

## **7. Questions to the Ministers without notice - The Minister for Health and Social Services**

### **7.1 The Deputy of St. John:**

If I could ask the Minister, in the U.K. on 11th February, the *Daily Mail* had an article on school milk and bowel cancer. Given that it is now proven that school milk can prevent bowel cancer, will the Minister for Health and Social Services look into, from within her budget and within the education budget, funding school milk? I will give her the article that might ... because it is 40 per cent ... cancers can be reduced by 40 per cent by taking school milk.

### **The Deputy of Trinity (The Minister for Health and Social Services):**

I shall look at the article and I will send it to public health for their comments. I wish it was as easy as that. That is what I would like to say. If that can cut it down by 40 per cent then I would support it but I know a lot of good work is being done in schools regarding healthy eating, and there are a lot of initiatives in the primary schools in healthy eating because that is important. Prevention starts at a very young age so that is where the work is being done. But I will certainly send this to our Acting M.O.H. (Medical Officer of Health) and she will comment and come back to you.

### **7.2 The Deputy of St. Martin:**

I am sorry to hear of the Medical Officer of Health's illness which is going to force her to retire and I am sure Members of the House would like to extend our best wishes to her. **[Approbation]** Her post has, of course, been covered by a Deputy for some time and is a very important job.

[14:45]

Is the Minister able to tell Members when the M.O.H. is likely to retire and how soon there will be an appointment to cover her job or to replace her?

### **The Deputy of Trinity:**

I thank the Deputy for his comments and it gives me an opportunity to publicly thank the States of Jersey M.O.H. for the work that she has done, and also to say how sorry I am that she has had to retire on health grounds. She has done work with raising the public awareness and the importance of screening in schools and other issues, but also importantly regarding 15 months ago with the swine flu pandemic. If it was not for her and her team, very proactive in how they vaccinated all our children back then, we could have been in a totally different situation to what we were and I would publicly like to thank her for that. The M.O.H. will be going in a couple of months' time, as you said quite rightly, we have an Acting M.O.H. because the M.O.H. has statutory duties which he or she have to perform. There will be a normal advertising process but also to pick up on a question Senator Perchard asked me a couple of months ago about having one M.O.H. with Guernsey. This gives us the chance to have discussions with Guernsey and just to take it from there. We will see how those discussions progress.

### **7.3 The Connétable of St. Mary:**

I have received calls from persons who are concerned following media publicity, about the possibility of having to pay for such things as carpal tunnel surgery and tonsillectomies. Can the Minister reassure the public that these medically warranted procedures will not be considered in the same light as, say, calf implants or buttock lifts?

### **The Deputy of Trinity:**

If only it was that simple. Yes, I think it was the result of a question that I think Deputy Southern asked and it was about cutting clinical operations. I would like to reconfirm, all operations are done on clinical need and the article in the *J.E.P.* was slightly misleading because

what was quoted on the back of that answer was low clinical value operations that are done in U.K. and N.H.S. (National Health Service) guidelines. I would like to just give an example, all operations are done on ...

**The Bailiff:**

If you could be concise, Minister, because your last answer, understandably, was very long.

**The Deputy of Trinity:**

... clinical need and they will continue to be done on clinical need.

**7.4 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

Given the most recent high level management appointment, one of a very long series made in Health, could the Minister inform us whether her department will now be using the States Procurement Department or whether they are now going ahead with their appointment of a senior manager and handling their arrangements independently?

**The Deputy of Trinity:**

Sorry, which appointment was the Deputy talking about?

**Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

As I understand, it was the appointment of a procurement and commissioning manager.

**The Deputy of Trinity:**

Procurement is run from the Treasury and Resources, it is a big area because against our C.S.R. savings we have to find, I think, £750,000. But it is important that it is well run because we purchase thousands and thousands of pieces of equipment every single day, and it is making sure that we get the right and the correct negotiating skills to achieve the best price and the best value.

**7.5 Deputy A.T. Dupré of St. Clement:**

I wonder if the Minister can give us an update on how the work on Brig-Y-Don is going, please?

**The Deputy of Trinity:**

Yes, that is a nice thing to say. Brig-Y-Don is, as you know... we had some money under an Article 11(8) request arising from the recommendations in the Williamson Review that we should be looking at a smaller children's home. Work started at the beginning of January. The trustees of Brig-Y-Don put us under a very tight timescale, to finish by the beginning of June as they have asked the Governor, as one of the last things that he will do, to open it. I think that we are on schedule hopefully to open the 6-bedded children's home with 2 independent living flats alongside of it.

