

2019.10.08

11 The Connétable of St. Helier of the Minister for the Environment regarding the Future St. Helier Group: (OQ.236/2019)

Is it the Minister's assessment that the Future St. Helier Group should be re-established; and, if so, will he commit to seeking its re-establishment?

Deputy J.H. Young (The Minister for the Environment):

I agree with the purpose behind the Constable's question. There is a need to establish a group that is responsible for the regeneration and future redevelopment of St. Helier, but also those urban parts of St. Saviour and St. Clement. So, it is essential that we are able to develop political consensus and also have a means and the resources to deliver the changes that need to take place. That is important for the whole Island and not just for St. Helier. Unfortunately, there is no current effective political forum that fully achieves that and so, as I have advised the Constable previously, I agree we need to create one, particularly now to inform the Island Plan review. I had expected that the Regeneration Steering Group, which was formed by a 2010 States decision, would be the right policy vehicle with a widened membership, but this group also is the decision maker for the redevelopment of States land assets. Following my recent meeting with them, my short meeting, I discussed the perception with that group of the conflicts of interest of my role with the Chief Minister and we have agreed the principle for restructuring of that group and widening the membership to take on the task.

4.11.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

I accept the Minister's comment that the other urban Parishes are, of course, included in the work of the Regeneration Steering Group; however, the Future St. Helier Group was established with specific targets to deliver States priorities in the Town area. I am not hearing the Minister saying that he is going to restart the Future St. Helier Group. Is he going to create some body that will deliver improvements in Town? Because we are more than a year into the life of this new Government and it has failed to deliver any schemes, whereas the previous Government, under former Chief Minister, Senator Gorst, did at least achieve schemes in Sand Street and Conway Street.

Deputy J.H. Young:

I certainly have found this a difficult area. I will be quite honest about this. I have spoken with it at the Scrutiny Panel on a couple of times. The issues about individual road improvement schemes, where the Constable refers to those, but that is not the entire task. What one is looking for is a big picture of the way in which we plan for the whole of the urban area, which is needed in the Island Plan, that does include the issue of road improvement schemes, but that has to be in the context of wider policies. That is why I saw the Regeneration Steering Group, because there is no finer way of achieving those visions than having resources and if we do not have the money, then the use of the States land assets, such as decisions on what we do with those assets, are crucial and they should be part of that plan. That is what I am trying to get to. I am making progress with it. I have discussed it with the Regeneration Steering Group and the meeting with the Chief Minister is going to give us the formula. It will need a wider membership and, yes, once we get that high-level picture, then we can have a working group on the procurement of individual detailed schemes of pavement widening and this sort of thing. That more is an implementation issue for the Minister for Infrastructure. So, it is a complex business, I am sorry about that, but it is very important we have joined-up policy rather than just form lots of *ad hoc* groups that do not connect with each other.

4.11.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:

I have a simple question. Can I just ask the Minister: whatever groups are set up, that the Assembly Members, who represent the area of St. Helier, are kept fully informed of all things that are going on? Sometimes developments happen, which are literally on the doorstep to my District, but I am not included in that information, but it impinges upon the lives of those members that I directly represent.

Deputy J.H. Young:

Absolutely, for example, very recently we had a debate about Green Street and so on and Members rightfully bring those issues here. But what they have dealt with is without the context of a broader-based plan into where are the primary routes, where are the secondary routes, where are you going to relocate facilities and so on? That is the kind of planning issues. On my list of restructured membership, I have written "Deputies". So, I am hopeful in my meetings with the Chief Minister - and I am sure he is listening to me - I have a list of Ministers, who are not currently part of those processes and Deputies and I think we should create that joined up. I give the Constable commitment, if I am allowed to, because the Chief Minister, it is his group, the Regeneration Steering Group, we will get the show on the road. The Island Plan, if we do not have it by the time of the Island Plan we will have failed. So we must have it as soon as possible.

4.11.3 The Connétable of St. Helier:

I am partly heartened by the Minister's response and I thank him for it, but can I urge him that an implementation group should be up and running before Christmas. We have already wasted more than a year and while I accept his arguments that we must have a big picture and the Island Plan and so on, let us get some work done on the ground and let us involve all the stakeholders, including the Deputies, in the projects. Will he agree with that approach?

Deputy J.H. Young:

What I would like to see from the Constable is a list. If he says let us have some works on the ground, can I have a list of those works, because I want to make sure that we ... if he gives me that list I am sure we will make sure it is progressed in the right way.

4.11.4 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Just a quick further supplementary: is the Minister aware that a list of prioritised projects was requested from the Infrastructure Department at the last meeting of the Regeneration Steering Group, but they had not got it ready and will he press his fellow Ministers to take the needs of urban regeneration seriously if the Town is to accept the loading of the bulk of the population envisaged by the Council of Ministers?

Deputy J.H. Young:

If I may, I was not aware of that and I am pleased to hear it. Of course, had I been allowed to stay longer at the Regeneration Steering Group, I could have heard it. But, of course, I was asked to go because of the conflict of interest.