

**QUESTION TO BE ASKED OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE FINANCE AND ECONOMICS COMMITTEE TUESDAY 24th JUNE 2003, BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER**

**Question**

In a letter sent to members dated October 2002, regarding Age Concern, the then President stated -

‘I have pledged to Daphne Minihane that I will put the issue of TV licences for pensioners on the agenda again, no later than March of next year.’

Will the President please indicate to members whether this matter has yet been placed on a Committee agenda, and, if so, whether he proposes to bring a proposition to the States?

**Answer**

Members will be aware that when a suggestion of free TV licences for all senior citizens, irrespective of need, was proposed in 2000, the Finance and Economics Committee at the time, with the support of the Senior Citizens' Association, took the view that the funding necessary to provide free TV licences would be better targeted towards the provision of improved primary health care for the less well-off of all senior citizens rather than a blanket coverage of free TV licences to only those aged over 75, regardless of need.

Accordingly the States made available (and ‘ringfenced’) funds for a trial period to provide a primary healthcare scheme administered on behalf of the Employment and Social Security Committee.

The current Finance and Economics Committee has not reconsidered this issue as a specific item on a Committee agenda, since, following discussions at the start of the year on the Committee's priorities, it was clear that free T.V. licences did not rank highly.

When I addressed a meeting of the Senior Citizens' Association in April of this year, I made it clear to attendees, (including Mrs. Minihane, their President), that the issue of TV licences for the senior citizens would not be promoted by the Committee in the foreseeable future.

Amongst the reasons for this is that any request for growth in States spending had to be submitted to the fundamental spending review for 2004, and meet the criteria for such requests. Against a background of limiting growth requests to essential areas, neither the Finance and Economics Committee nor any other Committee of the States considered this subject to be a top priority.

The trial period for the elderly healthcare scheme has not yet finished. A report on that scheme is expected later this year, after which the issues might be re-examined. However, it is important to remember that, even when proposals have been agreed in principle, they should not be confirmed until the States has looked at its spending demands in the round, and the States should not accept new, ad-hoc, costs outside of the normal budgetary process.