DÁIL ÉIREANN

AN COMHCHOISTE UM SHAINCHEISTEANNA RÍTHÁBHACHTACHA A THÉANN I GCION AR AN LUCHT SIÚIL

JOINT COMMITTEE ON KEY ISSUES AFFECTING THE TRAVELLER COMMUNITY

Déardaoin, 2 Iúil 2026

Thursday, 2 July 2026

Tháinig an Comhchoiste le chéile ag 12.30 p.m.

The Joint Committee met at 12.30 p.m.

Comhaltaí a bhí i láthair / Members present:

Dessie Ellis,	Maria Byrne,
Maurice Quinlivan,	Eileen Flynn,
Pádraig Rice.	Anne Rabbitte.

Teachta / Deputy George Lawlor sa Chathaoir / in the Chair.

The joint committee met in private session, suspended at 12.37 p.m. and resumed in public session at 12.41 p.m.

Conditions at Traveller Accommodation Sites on Dunsink Lane and Proposed Development: Discussion

An Cathaoirleach: Apologies have been received from Senator Malcolm Noonan and Deputy John Connolly. I welcome everyone. This meeting is to discuss the issue of Traveller accommodation, with particular reference to prospective developments at Dunsink Lane. I welcome, from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Mr. David Kelly, assistant secretary, Mr. Patrick O'Sullivan, principal officer, and Ms Samantha Kenny, assistant principal officer. From Fingal County Council, I welcome Ms AnnMarie Farrelly, chief executive, Ms Róisín Burke, director of planning and development, and Mr. Paul Carroll, director of housing. The witnesses are all very welcome.

As our witnesses are in the precincts of Leinster House, they are protected by absolute privilege in respect of the presentation they make to the committee. This means they have an absolute defence against any defamation action for anything they say at the meeting. However, they are expected not to abuse this privilege and it is my duty as Cathaoirleach to ensure this privilege is not abused. Therefore, if their statements are potentially defamatory in relation to an identifiable person or entity, they will be directed to discontinue their remarks. It is imperative that they comply with any such direction.

Members are also reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person or entity outside of the Houses, or an official of the Houses, either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable. I now invite Mr. Kelly to make his opening statement, followed by Ms Farrelly. We will then proceed with a question and answer session.

Mr. David Kelly: I thank the Cathaoirleach and members of the committee for the invitation to address it today on key issues affecting the Traveller community. I am joined today by my colleagues from the social inclusion unit in the Department, Patrick O'Sullivan, principal officer, Samantha Kenny, assistant principal officer, and Kerrie Ann Foran, higher executive officer. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage's policy in respect of accommodation for Travellers is underpinned by dedicated legislation. The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 provides that housing authorities have a statutory responsibility for the assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers and the preparation, adoption and implementation of multi-annual Traveller accommodation programmes in their areas.

In line with the statutory framework, the Department must ensure there are adequate structures and supports in place to assist local authorities in providing such accommodation, including a national framework of policy, legislation and funding. Under the Government's new housing plan, Delivering Homes, Building Communities, meeting Traveller accommodation needs continues to be a priority for the Government, with a commitment to continued investments in Traveller accommodation. The delivery of Traveller accommodation is managed and tracked through the Traveller accommodation programmes, TAPs, with the current programmes running from 2025 to 2029. The TAPs set the individual local authority targets over a five-year period and inform the basis of all forms of Traveller accommodation

delivery, including group housing schemes, halting site bays, acquisition of homes, the housing assistance payment, HAP, and the rental accommodation scheme, RAS.

Travellers have the right to choose their preferred form of accommodation and the TAPs are designed to reflect and support these preferences. Local authorities are implementing the current TAPs and managing the delivery and allocation of all Traveller accommodation under these important five-year rolling TAPs. The TAPs are designed to meet the existing and projected accommodation needs of Travellers in their areas. The Department continues to facilitate, encourage and support the local authorities in the delivery of these TAPs.

Funding for Traveller accommodation has been fully drawn down by local authorities in each of the past six years, from 2020 to 2025. This resulted in capital investment in Traveller accommodation of over €125 million, supporting local authorities in delivering high-quality Traveller-specific accommodation. In addition to this capital spend, almost €38 million was spent through current expenditure in the same period. This supported the management and maintenance of Traveller-specific accommodation, particularly halting sites. Budget 2026 provided an increase in the available capital funding for Traveller accommodation of €26 million and current funding of €8 million has been made available, demonstrating the ongoing commitment to delivering and supporting the management and maintenance of accommodation for Travellers.

The 2024 annual estimate of Traveller households shows that 78% of Travellers live in standard housing, including local authority and approved housing body, AHB, housing and HAP- and RAS-supported tenancies in the private rental sector. Provisional data from the 2025 annual Estimates supports that position. Funding for these housing supports is provided through the respective programme budget lines and are separate from Traveller-specific funding. Additionally, the summary of social housing assessments 2025, compiled by the Housing Agency, shows the majority of households who identify as Travellers prefer mainstream local authority, AHB, HAP or RAS accommodation.

The committee will be familiar with the progress being made by the programme board which oversees the implementation of the recommendations of the expert review group on Traveller accommodation. It is important to reiterate the Department is continually working to build on the good progress that has been made in respect of Traveller accommodation and remains committed to improving the lives of Travellers. While the Department provides the national policy framework and funding for accommodation, the management and day-to-day running of any individual Traveller accommodation site, such as those in Dunsink Lane, is a matter for the local authority. It is open to all local authorities to submit proposals to the Department at any time in respect of funding for accommodation for Travellers. Any proposals submitted will be considered in line with existing policies and will be responded to without delay. The Department welcomes any questions the committee may wish to raise.

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: I thank the Cathaoirleach and members of the committee. I am the chief executive of Fingal County Council and I am accompanied today by Ms Róisín Burke, director of services for planning and development, and Mr. Paul Carroll, director of services for housing. We welcome the opportunity to address the committee on the draft urban plan for the proposed Dunsink city quarter. Fingal County Council is advancing the proposed Dunsink city quarter, one of the most significant strategic development opportunities within the Dublin metropolitan area. The area comprises a substantial 433 ha landholding of predominantly

greenfield lands, providing a unique opportunity to deliver a new, sustainable and integrated urban quarter in a planned and coherent manner.

The overall vision is to create a well-connected, climate-resilient community, delivering up to 18,500 homes over three phases, alongside schools, community facilities, employment space, active travel infrastructure and the transformation of the former landfill area into a major regional park. Importantly, the proposed development is located predominantly on greenfield lands, enabling works to proceed without affecting existing residents or Traveller sites. This avoids the need for displacement or relocation and minimises the disruption to the established communities in the area.

