

2016.06.14

3.6 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding proposals to cut departmental revenue expenditure: [9494]

Will the Minister inform Members whether he has under consideration proposals to cut his departmental revenue expenditure by up to £55 million with the loss of up to 150 posts over the period 2016 to 2019?

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

As agreed in the Strategic Plan, we are investing in our priority areas of health, education, infrastructure and economic growth while at the same time aiming for balanced books in 2019. This, of course, means that we need to restructure our organisation and reprioritise our spending. As highlighted in last year's M.T.F.P. (Medium Term Financial Plan) debate this means reducing staffing in some areas of the States. We are achieving this through vacancy management, voluntary redundancy and, if necessary, some compulsory redundancies. However, there will be more staff in priority areas such as health and education and the figures provided to the media last week are not accurate. We will be publishing our figures in the M.T.F.P. edition on 30th June.

3.6.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Supplementary if I may. Within the overall sum that I mentioned, accurate or not, will the Minister explain what is meant by: "Review older adults' residential nursing home in-patient services and to stop this service." What does that mean, stopping that service? What will replace it?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

That means exactly what it says. We will review the services that we are providing at Sandybrook. It means exactly that. There are no plans at the moment to stop a service but to review how it might be delivered.

3.6.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Why then opposite this particular measure does it say "stop the service"? Clearly "stop the service".

Senator A.K.F. Green:

That might be the inevitable outcome but that review has yet to take place.

3.6.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

Will the Minister confirm whether there are any plans to close or cease services at Sandybrook?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I have just said there are plans to review Sandybrook; that is where we are.

3.6.4 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Will the Minister clarify his statement before, last but one, where he said: "We have not reviewed this yet"? If the M.T.F.P. is going to be given to the States on the 30th is the Minister saying that he has not done all the reviews that he has had to do, he has not decided which parts of the service he does not require any more or he is going to downgrade; that he has not come up with any figures for losing staff in one area and not another?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

First of all, I have got to correct the Deputy on one thing. There is no intention of downgrading services but we are going to review where it is appropriate for us to provide services, where it is

appropriate for us to buy-in other services. It is under review. We have a plan. We have already seen 20 extra social workers employed in Social Services

3.6.5 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

In terms of achieving the cuts that the Minister is intending to achieve what areas is he looking at to introduce user pays charges and can he give any information at all about what form these charges will take? Whether they will be upfront charges afterwards and what will happen to the people who simply are not able to pay them?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

Dealing with the latter bit first: if we bring forward any plans for user pays those who are needing protection would be fully protected but at the moment there are no plans to bring forward significant user pays charges.

3.6.6 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Supplementary. In that answer he has chosen his words carefully to indicate that user pays charges are indeed a possibility. Does he accept that this is an end to the rights of people to have health care free at the point of use and does he not consider that move to be very regrettable indeed?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

The health service in Jersey is based on a co-payment system. I am merely reviewing whether that is appropriate in the secondary care system as well as the primary care. In fact we already have this in the secondary care system where people make a contribution towards X-rays.

3.6.7 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will the Minister inform Members whether he has under consideration the introduction of new or the raising of hospital charges to the tune of £1.2 million?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

At the moment it is all under review but that figure does not ring a bell with me.

3.6.8 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The question is, what measures are under consideration. It is very carefully phrased. Not what has been decided, but what is under consideration. Does the figure of £1.2 million in hospital charges ring a bell?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I said that it did not and this is policy under development and it will be published in the M.T.F.P.