

2015.12.14

4.6 Deputy J.A. Hilton of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the reasons behind the recent announcement to close The Limes:

Can the Minister confirm the reasons behind the recent announcement to close the Limes?

Senator A.K.F. Green (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

This is a slightly wider question than the one previous. The Limes currently provides 25 beds for older people with complex physical care needs. It was originally built in 1993 as a residential home, but over the recent years the complexity of need has increased with all service users now receiving full nursing care. I have to stress again that the nursing care is first class, but it is the physical environment that has continued to deteriorate with different demands in providing nursing care as to providing residential care. For example, the corridors are too narrow for wheelchairs to pass, for manoeuvring beds and hoists, and for emergency evacuation. The need for a new sprinkler system and wider and improved fire doors has also been identified. This is of greater significance now that all residents are dependent on others to support them in evacuation. When the Limes functioned as a residential home, people were less dependent and the population were able to move about and, therefore, the risks significantly reduced. If central infection and prevention control audit standards cannot be achieved because of fundamental environmental failings, including poor floor coverings, frequently blocked drains, the need to provide new sluice facilities, and furthermore the narrow corridors and domestic-size bedroom doors result in regular damage to walls and doorframes. It is not just a matter of aesthetics. It is a matter of this increases the likelihood of increasing the acquired hospital infections. As I said before, the Regulation of Care Law 2014 quite rightly will be applied to all our facilities in 2016 and 2017.

4.6.1 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Notwithstanding that the home currently is nursing complex physical needs, the fact of the matter is that those residents are being nursed with complex needs in the building at the moment, although I do accept what the Minister has said: that he does not believe it reaches the required standard that it should. Has the department considered whether the premises could be used as a step up/step down facility?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

We are at the stage where we know it is not suitable for a care home. It is now for departments - because in accordance with the quite right procedures it will now go back to Property Holdings to see if it has a useful use within States departments - and that can include my own. If we have a useful use for it, an alternative other than a nursing home, we can make a bid. Mental health might be one of those things. If there is no use for it then it may be suitable, and this is pure conjecture on my part, for sheltered housing. It may be better to dispose of the site.

4.6.2 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

It does seem disappointing that the building underwent substantial renovation in 1993, so it is basically only 22 years old and is already being disposed of. Could the Minister inform Members what is happening with the £1.7 million budget that was allocated to the Limes in 2012?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

It will not be used to make the renovations at the Limes. The £1.7 million that was bid for is held by Property Holdings. They may- and I do not know the answer to this - choose to use it if we alter the building for some alternative use, otherwise, presumably, it will go back into reserve.

4.6.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Can the Minister confirm to Members that part of the reason for the closure of the Limes was because of challenges in the recruitment of staff given in his answer to my question on 22nd September over the reduction of 5 beds in the Limes? He said: "This followed the increased choice available to individuals following the introduction of the long-term care scheme and because of challenges in the recruitment of staff." What staff were challenging, or recruitment of which staff was challenging in this particular case?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I can say it is absolutely not the case that the Limes is closing to aid recruitment. The Limes is closing because it does not meet the standards required ... well, I would not want my parents to be there and I do not think anyone else should expect their parents to be there. Having said that, the care again, the care provided by the nurses is good. The environment is wrong. It is absolutely nothing to do with recruitment and we seem to have lost sight that if we are going to renovate a building, if we were able to renovate the building, and if we were to renovate the building to that standard, everybody would have to move out anyway. So, homes would have to be found for every member who occupies that now and then in 18 months, 2 years, come back. Not good.

4.6.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

If it truly has nothing to do with the recruitment of staff why, then, was a reduction of beds in part blamed upon the challenges of recruitment of staff at the Limes?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

The Deputy is twisting words. The closure of the Limes is absolutely nothing to do with recruitment of staff. Now there were and are challenges around maternity leave and recruitment within the General Hospital, but it is absolutely untrue that the closure of the Limes was to do with recruitment of staff.

[15:15]

The closure of the Limes is about providing the right facilities for our elderly folk who deserve to have the right facilities.

4.6.5 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Obviously, a large amount of the general public were very concerned when they heard about the Limes closure, and I think the general public are seeking reassurances from the Minister that this, indeed, has nothing to do with the police station opposite. Can the Minister just confirm to me that he has not been privy to any conversations about the future use of the vacant Limes site?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I can confirm that to the Deputy and to the Members that it is nothing to do whatsoever with the quite ridiculous suggestion that the police station would already be extending to the Limes. Nothing could be further from the truth. This is about the quality of care that we provide for our ageing folk.