The draft plans acknowledges the established Traveller community in Dunsink and recognises its long-standing presence as part of the local community and cultural heritage. The established presence of these Traveller communities adds an important living cultural layer, reflecting a distinct cultural identity. The plan seeks to respect and support this heritage in the delivery of inclusive, sustainable communities in line with Fingal County Council's approach to traveller accommodation and inclusion. Notably, the draft plan does not seek to displace or relocate the existing Traveller community in Dunsink. Therefore, in parallel and with strategic development, the council is addressing the needs of the existing Traveller community in the Dunsink area.

There are a number of Traveller sites in the vicinity - there is an aerial photo attached to this statement - which includes three sites on the northern side of Dunsink Lane. There are 12 families in St. Mary's and there are 14 families in St. Joseph's and Ratoath Road, which are managed by Dublin City Council, although two are located within the Fingal administrative area. On the southern side of Dunsink Lane, two smaller, unapproved sites are occupied by two Traveller family groups. These two households comprise approximately 14 adults and four children in total and have long-established connections to the area. While the sites are not authorised, Fingal County Council has provided basic services, including water supply and sanitation.

However, there is no formal electricity connection and there is a reliance on generators. Overall, the conditions remain challenging. The council has maintained sustained engagement with both family groups over a number of years through senior management, housing staff and the housing inspectorate, as well as through engagement with the Office of the Ombudsman. While engagement has generally been constructive, it has, on occasion, presented challenges. One family group has sought significant financial compensation to relocate, a request that the council does not consider feasible within the policy frameworks.

Through the Fingal Traveller accommodation programme 2025 to 2029, the council is progressing proposals for culturally appropriate, long-term Traveller accommodation in the area. This includes the delivery of two Traveller-specific sites, consisting of five and ten units, respectively, aligned with the identified need. The council has also made previous offers to the families, including Traveller-specific accommodation, at a nearby refurbished site and offers of standard social housing supports. These have not been accepted to date. The council has also intervened to address unauthorised occupation and unsafe conditions in the area, including the removal of hazardous connections and significant waste management works.

Part of the Dunsink area presents a particularly complex environment, with overlapping statutory responsibilities and a mixture of authorised and unauthorised accommodation. This represents a relatively small element within the overall land bank, the majority of which comprises undeveloped greenfield lands. Fingal County Council is working closely with Dublin City Council, the Department of housing, the local Traveller accommodation consultative committee, LTACC, and other relevant agencies to ensure a co-ordinated, consistent and sustainable approach to accommodation provision and the future development of the area.

Overall, the council's approach is to plan the early delivery of the Dunsink city quarter on largely greenfield lands, close to Dunsinea Lane and Scribblestown Lane, while working to improve living conditions and provide sustainable, culturally appropriate accommodation solutions for Traveller families already resident in the area.

We are happy to address any questions the committee has.

Deputy Dessie Ellis: The main reason we are here discussing Dunsink Lane is because the Travellers there have not been informed. I know Ms Farrelly told me that, at a later stage when there was more development at that end of Dunsink Lane, they would be informed. This is a major plan in the area for 18,500 units. There needs to be an explanation, or at least people need to know what is happening. We should have had some sort of information in the Finglas area. I know that there has been consultation in Fingal and people can put in their observations on the draft plan, but we should have provided some information in the Finglas area. There are three entrances and exits in the plan. One is through Scribblestown Lane, one is through Dunsink Lane and one is at the Ashtown end. That has huge implications along Ratoath Road in particular, not only for the safety of the Traveller families, but for the safety of everyone. That road is really dangerous. We need to explain why it is being addressed that way. There are many other ways you could put connections into a site that size. It is not right that those connections are the only ones that are being mentioned.

On the issues in Dunsink Lane, the crossover between Dublin City Council and Fingal County Council is a big problem. We are planning to do a major project. There is St. Joseph's Park there. I know it is with Dublin City Council, but I have spoken to the council and it has told me that it is not being consulted on any of the plans for Ratoath Road and Scribblestown Lane and is not aware of all of the plans that are in place. There needs to be more cohesion and contact with Dublin City Council and with the local representatives in the Finglas area because this has such huge implications.

There are other issues there for Traveller families. If you look at St. Joseph's, it has a horse project. I have spoken to Ms Farrelly, Mr. Dave Storey and others about how we have to look at consulting with all of the people in the area. We have three horse projects in the area - one in Scribblestown Lane, one at the observatory and one in St. Joseph's. We need answers about what will be done with those.

On Dunsink dump itself, there are many issues that have not been addressed. The health and safety of the Traveller families in that area have always been a problem, given their close proximity to the dump, because it has never been properly capped and sealed around the edges. That is something that will have to be addressed in this plan.

I could talk for ages about this, but all I will do is ask about St. Christopher's Lane and those sites. If necessary, why are we not looking at demolishing those and putting up-to-date halting sites in place? We should be saying to ourselves that we are going in there. This is why I am upset about the fact that we are not communicating with Dublin City Council. With St. Joseph's, you could go in there and doctor up this, that and the other, but it would be better to just build new sites and arrange the transfer of the people to them - with their permission, of course; that is part of it. There is so much miscommunication and people are not being informed about what is happening. That is a big worry for me.

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: I thank Deputy Ellis. I will refer to my colleagues as I move on. The key thing we need to do is differentiate between the draft urban area plan and our and Dublin City Council's Traveller accommodation programmes as they relate to the sites the Deputy mentioned. It is not correct to say that Dublin City Council has not been consulted. Certainly, the beginning of this consultation, which Deputy Ellis will agree is quite recent, has commenced that process. This is the beginning of the planning of this urban area; it is not the end.

We also need not to confuse the planning of the area with implementation. As we mentioned, this is a considerable land bank of 435 ha. That will require considerable planning in order to be delivered. Some of the issues the Deputy mentioned will be part of that planning. It is also not correct to say that we have not met the horse projects. We will certainly continue to do so. I will ask Ms Burke to comment in a moment on the planned consultation, which includes elected representatives from Dublin City Council and Fingal County Council.

I reject the Deputy's statement that Dunsink landfill is not capped. That is not correct-----

Deputy Dessie Ellis: Sorry. It is capped, but there is one further cap needed. The outer edges have not been properly dealt with. That is what I meant.

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: In terms of the environmental plan that is in place for the restoration of the Dunsink landfill, that work is ongoing in line with the Environmental Protection Agency, EPA, licence. Considerable works have been done in the past year and we will continue to live up to our obligations in relation to the licence.

