

3.7 Deputy M. Tadier of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding plans to close down, reduce or replace the service provided by St. Brelade's Youth Club:

Will the Minister advise if there are any plans to close down, reduce or replace the service provided by St. Brelade's Youth Club which operates out of Communicare?

Deputy P.J.D. Ryan of St. John (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

There are no plans to close the youth project at Communicare. There is a proposal to restructure the service in St. Brelade so that staff can also do more Outreach work at different locations. This more flexible approach would be good news for the Parish, enabling youth workers to target more young people, some of whom have been reluctant to use the existing traditional service based in one building. Youth officers have had a number of positive meetings with the Parish and the St. Brelade Youth Project Committee to explore the options. The details are not yet finalised and discussions are still ongoing. I might add that my Assistant, Deputy Rod Bryans, will be leading discussions with all stakeholders and all partners in the provision of youth service and no final decision has been made on anything as yet.

3.7.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

I am reassured to know that no final decisions have been made. I put it to the Minister that this is being motivated not by what is best for the community or for the young people and the families themselves, it is being motivated by finance and by the C.S.R. (Comprehensive Spending Review) cuts which I think, and many of my constituents think, will be a false economy as well as coming at a big social cost. The Minister talks about restructuring towards Outreach work. Will he agree that the 2 are not mutually exclusive? My fear, and this is what I would like him to confirm, is that when he talks about moving to Outreach work, that will necessarily mean a corresponding reduction in the fixed community work that they do in Communicare where you can play football and all sorts of things, which need a fixed and a sizeable building.

Deputy P.J.D. Ryan:

Yes, I would agree with the Deputy that the 2 are not mutually exclusive and that the 2 can go on concurrently but we have to work within budgets and that is a reality that we all face. Nevertheless, I would repeat that this more flexible approach, I have already said it in my answer, would be good news for the Parish and it will enable youth workers to target more young people and I have referred to these young people in the past as the "unclubbables" and particularly in St. Brelade as well as in other areas of the Island, and I have said it before, there needs to be more work in this area. We have to work within our budgets. We all know that that is a consideration but it certainly is not the complete consideration or the final one and, I would repeat, no final decisions have been made. I will come to reach a final decision when my Assistant Minister has concluded his discussions with all stakeholders and all partners in this area.

3.7.2 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Does the Minister or his Assistant Minister realise that these are both 2 very different skills, 2 very different approaches to working with young people? Following on from what Deputy Tadier has asked, does he not accept - because I can tell him it will happen - that if he channels money away from one area into another, all he will do is lose on the one hand but gain ... it will be like robbing

Peter to pay Paul. It is not going to be a win/win situation. Does the Minister take that on board because that is what will happen?

Deputy P.J.D. Ryan:

Yes, I do not pretend to have the kind of experience in the Youth Service that Deputy Pitman has and I accept that he knows more about this particular subject, and there are other Deputies as well who have first-hand experience of the Youth Service. I would be very interested to hear their views and I do take it on board and I will be very careful in my final decision, but I would like him to accept that whatever final decision I do make will be very carefully considered and it will have as its prime objective the wellbeing of the youth of this Island.

3.7.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

If I may take the subject on to a wider range of issues. What progress has the new Minister made in delivering his C.S.R. targets, which his predecessor failed to deliver, and when will he bring any measures to the House?

The Deputy Bailiff:

That does not arise out of the question.

3.7.4 Deputy J.A. Martin:

I do appreciate where the Minister is coming from. I would just like to ask and I know it is increasingly harder, especially in St. Helier and I think St. Brelade being quite an urban Parish nowadays in certain parts, but does the Minister for Education or even all the Parish Deputies actively go out to recruit volunteers for these services because good volunteers can do the base at Communicare whereas the volunteers for Outreach will probably need to be more experienced. I just would like to ask is he actively going out there to get more volunteers in the Youth Service?

Deputy P.J.D. Ryan:

I would like to thank the Deputy for that question and it is an area that I have not considered and I will consider it, and I thank her again for mentioning it. It is not something that I have discussed with my officers as yet. As many people can probably understand, I am currently in the process of looking at so many parts of what is quite a wide portfolio of responsibilities. Yes, I will take that on board and discuss it with my officers and my Assistant Minister.

3.7.5 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Is the Minister aware that part of the Outreach work done in St. Brelade is by a member of the public who is fully trained, supported and funded by the Methodist Circuit and is he aware that there is also a flourishing Youth Club in St. Aubin again organised by this lady who is part of the Methodist community in St. Brelade? Has anybody from his department been down to look at the work being done at Communicare by the Outreach and down in St. Aubin?

Deputy P.J.D. Ryan:

Again, I would thank the Senator for bringing this to my notice. I have not looked in detail at the Youth Service myself. I have delegated that to my Assistant Minister, Deputy Rod Bryans, but he is listening to the Senator's question and I have no doubt that he will want to look at what goes on,

both at Communicare and in St. Aubin, and I would like to officially thank that particular volunteer for the work she does.

3.7.6 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

First of all, I thank the Minister for his answers. I would ask him to take on board the strong feeling, which I think has come out in this Assembly, and there will be much more and equally strong feelings in St. Brelade because we know as a community the value that both the fixed and the outreach work provides. What I would like to ask the Minister is for an invitation to the next meeting because, as far as I know, certainly none of the Deputies - I am not sure about the Constable - has been invited into talks and we cannot rely simply on our youth workers because as well as being youth workers, they are also employees and they also feel under pressure from both sides. So will the Minister give an invitation to the representatives in the Parish to come along when the next meetings are held so that we can give our input and make sure that we steer this in a direction which is beneficial for the Parish and the Island?

Deputy P.J.D. Ryan:

Yes, I certainly would through my Assistant Minister. I am sure he will invite all politicians and other stakeholders as well and Parish officials into discussions with regard to the future of the Youth Service in St. Brelade. May I just say that any time that change is proposed, one of the most difficult things for anybody to do is to manage a change for the better but I would ask the Deputy to accept that whatever changes are being looked at are being done with the best possible motives. Although C.S.R. is an issue, they are not being done purely from a C.S.R. perspective. They are also looking at what is best for the future of the Youth Service. To repeat, he will be invited to discussions.