

Report on the Procurement and Use of Sanitation Units

Why were the facilities provided?

On many City Council traveller sites, families who are not tenants relocate to empty spaces on the site. In such instances DCC frequently receives requests to provide emergency shower, toilet and basic kitchen facilities for these families although they are not tenants and the site is not designed for accommodation.

In 2010 at a time when there were issues of anti- social behaviour in Labre Park with a building and houses being destroyed on site, DCC refused a number of requests from advocacy groups to provide temporary facilities of water, sewerage and electricity to the caravans illegally located there, citing the prohibitive cost of the provision of facilities (Appendix 1 Report prepared for Area Committee by Kieran Cunningham - Senior Executive Officer).

In 2011 the *National Traveller Accommodation* budget was €3m. The cost for redevelopment of Labre Park at that time was estimated to be in the range of €8m. Given that the redevelopment of Labre Park was unlikely in view of the funding levels available, having regard to the plight of these families, and representations made by local traveller advisory groups and elected members, a decision was taken to rent units that would provide emergency facilities.

The Council always maintained the costs of providing services to all unofficial Traveller camps was high but in these cases took a humanitarian approach in view of the conditions in which the families were living. In 2014 DCC was requested by BTAP to provide temporary services to a further 8 illegally located families. This request was acceded to despite similar reservations about the cost.

Decision to Rent

Both rental and purchase were considered at that time but rental was considered preferable on cost grounds if the units were used for less than 3 years taking into account the provision of maintenance as part of the contract. It was estimated that the minimum cost of purchase of these units is in the region of €200-230,000 (based on quotes from 2 companies) and this would have required a significant capital investment in addition to the capital required for groundworks.

Selection of Supplier

The application to the DECLG at the time states the basis of selection; i.e. a limited number of suppliers in the market, a belief that a proposal for redevelopment would be submitted within a year There was intense pressure on DCC to provide these units as a matter of urgency despite the very high costs of infrastructural works and ongoing rental/maintenance costs for temporary services. The Traveller Accommodation Unit researched suppliers for these units in 2011 and found only 2 main suppliers. Portakabin Allspace was selected as the preferred supplier.

Issues relating to Electrics and Fire Risk

Following a fire in one of the units earlier this year, there was an inspection of the electrics of that unit by a contract electrician whose opinion was that a twin socket was the probable source of the fire and that overloading of the socket was the most likely explanation.

The Traveller Accommodation Unit requested that a Fire Prevention Officer examine the units and the officer made a number of recommendations. (Appendix 3) All units have been provided with a fire blanket and a contract for the supply and maintenance of fire extinguishers is in negotiation. A letter went to each user of the units to advise of the concerns raised in the report regarding unsafe storage of combustible materials, the risks of forcing electrical wiring through sockets without plugtops, overloaded extension leads lying under clothing (results in a build up of heat), overloading of sockets, flammable items of clothing, toys and furniture on top of electrical items. Extension leads were observed being used way beyond their permitted capacity, which is a major fire hazard.

Following the inspection, Electrical Services looked at the electrics in all the units and advised that the electric were in order. A contractor was instructed to carry out other structural repairs.

Repairs & Maintenance

There have been ongoing issues with the maintenance contract. Following a meeting in January 2015 to resolve Health and Safety concerns, DCC agreed that a supervisor would be onsite to liaise between the supplier of the portocabins and users of the units. The supplier made an offer to reduce the rent of the units by 15% in return for DCC taking on the responsibility for maintenance of the units. This offer was not accepted on the basis that it did not represent good value and the repairs to the units were outstanding for some duration, requiring a significant investment to bring them up to standard.

Following the inspection of the units by electrical services, a snag list was sent to the supplier in March 2015. DCC has complained to the supplier about the delays in getting these repairs completed. A structural repairs programme commenced on the 22nd June. A DCC supervisor liaises with the supplier on a daily basis onsite to ensure the works are progressing.

There have been complaints from the supplier that the units have been misused and they point to the far better condition of the units in Cara Park, which were hired at the same time and are used for the same purpose. The Clerk of Works is overseeing the repairs programme.

LTACC - Local traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee

The statutory consultative group (LTACC) has membership from local councillors, Traveller representatives and officials of the City Council. The options, advantages and disadvantages with regard to replacement/ refurbishment and purchase /rental options have been discussed there in fine detail so that all parties are clear about the issues involved.