To go further than that, we would like to develop a regional park at Dunsink. That is integral to this plan because it presents an opportunity to have a regional park at the edge of Dublin city and, of course, the edge of Fingal to the benefit of all residents in the area. This is an opportunity to allow us to do that. It will come at a considerable cost but we understand that, aligned with housing delivery, you must deliver community facilities. It is fully compliant with the environmental licence in case any other perception is understood.

I will ask Mr. Carroll to come in on some of the specifics on the accommodation proposals in our Traveller accommodation plan, but we cannot answer for Dublin City Council today in terms of the sites it owns beyond saying we will communicate with it on this plan so that it understands what the proposals are.

On the routing within the plan, there is the proposal for where the permeability should be and where the access to the site should be. There is then the planning of the access and the roads. They will go through their own particular design and planning processes. There is a considerable amount of work yet to be done on those routes.

Then they will go through their own particular design and planning process. A considerable amount of work has yet to be done on those routes. Ultimately, safety is always a priority in the planning and design of any access route. That is something to be delivered in the future.

The key message for me today is that, right now, none of the Traveller accommodation sites will be impacted by any proposed development. The first phase of 2,500 units will happen on the greenfield site and will be delivered first. That is what will go through planning first, subject to the adoption of the plan. Again, this is a draft plan under consultation. We want to hear everybody's views. We want to inform people adequately so that they can give their views. That process is under way and will continue until the end of the consultation period. I ask Ms Burke to come in on the planned consultation over the next couple of weeks.

Ms Róisín Burke: As Ms Farrelly indicated, this is the first stage of the consultation and it has just opened. We have a number of avenues and processes under way.

In the first instance, there will be a public drop-in session in Blanchardstown Library on 13 July. Separate to that, Fingal officials visited Dunsink Lane this week and spoke to the families on the site. We have already set up two individual meetings with planning officials at their request, and we will facilitate any other family that wants to have such a meeting. Those will be one-to-one sessions, and the first will take place next week, on 9 July. We have also set up a separate briefing session for Members of the Oireachtas, having regard to the Fingal members and the members who represent the Dublin City Council area. Separate to that, we are availing of any additional processes and systems that are in place. The planning department will be attending the local Traveller accommodation consultative committee meeting, which takes place later this month.

We are very much open to having consultation in whatever way people see fit. We are happy to meet people individually, in groups or as necessary, whether they are local to the area, representatives of Dublin City Council, representatives of the Oireachtas or our own representatives across the Fingal area. The consultation is open and we are accepting written communications through our website up until the end of this month.

Mr. Paul Carroll: In relation to the provision of Traveller accommodation in the area, as Ms Farrelly said, we talk to Dublin City Council, but we will not be answering on its behalf regarding the two Dublin City Council sites within Fingal's administrative area. At a general level, however, we have three proposals for the vicinity of Dunsink Lane. Within our Traveller accommodation programme, which runs up to 2029, we have Bill Shelly Park, Dunsink Lane south west and Dunsink Lane south east. Dunsink Lane south west and south east are both proposed to cater for the two existing unauthorised encampments that Ms Farrelly referred to in her opening statement. We will continue working in collaboration with the residents there to come up with a solution that is acceptable to them. That is what we want to do. That is what is in our accommodation programme, which was adopted by the elected representatives of Fingal County Council late last year. That is something we really do want to see. Staff in Fingal County Council's housing department have been engaging on that over a number of years with residents there. Unfortunately, there are some demands that we do not see ourselves being able to meet, but it remains an objective. We will keep working towards providing that solution to make sure those families are accommodated in much more suitable accommodation.

On Bill Shelly Park, which is a Fingal County Council site to the north of Dunsink Lane, we had tried to refurbish it and allocate the accommodation to some families. That did not proceed. It was demolished very recently and the property has been returned to open space, essentially, but it remains an objective for us to provide something there.

There are a number of different options within the immediate vicinity of Dunsink Lane that we see as objectives that we will continue working on within the lifetime of the Traveller accommodation programme and within the framework of the Dunsink urban area plan, which provides a much more widespread area for us to consider.

An Cathaoirleach: Does the Department want to come in?

Mr. David Kelly: We are aware from the Traveller accommodation programme of the proposals Mr. Carroll has outlined. We will consider any applications that come to the Department. There is capital funding available. We expect the increasing trend to continue during the lifetime of the current plan, so we expect there will be sufficient capital to meet any schemes that come in from Fingal.

Deputy Dessie Ellis: I have a point on what Ms Burke was saying. I know about the consultation. I got the message about it and I will be there for it. The one hour made available for consultation online is just far too short. I do not think we are going to have enough time, so I am asking whether it can be extended a little. People in the Dunsink Lane and Finglas areas should at least have had some communications, or even some notices put up locally, as in Blanchardstown and Swords, to explain to people that there is a draft plan. Half the people of Fingal do not even know there is a draft plan. That is a problem. People are not aware of it. There is something missing at that end. Owing to the effects, and I know there are witnesses here from Fingal, it still should have been advertised locally so people could come along and make submissions on the draft. I will be putting in my own submission on the draft plan.

I was led to believe that we were going to put new units in at Bill Shelly Park. I hope that is the case because, with the number of units being put in and with no additional units being put in for Traveller families, it does not make sense to me, although Ms Burke did mention some units. We need to have something more definite on that.

Ms Róisín Burke: I thank the Deputy. We are happy to extend the briefing with the members for more than an hour. We will be there for as long as it takes. There is no stoppage time on our part. In an effort to spread the word around the wider Finglas area, I am happy to make contact with Finglas Library and see whether it can accommodate having a copy of the plan and things like that. I will organise that when I go back to the office and see whether that can be accommodated.

Mr. Paul Carroll: At Belcamp Park, our objective is to provide an eight-unit group housing scheme. At Dunsink Lane south west, we are proposing a five-unit group housing scheme, and at Dunsink Lane south east, the proposal is for a ten-unit group housing scheme. That was based on engagement with the local residents. If they need to change somewhat, that is part of the process we go through every time we go through the provision of a new or upgraded Traveller accommodation facility. That is the process we work through.

An Cathaoirleach: Has Deputy Ellis concluded?

Deputy Dessie Ellis: I have.

Senator Eileen Flynn: I thank the officials from the Department and Fingal County Council for being here this afternoon. It is mind-blowing that Fingal County Council is looking at developments and has already come up with a plan, but only a few hours ago reached out to the community to organise for them to have their voices heard. It is absolutely disrespectful to the Traveller community. I understand comments were made saying it will not impact Traveller accommodation. Of course, it will have an impact, including on those in the room this afternoon. It is their community. There are people who were born and reared in Dunsink Lane. It is part of the Fingal Traveller culture. It tells stories.

