

2019.11.12

14 The Deputy of St. Martin of the Chief Minister regarding the future of Haut de la Garenne: (OQ.275/2019)

Has the Council of Ministers reached a final decision on the future of Haut de la Garenne?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré (The Chief Minister):

The Council of Ministers considered a proposal for the redemption and future use of the former Haut de la Garenne site on 2nd October 2019. Ministers felt they would like to confirm the views of the Citizens' Panel before making a final decision to ensure that they have taken the perspective of the survivors into account. The Citizens' Panel was recruited to recommend a fitting way for the Island to remember the failings addressed by the Care Inquiry and it has continued to work with Government to support the implementation of a legacy project. It is due to meet again in early December and so, on that basis, a final decision about the proposal for the future of Haut de la Garenne will be made, I guess, when the Council of Ministers reconvenes in early New Year. A public announcement will follow and I will ensure that the Deputy and Connétable are kept apprised as matters progress.

3.14.1 Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

That gives me an excellent opportunity to refer Members to the updated response to the Care Inquiry Scrutiny report done by the Care of Children in Jersey Review Panel, where you will see on page 30, 8.2, we cover Haut de la Garenne in great detail, with 3 findings and one recommendation that the Council of Ministers should identify and allocate capital funding in order to update the building and bring it into line with modern safeguarding requirements. This should be completed for inclusion with the next Government Plan for 2021. Does the Chief Minister agree?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

The short answer is what the Council of Ministers decided it wanted to do, it had some proposals put forward to them. I think they are good proposals, but I am not giving any details at this stage. We have been trying to manage this process really sensitively, given the sensitivities around the whole subject. The next step is to make sure that the Citizens' Panel is absolutely happy with what we are proposing to do. I do think there are some good ideas in there and I do hope the parties involved so far will be pleased with the outcome. Until that crucial meeting has taken place, I cannot commit one way, or another, to that without confirming an outcome, but I would hope people will be pleased with the details if the Citizens' Panel is happy.

3.14.2 Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I am sure the Chief Minister has read our Scrutiny report and he would see that we identify what I agree is a very sensitive and important issue. However, time is of the essence. If there is no communication and further delay, it can cause issues. Can the Chief Minister assure us that this urgent matter will be resolved as soon as possible, by engaging the right people?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

We believe we are engaging the right people. As I said, they are next meeting in early December and then, once we get that feedback, it will go to the next Council of Ministers. If they make it before Christmas, brilliant, that will be on the agenda. If not, it will be the first meeting after the New Year.

3.14.3 Deputy S.M. Ahier:

I am sure the Chief Minister is aware of the report of the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry Panel 2019. Under recommendation 8, concerning the Haut de la Garenne site it states: "It remains in our view in our recommendations that the building should be demolished." Does the Chief Minister agree with this finding?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

The difficulty we faced, which the Care Inquiry is fully aware of, is that when a survey was done of members of the public - and I believe about 1,000 people took part - 94 per cent of respondents, including the Citizens' Panel, who are those most directly affected, which includes survivors from our care system, disagreed with that recommendation to raze the building and that is why it remains in its present position. **[Approbation]** I do stress we have got to deal with it sensitively and that is why we are reconfirming the position with the Citizens' Panel shortly.

3.14.4 Deputy S.M. Ahier:

My question was to the Chief Minister. Does the Chief Minister believe that the Haut de la Garenne site should be demolished as the recommendation in the Jersey Care Inquiry report?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

I will stick to what I said publicly at election time, which is that if the public mood on that, which included survivors, was that it should not be razed then, unfortunately, I did not support that recommendation. That was the difficulty, that as the decision was made - and I think it was by the previous Council of Ministers - to go and consult on the future of the building, we have consulted and we have an outcome that says 94 per cent of people do not agree with that recommendation. It is, therefore, very difficult to go to people and say: "We would like your opinion" and then not to follow that through. That is the difficulty we face. We are trying to balance off the various needs of the various parties and that is why I said the discussion in early December is that final stage, but we need to deal with it very sensitively.

3.14.5 Connétable K. Shenton-Stone of St. Martin:

My question has more, or less, been answered. I would just like to say that I find this really frustrating, because I knew that the Citizens' Panel had agreed to keep Haut de la Garenne. I just want to know why we cannot make a decision and keep to it and why do we have to keep going back on things to make sure that it is 120 per cent correct?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

There are 2 aspects to that. One is that further to the outcomes of the work that came out in January, I think it was, this year an officer group has been putting together various options as to how we progress those forward and that is part of what will be going to be the Citizens' Panel. The second point is, obviously, that the Care Inquiry has reiterated its recommendations and we are making sure that that remains the case but, as I said, in terms of the options I have seen, I think they are good options in front of us and I hope all parties will find them acceptable. But we are very mindful of the outcomes of the previous public positions that have been taken and we are just trying to manage what is a very sensitive issue as sensitively as possible.

3.14.6 The Connétable of St. Martin:

I would like to ask the Chief Minister whether the Parishes will be able to have any input on this at all?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

Absolutely.

3.14.7 The Deputy of St. Martin:

I think all my points have been raised, but it is 18 months since the Chief Minister has been in post and during that time we have had what is, as far as I can remember, the largest and most expensive consultation ever. We have had the results and the Chief Minister alluded to them. I accept that there are sensitivities here. Can the Chief Minister guarantee that we will have a decision one way, or the other, before the end of January?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

As I said, what the process is meant to be is that we are timing it into the Citizens' Panel. We do keep saying we are trying to manage this as sensitively as possible. That means dealing with it appropriately and as soon as that decision comes back it will go to the next Council of Ministers. I am expecting that to be before the end of January. It would be great if it could be before Christmas, but I do not know if it will be.