**7.6 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:**

Private treatment for cancer in France can be achieved at a greatly reduced cost in a country which is recognised as being one of the best in tackling that issue. What work, if any, is occurring at the moment in trying to ascertain whether or not future needs in these areas can be filled by our neighbours in St. Malo?

**The Deputy of Trinity:**

All these issues are being put - and especially that one - in a strategic road map because, as we all know, Health faces many problems, the Island faces many problems looking ahead with ageing population, chronic diseases, health estates and cost of drug treatments. So we have to look at how we can ... what operations that we do need to do here, could they be more effective done elsewhere and France is part of that mix.

**7.7 Senator J.L. Perchard:**

Again about the Medical Officer of Health, I would endorse the Minister's comments. But does the Minister view the departure of the Medical Officer of Health as an opportunity to reprioritise her department's expenditure, in particular by targeting greater resource at frontline services rather than at the Department of Health?

**The Deputy of Trinity:**

With the departure of the M.O.H. it does give us an opportunity to look at whether we have a joint Channel Islands one, but also we are looking at the department as a whole. But public health is important. We should not underestimate that. It is keeping the Island healthy, starting from immunising children upwards. So there will always be a need for a department.

**7.7.1 Senator J.L. Perchard:**

The Minister has more or less told me, not quite directly so I will ask her again, that she is not prepared to look at reprioritising her department's expenditure to provide more resource to frontline services, at perhaps the expense of the Public Health Department.

**The Deputy of Trinity:**

I did not quite say that. Everything is still in the mix but there still will need to be a Department of Health. As I said, screening, immunisation for children, and we saw 15 months ago with the pandemic flu, that was led from the Department of Health. If we take our eye off the ball we will store up problems for 5, 10, 15 years' time and we need to think of that too.

**7.8 Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:**

Does the Minister have a strategy to purchase any more nursing home beds in the private sector to cope with the ageing population or does she consider that the current provision is adequate?

**The Deputy of Trinity:**

This is where we are with the ageing population and there will be a need for more beds, especially nursing home beds. At the moment Health and Social Services with the 2 nursing homes have 64 beds between The Limes and Sandybrook and in addition we contract 44 contract beds and a further 42 spot purchase beds. We have funding for those, but it is a worry as we go forward because of the ageing population and the cost of nursing homes, and we are working with Social Security with the funding and that is where the long term care package will be very important going forward.

**7.9 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Could I ask the Minister for an update on the alcohol strategy and when we can expect to see it come to fruition?

**The Deputy of Trinity:**

I hope that will be within the next couple of months. I have not had an update personally for the last couple of weeks, but I shall put it on the Ministerial agenda for next week and tell the Deputy where we are.

**7.10 Deputy A.E. Jeune:**

Would the Minister confirm or deny whether the interim hospital manager who came for 6 months, which I think was going to expire last November, has been given a 2-year extension and, if that is the case, is it on the same terms and conditions?

**The Deputy of Trinity:**

Yes, the hospital director has got an extension. We worked with him to provide that because he was absolutely a great asset and doing a great deal of work within the hospital. Regarding his terms and conditions, I think that is private and confidential between him and his employer.

**7.10.1 Deputy A.E. Jeune:**

I am sorry, I believe that it was public information that it was costing the States of Jersey or the Health Department £1,000 a day. I am just wondering whether this 2-year extension, as I heard it was, is in fact on those same terms.

**The Deputy of Trinity:**

Sorry, I thought you wanted more detail of terms and conditions. Yes, it was in a written question that came from the Chief Minister today.

**7.10.2 Deputy A.E. Jeune:**

Sorry, the Minister is confirming that that £1,000 continues a day?

**The Deputy of Trinity:**

No, in the written question it is £26,000 a month. On top of that you have to think of what he saved within the hospital. He has at least saved £600,000 so far in the months that he has been with us and I think that is very good value.

**Deputy J.A. Hilton:**

My question has been asked. It was about the Medical Officer of Health sharing with Guernsey.

**7.11 Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

The department has now been given availability of the Health Insurance Fund monies but we have not seen anything on the progress or plans for the primary healthcare plans. When will these be brought to the House?

**The Deputy of Trinity:**

If I remember rightly, the Health Insurance Fund, the funding for primary care plans was going to be funded from Social Security within the overall budget that came to the States. Work is going on with Social Security and the Law Officers' Department and the primary care body as well as the Acting Medical Officer for Health.

**7.11.1 Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

Supplementary? But surely at this point there are some plans as to what the primary healthcare plan is going to be?

**The Deputy of Trinity:**

I am sure there are some plans because the officers have been working hard and they know very well that they are within a very tight timescale. As to the nitty-gritty of the plan, I have not got that information.