Could the Fingal County Council officials tell the committee what sites the council has responsibility for? We see all the time that the council will not take responsibility. It looks a bit like that today, if I am honest. It looks like kicking the can down the road, not taking responsibility, having no consultation and not doing the work with the community.

There will be new builds around where Travellers live but they will not impact on them. How many Traveller families does Fingal County Council work with? Will the witnesses name the sites they work with as well, so we can have it on record? Even I am a wee bit confused.

On TAP, Mr. Carroll said some of the actions in the plan cannot be delivered by the end of 2029. Which ones is he talking about? He was talking about delivery of TAP and said it might not be possible to deliver on all of it by the end of 2029. What ones might not be possible? We know TAP has not worked and has produced very few outcomes when it comes to Traveller accommodation. The Department spoke about €26 million being drawn down for Traveller accommodation. What new builds for members of the Traveller community have been completed in the past few years? Where does the responsibility lie for failing Travellers in Fingal? It does not lie with Dublin City Council and, apparently, it does not lie with Fingal County Council. The Department reckons Finglas is better placed to answer the questions. Nobody wants to take the responsibility. As a member of the Traveller community who works on the ground with Travellers every day, I see this as a failure by the State and local authorities. We need somebody to take responsibility. If the money is there, why is it not delivered on the ground?

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: We have a very big responsibility in relation to Traveller accommodation throughout the Fingal area. We are working actively on 23 sites. We have carried out considerable refurbishment of nine sites in recent times and much of our capital spend has been on the refurbishment of sites, although we have delivered a new group housing scheme in the Portmarnock area in the last couple of years. It is to a good standard and is enjoyed by the families who live there, thankfully.

We have our Traveller accommodation programme so it is not true to say Traveller needs were put second to this plan. Our Traveller accommodation programme was adopted well in advance of this draft plan with the plans for the delivery of housing. Mr. Carroll has gone through some of the detail for residents in the Dunsink area.

The purpose of having a draft plan is to consult. The consultation period has been ongoing for a short number of weeks and will continue for the next month or so. One of the reasons we were happy to receive this invitation was we were able to bring the draft plan to the committee. We want to hear from everybody. In terms of residents on the site, not only do we want to hear from them but we wanted to make sure we went to each site and people understood the draft

plan is on display. There was no question of it being a last thought. It was on the first part of our work programme for consultation. That is ongoing and can be moulded and changed as we move on.

In terms of our responsibility, the key staff are here and are doing a lot of work to deliver Traveller accommodation. One of the frustrations we have is it can be quite slow to get a design that is acceptable to everybody. That is a process we believe in but it takes considerable time. If there is anything we can do to speed that up, bearing in mind the funding that is be available to us, that would be a good result for the residents and ourselves. We have no interest in delaying delivery of our programme. We would like to get it delivered as quickly as possible.

On delivery of housing on the greenfield sites, it is 450 ha. It is the size of a small city. When this is built out, it will probably be a ten- to 15-year programme, subject to planning, delivery of infrastructure and all that is required to progress these schemes. That time will be an opportunity to work with everybody on delivering what is required by all communities. It is not a question of something happening tomorrow. This is the beginning of a consultation on delivering this site, which will be to the benefit of everybody. We would like the regional park in Dunsink to be attractive to everybody and to be a place where people want to spend their recreational time. This provides that opportunity. It also provides great opportunity for housing delivery. There is no greater priority for us than the delivery of housing. This site is 7 km from the Spire on O'Connell Street. It is a good site that can be delivered in a resilient, sustainable way and will, it is hoped, be a place where people want to live and have their home in. We are, for the first time perhaps, giving attention to the full area and coming up with a plan for the full area that will allow it to become a place that delivers sustainable homes for everybody and, in particular, addresses the needs of the Traveller community.

I feel the need to come in on Bill Shelly Park. That was a state-of-the-art, award-winning housing scheme. We decommissioned that site and had to demolish it in recent times at a cost of €150,000. A total of 150,000 tonnes of rubbish was removed from the site. In terms of responsibility, we are actively working every day but we are meeting a lot of challenges and there is a lot of wasted spend. Demolishing a group housing scheme and removing 150,000 tonnes of rubbish is a wasted spend. That is a spend that did not need to happen and should be better spent. Those are the challenges we are dealing with.

Senator Eileen Flynn: Does that money for waste management come out of the €26 million Traveller accommodation budget the Department is speaking about?

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: It comes out of our revenue spend, so the money we spend day to day in management and maintenance of Traveller sites.

Senator Eileen Flynn: How does the local authority allow that to happen?

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: We try to prevent it happening but it is not easy. We have a good record of dealing with it all of the time.

Senator Eileen Flynn: I will talk on behalf of Labre because it is the site I know best. It is not policed. I do not know if Fingal is the same. We are expected to police our own communities. The majority of the time the dumping is, of course, invited in by some members of the community but not all of the community. It is done by certain people. They dump outside, over a wall or wherever it may be. The responsibility lands on us again as a community

to police each other. That would not be allowed in any standard accommodation. Ms Farrelly is right that it is a waste of money. Local authorities need to work on the policing of the sites rather than expecting communities to police their own areas, which would not be expected anywhere else. It is important to say that.

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: I totally agree that day-to-day management is really important. We take that very seriously. We visit our sites regularly. Illegal dumping happens across the county. We have a strong environmental enforcement team. It is a general problem. One thing that would have prevented Bill Shelly Park reaching the stage where it was necessary to clear that amount of waste would have been quicker agreement on group housing and what it should be used for.

When I say the design time is taking too long, that is something we can work together on to try to shorten it because it is of no value or benefit to us to spend too long in that phase of a development. We would prefer to get on with building and getting new homes for people. That is our objective.

An Cathaoirleach: I call Deputy Rice.

Senator Eileen Flynn: The Department did not comment. I wish to get a response from it.

Mr. David Kelly: The Senator mentioned the funding. We mentioned in our opening statement that we had capital expenditure of €125 million on Traveller accommodation from 2020 to 2025. I will give the Fingal figures in that period. A total of €6.7 million was related to Traveller accommodation in Fingal County Council. That supported the delivery of group homes, caravan loans, replacement mobiles and some acquisitions. In that period, there was €1.5 million in current funding on top of the capital funding. We can provide a note to the committee Chair in relation to a breakdown at local authority level regarding what was delivered in each local authority, if it is helpful and members wish.

