

3.8 Deputy K.C. Lewis of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding youth and sport facilities to eliminate anti-social behaviour:

Will the Minister undertake to increase funding and work with other agencies to provide greater youth and sports facilities in St. Helier and other Parishes to eliminate anti-social behaviour?

Deputy J.G. Reed of St. Ouen (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

My department is already actively working with the Parishes and other agencies to provide a wide range of positive activities for young people and, while I am unable to increase funding at this time, I am totally committed to ensuring that current levels of funding are directed to areas where there is most need. It should be recognised that anti-social behaviour is limited to a relatively small number of individuals who, for the most part, choose not to take advantage of the opportunity to participate in the wide range of activities currently provided across the Island. It would, therefore, be wrong to believe that additional funding in the areas mentioned will necessarily deal with the problem.

3.8.1 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

While I fully appreciate that we are talking about a very small minority of troublesome teenagers, we are seeing reports increasing every weekend. The provision of improved youth facilities and funding will go a long way towards keeping young people off the streets. Does the Minister not agree?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I believe that it is part of the solution but not the full and complete method of dealing with this issue. We are currently carrying out, at officer level, work with other departments to address this particular area and see where resources need to be best used.

3.8.2 Deputy S. Power:

Can I ask the Minister what is being done by his department to investigate the damage being done by users of the BMX jumps at Les Creux Country Park where the toilet block has recently been rendered useless by vandalism, most of the low-level lights in the car park destroyed, fences and gates have been ripped down and rocks and stones from walls within Le Creux have been thrown across the road and have damaged cars and private property?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I have personally met with users in the Les Creux Park area and with individuals that have been faced with certain issues. I would hasten to add that, contrary to what the Deputy suggests, I do not believe it is the users of the mountain bike area that are indeed the problem. I think there are other individuals, as yet unidentified, who are causing the concerns and raising concerns in the area. Work is being carried out in conjunction with the police to improve the security in the area and user groups are being set up to monitor that particular area and ensure that, where possible, we can minimise the destruction.

3.8.3 Deputy S. Power:

Can I just ask the Minister if he is prepared to give an undertaking to repair some of the property that has been damaged in Les Creux, and I was not associating that the

users of the BMX jumps were exclusively responsible for the stones and rocks that were thrown across the road. There is evidence that the rocks and stones from the walls of Les Creux were used to damage adjoining property.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

It is unfortunate that currently we have a toilet block that is closed because of the concerns raised by vandalism and this is one of the issues that we are dealing with. Clearly we have also implemented, in the last month, a youth worker who is linked to St. Brelade to work with the youngsters in the area and to help us identify exactly what the problems are. I am sure that if the Deputy wants to again engage with... as the Constable has already done, we might be able to better understand this issue. Thank you.

3.8.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Minister acknowledge the correlation between the closure of the drop-in café in Liberation Square and the rise in delinquency in town, particularly around Liberation Square?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I absolutely believe that it is essential that the Move On Café is re-opened as soon as possible and I think that it is appalling that a particular facility like this, that was required to be delivered by the developers, has yet to be seen to be done. I would encourage all those involved in the delivery of this very important project to wake up and get it sorted. Thank you. [Approbation]

3.8.5 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Would the Minister indicate to the House, having had his department undertake a survey of youth service provision, whether there are areas of St. Helier or St. Saviour which, in his view, are at present under-resourced, such as Longueville and Five Oaks? [Laughter]

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I do not believe that that is the case.

3.8.6 The Deputy of St. John:

Given that the new skateboard park in St. Helier has been highlighted in this Chamber several times in recent months, has the Minister attended down there in the evenings and seen the behaviour of the youngsters; given that we have now got to a situation that the skateboarders themselves cannot get on to their skateboard park because of mountain-type bikes and also motorcycles within that park, thereby pushing the users out? What is his department doing to police this, given the problems that we have had recently?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I am currently unaware that motorbikes are using the facility. I find that rather disturbing. I am equally aware that mountain-bike-type cycles can be used successfully on the facility, as well as skateboards and roller-skates. With regard to attending at the site, I have attended on a number of occasions and so has my Assistant Minister, who is responsible for the youth service, and I must admit that I have been encouraged by the attitude and the way that the youngsters are using that area. Again, I accept that there are individuals that are or could be causing concerns

in that area and, as in any other case, my department will clearly be doing all that they can to address the concerns.

3.8.7 The Deputy of St. Martin:

I think the Minister will agree with me that, for some youngsters, they do not particularly like the traditional youth club. For them it is old hat. But they would rather the drop-in type of establishment. Can I ask the Minister, how much money do we devote to this form of drop-in establishments which do seem to fit the bill for some of those youngsters who do not prefer the traditional type of youth club? Has he got any money set aside that he could put towards establishing more drop-in type establishments? I know that he had £2 million left over last year, so maybe some of those funds could go towards the drop-in centres.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

We are actively engaging with the Parishes to ensure that the correct provision for our young people in all areas of the Island are addressed and I can happily say that in recent times discussions have been taking place with the Constable of St. Helier who is equally committed to addressing this issue, to ensure that drop-in facilities, and especially the Move-On Café, is properly provided for and supported with a youth worker.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

May I just thank the Minister and fellow colleagues for their constructive comments. Thank you.