TravellerSpace

Officer providing evidence: TravellerSpace support worker

Date: 12 Jan 2026

Impact of Unauthorised Encampments	Impact on Gypsy and Travellers communities and individuals: • on health • on access to vital services and ongoing health programmes and treatment • on ability to keep homes mobile legal and safe • on ability to sustain employment • on ability to sustain schooling college and other learning • on life chances and choices • on trust in public sector • on safety- e.g. roadside (esp. Children and dogs) • on fear of vigilante action • Continual eviction and lack of choice and control about moving (compared to settled communities) leads to shorter life expectancy, higher rates of miscarriage and infant mortality, higher rates of chronic illness, more mental health issues and higher rates of suicide • Increased “criminalisation” of itinerant ethnic communities and lifestyles leading to increased interaction with the Police, increased potential for a criminal record and the profound impact of that on life opportunities and outcomes Impact on Settled community: • Perceived impact vs actual impact (racist responses and public over-reaction sometimes fuelled by media sensationalism) • Tax-payers money – evictions cost Impact on services: • Council services • Third sector services
------------------------------------	---

	Costs of evictions vs cost of identifying safe stopping places
Potential solutions	“Meanwhile” or similar policy to ease movement and create more safety. “Negotiated stopping” through dialogue with communities about their needs, with agreement on how long and what services can be provided, eg waste disposal. We are aware local communities are requesting a positive dialogue with local councils on these sorts of options currently. More accurate Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments and hence clearer / more accurate local planning. Funding to deliver sites – permanent and transit. Higher priority given to avoiding eviction where welfare needs are identified especially re childrens’ rights, access to education and health services or where there are needs to access ongoing health services for anyone. Recognition of a need for accommodation or safe places where the same people are being evicted over and over again... to help avoid the additional cost and impact on a whole raft of services that end up “picking up the pieces” - breaking the cycle.
Work, activity, projects and initiatives currently undertaken by my organisation	Outreach and one to one support services. Playbus outreach and regular local sessions at key locations and home visits. Joint working with other key services, eg NHS, DCC, Devon Carers, GP surgeries, Schools, Fire Service, mental health service providers. Support with planning processes (funding limits this). Advice on rights. Support during crisis.
Any other information you may feel is of use to the Strategic Scrutiny Committee	Organisation has worked for over 20 years in Cornwall and over 5 years in Devon. Key references: Kicking the Can down the Road. Health Inequalities experienced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities (FFT) Gypsies’ and Travellers’ lived experiences health England and Wales 2022. (ONS) Negotiated stopping campaign

The information provided above, will be included in a presentation at the next Strategic Scrutiny Committee on 15 January 2026. You are invited to attend to present the evidence you have provided above and to answer questions from Councillors.

Impact Statement: Repeated Unauthorised Traveller Encampments at Stoke Hill AFC

Stoke Hill AFC is a grassroots football club serving the local community, with nearly 300 registered players across 20 teams, many of whom are children and young people.

Although there is no encampment currently present, the club experiences repeated unauthorised traveller encampments several times each year on land used by Stoke Hill AFC. These recurring incidents have a significant and ongoing impact on the club's ability to operate safely and effectively.

Each occurrence results in disruption to training sessions and matches, often at short notice, creating ongoing uncertainty for players, parents, and volunteers. There are persistent health and safety concerns, particularly for youth teams, arising from vehicle movements, temporary structures, and waste left on playing areas. The cumulative effect causes distress for players and families and undermines the safe, positive environment the club provides.

Stoke Hill AFC plays a vital role in the local community, and the frequency of these incidents places a disproportionate burden on a volunteer-run grassroots club.

Suggested Preventative Measures

To reduce the likelihood and impact of future unauthorised encampments, the following preventative measures are suggested for consideration:

-

Installation or improvement of physical deterrents, such as secure gates, barriers, earth bunds, or strategically placed bollards at access points.

-

Clear signage stating restricted access and identifying the land as managed sporting facilities in regular use.

-

Improved monitoring, including periodic checks by landowners or council officers, particularly during peak risk periods.

-

A clear and agreed rapid-response protocol between the landowner, local authority, and police to ensure timely action when encampments occur.

•

Consideration of long-term site management solutions to protect pitches and facilities while maintaining community access.

Preventative action and early intervention are essential to safeguarding the continued use of the site for grassroots sport and the wellbeing of players, volunteers, and families.

Exeter City Council Strategic Scrutiny Committee

Issue to be considered by Strategic Scrutiny Committee: ***Unauthorised Encampments***

Organisation providing evidence: ISCA INDOOR BOWLS CLUB

Officer providing evidence:

Date: 15.01.26

Impact of Unauthorised Encampments	Depends on the number and their location in the car park. If they park in the smaller car park closest to the ISCA centre then we have had to cancel our fixtures as it is not always safe for us to walk through them. We have had to cancel fixtures when they have been throwing eggs at our cars and when their are children and dogs are running wild. Our club has an older demographic and they are fearful of parking between the caravans and of walking down alternative paths when the main path is being used as a toilet. We have also had to cancel our social commitments e.g. Bingo and lunch club as we were concerned about the safety of our members. Our members have been verbally abused and been the victims of dog bites. Rubbish being left outside – causing environmental health issues and attracting rats and other vermin.
Potential solutions	Main door being locked at all times. Height restriction barriers. Quicker eviction. An order that forbids them from parking there like we had during the women's rugby world cup. Working cctv.

	Double yellow lines needed on main road through the site to stop them parking there once the barriers are in place. Better communication between the council and the club's that use the centres.
Work, activity, projects and initiatives currently undertaken by my organisation	Regular daytime and evening bowls matches 7 days per week. Bingo, lunch club and card games all with an older demographic many of who are also widowers and these events are sometimes the only time they see people.
Any other information you may feel is of use to the Strategic Scrutiny Committee	

The information provided above, will be included in a presentation at the next Strategic Scrutiny Committee on 15 January 2026. You are invited to attend to present the evidence you have provided above and to answer questions from Councillors.