An Cathaoirleach: That would be useful. Is the €1.5 million specific to Fingal in relation to current?

Mr. David Kelly: Current would be provided to all local authorities. The capital funding is what supports delivery but the current funding supports operational-----

An Cathaoirleach: Is the €1.5 million Mr. Kelly referred to specific to Fingal?

Mr. David Kelly: It is specific to Fingal, yes.

An Cathaoirleach: Okay. I call Deputy Rice and then Deputy Quinlivan.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: I apologise that I was late. I had a question with the Tánaiste where I spoke about the report we launched last week on Traveller health, which has some damning findings and highlights the extreme levels of health inequality that are a result of systemic discrimination, racism and neglect by the State. I have no doubt that the findings of our report last week in terms of health are directly linked to the accommodation crisis and the poor accommodation, which is an example that I will talk about today. Regarding health findings, suicide rates are six times higher, there is higher infant mortality and life expectancy is cut short by over a decade. It should be a cause of concern to Departments and local authorities that we have this level of health inequality in our State. There needs to be greater responsibility

from the Departments, local authorities, every State body and State actor to address those. That is why I raised it with the Tánaiste in the Dáil just before I came here.

With other members of the committee, I visited Dunsink Lane a number of weeks ago. I must say that I was appalled and shocked by some of the conditions. One of the advantages of being a professional politician is you can knock on every door across constituencies. I have knocked on thousands of them over the years, from some of the largest mansions in the State to some of the poorest housing conditions. Some of the conditions that we saw were appalling, frankly. The responsible authorities should be ashamed that they have left conditions in that way, have left people living in those kinds of conditions and have not provided the resourcing and the supports that are needed.

We arrived to face a road that was blocked off. Members of the Oireachtas who arrived had to climb over numerous bollards to access the site. It was really clear from the moment we arrived about the underinvestment and under-resourcing of the site. There were no footpaths and no street lighting. What other areas do you go where there is not a footpath at the side of the road, street lights or a playground for children? These are things that we provide in every other community across the State, but it was clear to me from the moment I arrived that this was out of sight, out of mind, blocked off and to be forgotten about by the local authorities and the State. The level of anger and frustration experienced by people was clear. People said they had contacted the local authorities looking for basic facilities. These were elderly people looking for access to trailers and for ramps but who were not getting responses from local authorities. People were looking for improvements to sanitation like hot water. These are very basic requirements that should be available to every citizen living in this Republic. We should have a republic of equals where we treat every citizen equally. It is clear to me that is not the case in terms of Travellers. The reports published by this committee make exceptionally clear the level of systemic racism, discrimination and neglect by this State.

A Traveller said they had been left feeling like a piece of dirt by the State. That is how we are treating people. The level of anger was huge. They are hearing about this development that is happening around them. These are people who have lived in this area since the 1970s. Imagine you and your family lived in a set area for decades and all of a sudden you hear there is going to be a big development around you, with no consultation or information, and hearsay and rumours. You see different clips online and different videos. You are hearing different things from different people about what is going to happen to your home, your community, the place you live - the place you have lived for all your life - and you are getting no information directly. People were genuinely worried. It is clear that things need to be done urgently to improve the conditions. There needs to be much better engagement delivered in a way that we need to meet people where they are, and deliver information to them in a way that is accessible to them. We often hear talks about how it is going to be on a website or to do an online submission. That is not accessible to everybody, particularly older people who maybe do not use computers or maybe are not literate. We have to have much more meaningful engagement with people directly. If this were a settled community, the approach would have been far different. I am deeply disappointed by the way in which Traveller communities across the State have been treated.

It might have been explained earlier, but I am still confused about who is responsible. It almost seems to be: "This is Fingal. This is DCC. This is nobody's responsibility. This might

be the Department's responsibility". Why is there this passing of the buck between different local authorities? It is a constant in this State that people constantly say, "That is actually somebody else's responsibility. That is not mine". All of the witnesses who work for the State and State agencies need to work together to improve the living conditions.

There needs to be far better planning here in terms of the long-term plans for this community in Dunsink Lane. I spoke to young women there who were saying, "I am going to be getting married soon. I am going to have children. What is the plan for me? Where am I going to live? Where are my children going to live?" When we think intergenerationally, there needs to be a long-term plan for this community and these families, so they can stay living where they want to live in their communities with their families. They need to be provided with far better basic services. They are not looking for anything radical here. We are talking about basic facilities like hot running water, footpaths, playgrounds, street lighting and rubbish to be collected. These are not radical demands. We should not have to haul local authorities before a committee to look for basic services to be provided to citizens of this State. It is frankly disgraceful that we have to do that.

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: I thank the Deputy. I wish to clear up a question from Senator Flynn. In 2024, Fingal County Council spent €3.2 million through our revenue account, some of which was self-funded, and €1.3 million in the capital account.

An Cathaoirleach: Is that on top of the €1.5 million?

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: That would include the €1.5 million, but just double the actual spend. There were similar figures for 2025.

To Deputy Rice's points, there is something I wish to make very clear. We have a strong Traveller support team in Fingal. There is no question that Fingal County Council does not treat anybody with anything but respect. This draft plan, which is now beginning a consultation and not ending a consultation - Ms Burke has gone through the consultation yet to happen - also included a direct visit to each of the sites. I am sorry if any misunderstanding has occurred, but this is the beginning of a consultation. It follows on from our consultation for the Traveller accommodation programme which was adopted in recent times.

The Traveller accommodation programme is the principal mechanism for dealing with some of the issues the Deputy mentioned in terms of substandard accommodation or any other issues that he raised. There is no passing the buck between Dublin City Council and Fingal County Council. The three sites that are owned and managed by Dublin City Council is simply just that fact - they are owned and managed by Dublin City Council. It provided that accommodation in the first place. I do not know what site the Deputy mentioned that he visited, but certainly we are not happy with the unauthorised sites. There are two of them in that area where we have been dealing directly with the families who are involved. We have made various options available for those sites, including the Bill Shelly Park I mentioned, which ended up being demolished but could have by now been a group housing scheme. It is very much located in the area that we are talking about. It is another opportunity site that can be developed. We are very happy to progress that with the families involved.

We ask any family who is in difficulty to deal with us in the normal way. Our inspectors will be visiting the unauthorised sites in the normal course of events. Regarding Dublin City Council managed sites, it just simply a fact that we do not manage them.

They are owned and managed by Dublin City Council. In terms of long-term strategic planning, we have a strong relationship with Dublin City Council and, where issues arise, there is strong communication. Again, we certainly can convey the comments made by members to ensure that any issues that need to be dealt with quickly can be addressed.

The draft urban area plan does not interfere with what is happening in those areas. The issues will be resolved through the Traveller accommodation programme both in Dublin city and in Fingal. This plan in itself is separate. The infrastructure that will be delivered through this plan is, in fact, an opportunity for everybody and will be to the benefit of everybody. There is a distinct section in the plan that deals with the fact that we recognise the communities that already live there. With any plan for development, there is always an existing community that will be impacted by the plan from the perspective that it is happening in that location or its vicinity, but that does not necessarily mean there must be change. The communities will stay there and will, we hope, benefit from the infrastructure. It is not necessary for there to be a concern that this is being planned without them or whatever. The Traveller accommodation has to happen. The schemes we mentioned are happening on the plan area and will be delivered through the Traveller accommodation programme.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: With respect, Ms Farrelly and her colleagues would not be here if the process to date had not been deeply flawed. There is real and deep concern in these communities. That is why we are having these discussions, why we went to visit the communities and why we have brought the witnesses before us. What we are hearing from the communities is that the process to date has been deeply flawed. Citizens are deeply unhappy with how they have been treated, and that needs a robust response.

Ms Farrelly said the sites on Dunsink Lane are owned by Dublin City Council. Who is responsible for the local area in terms of the provision of footpaths, playgrounds, street lighting, road safety and accessibility aspects? Is that the responsibility of Fingal County Council or does it also fall to Dublin City Council? I saw for myself the lack of basic infrastructure when I visited Dunsink Lane. Whose responsibility is it to provide that?

Mr. Paul Carroll: In terms of where the areas of responsibility lie, an aerial photograph that was circulated with our opening statement gives a clear picture of where the different sites under discussion are and who is responsible for which ones. There are two specifically under Dublin City Council's remit, although they sit within Fingal County Council's administrative area. The St. Joseph's and St. Mary's sites are both under the day-to-day management of Dublin City Council and are contained within its Traveller accommodation programme. Bill Shelly Park and two unauthorised sites to the south of Dunsink Lane are both within Fingal County Council's administrative area and are under our day-to-day management. A further site on the eastern side of the aerial photograph, labelled "Joyce Family Group DCC", is within Dublin City Council's administrative area and under its management.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: What about roads, access, street lighting and playgrounds? Is Fingal County Council responsible for them?

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: The external environment of those sites in the Fingal area is clearly within the public realm of Fingal County Council.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: Does Ms Farrelly accept it is in poor condition?

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: I absolutely accept it is in poor condition. The purpose of the holistic plan is to address many of those issues, including the upgrade of Dunsink Lane and, we hope, its reopening, in consultation with the Garda. Currently, there is no through route at that location.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: How has it reached the point that the location is in such poor condition? I refer to the basic issues I mentioned - which are Fingal's responsibility; there should be no passing of the buck to Dublin City Council - such as footpaths, street lights, rubbish collection, maintenance and even road safety issues, including at the junction there. How have we reached the point that the area is in such poor condition? A large number of families and children have been living there for years and have not been provided with the kind of infrastructure Fingal provides to other communities.

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: Certainly, there is a need for road upgrades in that area, and that is part of the plan that is out for consultation.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: Families have lived there since the 1970s. We are not talking about today or yesterday. We are talking about people who have lived in this area for more than 50 years and have not been provided with basic infrastructure by the local authority. Why has that happened?

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: It is not true that no infrastructure has been provided but we certainly would like to provide more.

An Cathaoirleach: Are you finished, Deputy Rice?

Deputy Pádraig Rice: Yes. I am not getting answers as to why things have not been done, so I am happy to leave it there. I am not going to keep asking the same questions.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: My first question is for Mr. Kelly. He said in his opening statement:

> Funding for Traveller accommodation has been fully drawn down by local authorities in each of the past six years, from 2020 to 2025. This resulted in capital investment in Traveller accommodation of over €125 million, supporting local authorities in delivering high-quality Traveller-specific accommodation.
>
> How many units have been delivered?

Mr. David Kelly: I mentioned in my statement that we will circulate a full breakdown of the numbers to the committee but I should have a figure to hand for-----

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: I am interested in the number of units.

Mr. David Kelly: There were 719 units across the local authorities.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: Are they new-build units?

Mr. David Kelly: That number would include group housing units, halting bay sites, caravan loan schemes, acquisitions of homes and the replacement of mobile homes. There is a range of housing solutions.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: I thank Mr. Kelly.

My next question is for the witnesses from Fingal County Council. A couple of months ago, Deputies Rice and Ellis, Senator Noonan and I travelled by taxi to Dunsink Lane. Deputy Ellis, who knows the area well, was cleverer than the rest of us and went in by the other side. We got out at the observatory on Dunsink Lane and had to climb over bollards. They are not like the bollards you see all over the place that are placed for safety reasons, to obstruct scramblers or bikes or whatever. There is no access through the bollards on Dunsink Lane. Their purpose is basically to stop people from coming onto the lane. We had to climb over them and make our way down to see the sites we had planned to visit. When was the lane-way blocked off at the observatory?

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: I understand Deputy Quinlivan accessed Dunsink Lane from the Blanchardstown route. Is that correct?

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: I do not know. I went in a taxi and I do not know that part of Dublin very well.

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: I cannot be precise but I understand Dunsink Lane has not operated as a through route for over 20 years. I had involvement in this matter previously but my understanding from dealing with the Garda, in terms of our plan to reopen the lane, is that the closure was done for safety reasons at that time.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: Do those safety reasons still exist?

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: We are hoping that our plan to reopen the route will be agreed by all statutory agencies.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: As Ms Farrelly said, that plan is in its initial stages. I am talking about now.

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: Apologies, I did not-----

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: Do the conditions still exist under which the decision was made, by whomever it was made, to close the lane 20 years ago?

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: Potentially, yes. Work is ongoing to secure agreement with all statutory agencies to reopen it. Obviously, if it were to reopen-----

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: That does not answer my question. Ms Farrelly said the lane was closed for specific reasons. Do those reasons still apply?

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: The reasons were outside of our role. They were to do with safety and came under the role of An Garda Síochána. As to whether those reasons still exist, there is potential to prevent issues happening there if we open a good-standard road with permeability, active travel routes, public lighting, etc. We are hopeful we will reach agreement and that we will be able to invest in getting that work done.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: As part of our visit, we went to a number of sites. I understand some of them are managed by Dublin City Council, others by Fingal County Council and there are unauthorised sites as well. What is definitely under Fingal's remit is the road itself. Having been to lots of places across the State and, indeed, across the world, I have never seen anything as bad as Dunsink Lane since the last time I was in the slums in India. I said that at the previous meeting at which we spoke about this issue. I am 100% sure that a number of Travellers have

been involved in dumping there, with which the representatives of Pavee Point who attended that meeting agreed. Not all the Travellers are involved in dumping but, unfortunately, all the Travellers have to live with that dumping. That would not be tolerated elsewhere in the State.

Clearly, there is also industrial dumping happening there. We saw windows, doors, frames and so on. That is not coming from Traveller sites by any stretch of the imagination. There clearly has been illegal dumping there. That is the responsibility of Fingal County Council.

Ms Farrelly, in her response to Deputy Rice, said Fingal County Council treats everybody with respect and does not pass the buck. This is its buck, in fairness. Dunsink Lane is her local authority's lane and the conditions there are an absolute scandal and should shame all of us. I think the committee made representations, I am open to correction on that, to both Dublin local authorities bodies about the Traveller site and the laneway itself. An Oireachtas committee should not have to go out to look at a laneway in order to have it cleaned up. I do not know if it has been cleaned up. I do not represent the area or know it very well but I have come to know a number of the Travellers there from visiting the site. Deputy Rice talked about the frustration and the anger among residents there and I do not blame them for a second. I want to know what has been done to clean up the site. Has anything been done to clean up that site since we visited it and made our complaints? As I said, the buck stops with Ms Farrelly on that one.

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: I thank the Deputy. It was not fully clear that Deputy Rice was talking about Dunsink Lane so to be clear, in my answers-----

Deputy Pádraig Rice: The purpose of today's discussion is to talk about Dunsink Lane.

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: Apologies, I was not clear that the Deputy was speaking about Dunsink Lane, the specific road as opposed to the area. That is a closed road. As I mentioned, it was closed decades ago on the advice of other statutory agencies. We have been working with statutory agencies in recent months to reach agreement to reopen the road. If the road is reopened, it will require to be upgraded and to provide a through route from Finglas to Blanchardstown.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: We were on the road. We climbed over the bollards to get on to it. We walked down to the Traveller site itself, which was probably half a kilometre or a kilometre away; it was a fair walk in any event. We exited the other side which brought us into Finglas, if I am not mistaken. You can drive into that road because obviously people are driving in and dumping rubbish there. That road needs to be cleaned. Has it been cleaned since we were there?

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: That road was cleaned three months ago. I do not have the cost of that clean-up but it was cleaned up about three months ago or so. A considerable clean-up was required and it included dealing with vegetation and other things on that road. I became aware during the week that the road is in difficulty again. We will have to look at that. That road was cleaned up by us within, I think, the last quarter. I would have to check the precise date and I will be happy to come back to the committee with that information.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: I would like Ms Farrelly to come back with that information. It has not been three months since we visited.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: It was less than three months ago.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: It was less than three months ago since we visited, so I cannot imagine that scale of rubbish-----

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: Forgive me if I have the wrong time period but it was definitely cleaned during 2026.

An Cathaoirleach: We visited in May.

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: I can certainly come back with the details of that clean-up at that time. That is something that will only be alleviated by reopening the through road and upgrading the road to a standard-----

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: Is there any CCTV camera footage of that laneway?

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: There has been from time to time. I do not know if there is any right now but there have been CCTV cameras and stuff.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: I know that in some of the sites there were CCTV cameras that were not working. That was pointed out by some of the residents. That would be the responsibility of Dublin City Council I imagine.

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: We have had difficulty maintaining CCTV in that area.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: Were the cameras damaged?

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: Yes.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: Have they been replaced?

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: They have been replaced many times but, again, I would have to-----

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: Who monitors those cameras? For instance, I come from Limerick where we have a project in the Moyross Community Enterprise Centre that manages the whole city and county. There are 400 cameras in it and it is one of the biggest community camera operations. I do not know how it works in Dublin. Who manages Fingal County Council's CCTV?

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: Obviously, the recent changes in legislation for CCTV has meant its installation is now very regulated. but more in our control. We are bringing through schemes on an ongoing basis. Some of the areas in Dunsink were monitored through the Garda system, by agreement with the Garda because we simply did not have the authorisation to monitor. As regards the reinstallation of CCTV, our current plan is to upgrade that road and provide lighting, footpaths and cycle lanes on it. We are working through the process of getting agreement from everybody that it is now safe to do that.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: Will Ms Farrelly come back to the committee with a note about when the laneway was cleaned up over the past year, for each time it was cleaned.

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: Sorry?

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: Will Ms Farrelly provide a list of the times during the past year that Fingal County Council has cleaned up that road?

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: I can bring that information back.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan: I thank Ms Farrelly.

Deputy Dessie Ellis: I know we have Dublin City Council and Fingal County Council involved in this, and I know the St. Joseph's and St. Mary's sites are managed by Dublin City Council, but with a project of this size, Fingal County Council and Dublin City Councils should be looking at what can be done for those residents. To take the St. Joseph's site, you could go in there and do some doctoring, as Dublin City Council does, but that site probably needs to be rebuilt. With such a big plan, surely it is not rocket science to get Dublin City Council and Fingal County Council together to put some sort of plan to provide proper living conditions for those areas, rather than having the councils say, "That is a matter for Dublin City Council" or "That is for Fingal County Council." We need more communication and contact.

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: As I mentioned, I am happy to follow up with Dublin City Council. No housing in this plan will be delivered through the plan. We need to work through the normal planning and design of housing and decide what happens where. That will be the work of the next stage and will only happen for phase 1, initially. That is not delaying the provision of accommodation for Travellers through the Traveller accommodation plan. We will always work with Dublin City Council on any plans it has for replacing the accommodation there.

Whether or not this is correct, the existing Traveller sites are serviced from the Finglas area. Permeability towards Blanchardstown has not been planned or implemented because that road was closed. It is a road to nowhere right now. We have the ambition of reopening that road and making sure it functions correctly as a public road. Again, that work is ongoing.

Deputy Pádraig Rice: I will make two points. First, it is not a road to nowhere; it is a road to people's houses, lives and communities and to where they live and should be considered more than a road to nowhere.

The other point I would like to make is about a pattern I have noticed, repeatedly, when we have State agencies in, not just the ones in front of us today. It is a repeated pattern I have noticed when we have State agencies in front of us. They often talk about the huge amount of money they spend, sometimes down to the penny, on Travellers. We do not hear that for other communities and there is almost a sense of reluctance to spend this money or that these agencies should not have to spend this money. We do not hear that when we talk about other communities. We do not hear it in other Oireachtas committees when State agencies talk about other people in other parts of society. There is never an acknowledgement of the under-investment and under-resourcing, historical discrimination and absolute State neglect of these communities. We are so far behind in terms of some of the resourcing that we should be spending ten or 20 times more on some of these facilities because they have been neglected for over 50 years. We have heard people talking about the significant amount of money spent a number of times. It was clear to my eyes when I visited that a significant amount of money has not been spent by the local authority on that road in that area or by Dublin City Council on those sites. Much more needs to be spent to provide people with good living standards and a good quality of life and to address some of the health inequalities which, as the Tánaiste said on the floor of the Dáil today, are stark and serious. People are dying over a decade earlier because of health inequalities and so much of that comes from the social determinants of health,

namely, poor housing and poor conditions. It is the responsibility of the Department and local authorities to fix that and I urge them to do it urgently.

An Cathaoirleach: I was a member of Wexford County Council for 20 years and from evidence I received and conversations I had with colleagues from throughout the country, local authorities do not have a good record of working with Traveller families. Ms Farrelly said the local authority visits the sites regularly but it still ended up having to spend €150,000 recently on the removal of rubbish. If that was in a settled area, it would not be happening. Action would be taken almost immediately by the local authorities. I have seen this time and again. As Deputy Rice alluded to, our report last week was extremely stark in terms of the treatment of Travellers and the impact that was having on their health, and mental health in particular.

Will the witnesses outline again how the council intends to engage with the Traveller community as the development of Dunsink progresses? What are its definite plans? While Dunsink is not just about Travellers - there are 900 acres of land - they have been a significant part of Dunsink for more than 50 years, and the notion that they are, to date, the least communicated with is indicative of what happens. Is the council proposing to have specific interactions with Travellers in Dunsink with regard to the development plan, because they will be an integral part of the overall development?

Ms Róisín Burke: Yes. Earlier this week, Fingal officials visited the site and explained the process. This is, as mentioned earlier, the first stage of the consultation for the draft plan. We have now issued invitations to two families already to meet with them individually. The planning officials will meet with them to explain the plan and process and how it will impact them, such as where phase 1 is, where the other phases are, and to show how the plan acknowledges the recognition of the Travellers in the area, speaks of the culture and community aspect they bring to the area, and how that can be protected and emphasised in the plan and wider Dunsink area. We have two meetings set up, as I said, for 9 July, and we have further invitations to issue. We have put the invitation out that we are available to meet, with the planning officials, almost on a one-on-one basis or a family-on-planning-official basis, as needed. That is going to bring us through the consultation process for this draft plan.

An Cathaoirleach: Can Ms Burke assure the meeting that Travellers will have a genuine opportunity to influence the plan?

Ms Róisín Burke: Absolutely. This is the consultation phase and it is a draft. None of our plans, whether for Dunsink or for the county development plan itself or any other area are ever done without that local input. The local input and knowledge always add something we are unaware of as officials, possibly due to not living in the area or being familiar with the nuances of it, so anything we can put forward to give comfort to the Traveller community or highlight a particular aspect of their community or culture, we are very happy to facilitate through the plan. That is the point of this consultation process. We are very much open to change and accommodation, where possible, within the realms of the urban area plan process and what we are trying to achieve across the wider area. As the Deputy said, it is more than 400 ha. A total of 180 ha are zoned for residential development. This is going to provide almost a new town. It is a very exciting development in a very strategic location in Dublin, and this consultation process allows us the opportunity to make sure we get it right for everyone: the existing Traveller community on the site and new people who will be living in this area.

An Cathaoirleach: Does Fingal County Council have a timeline or timeframe on the Bill Shelly development?

Mr. Paul Carroll: In terms of Bill Shelly, and generally in terms of the Traveller accommodation programme, again, that would be the next tier down in terms of a more detailed consultation process that would take place with each of the family groupings in the particular existing locations.

In terms of the amount of funding available, one of the key things that hinders the level of delivery we can achieve in the Traveller accommodation programme every year is the consultation programme, because it is very detailed and can change. It is often an iterative process and, because of that, that tends to slow things down, but that is much more preferable than us deciding from a top-down approach what we are going to do without getting full engagement and buy-in to make sure that what we are doing is appropriate and accepted by the residents in the area. As Ms Burke says, the ultimate framework is in place for the plan, and we have the individual objectives within Fingal County Council's Traveller accommodation programme and the two larger sites of Dublin City Council's programme. They are to be addressed as part of those programmes but also in the context of that plan, and we will continue engaging with our colleagues in Dublin City Council to make sure that we come up with an acceptable solution, both for ourselves, Dublin City Council and, most important, for the people on the site.

An Cathaoirleach: Would anyone from the Department like to add anything further?

Mr. David Kelly: Regarding Deputy Rice's comment, I accept when you hear about national expenditure on a programme in your own situation, it can ring hollow, but that increasing capital expenditure does facilitate more projects to be advanced. We see from the Traveller action plan in Fingal, there are a number of proposals which the Department will now have the funding to advance.

At the broader level there have been challenges in delivering Traveller accommodation, which the Chair alluded to, and there is a programme board in place, chaired by the chair of the NTACC, Niall Crowley, that is looking at trying to unlock new actions to support the delivery of Traveller accommodation. There is an active work programme there. The Minister of State attends that meeting regularly. It looks at how we address some of the issues which have delayed Traveller accommodation in the past. Funding is one aspect, but there have been other issues around planning, the design of units, and how we design good quality schemes. That is a priority for the Department, not just to provide the funding but to look at other measures to support increased delivery and make sure that the programmes in the Traveller plan are not just funded but delivered.

Ms AnnMarie Farrelly: I thank the Cathaoirleach for giving me the opportunity to come in again. We are very anxious to consult well with everybody. I appreciate we are moving at pace because this land was only zoned for development in terms of bringing in construction of units on 31 March in reaction to aligning our development plan with the national planning framework revised targets. This is a site for early delivery of housing through the fact that it was just recently zoned for that purpose, and a plan-making process commenced on 1 April and was published in very recent times. We are moving at pace in order to plan this overall housing delivery. During this consultation phase we are very anxious to engage and consult in

a meaningful way with everybody, and it is hoped those meetings which are now scheduled will address anybody's and everybody's concerns.

An Cathaoirleach: We look forward to that coming to pass, because I am sure we will be told if it is not happening. I thank the witnesses for their attendance and responses, and I thank members. We look forward to further engagement ongoing.

The joint committee adjourned at 1.57 p.m. until 6.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 8 July 2026.