

2016.02.02

5.6 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of the Minister for Health and Social Security regarding the removal of People's Park from the list of potential sites in advance of the debate on P.3/2016:

Will the Minister agree to remove People's Park from the list of potential sites in advance of the debate on P.3/2016?

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

No, Ministers will not remove the People's Park from the list of shortlisted sites in advance of P.3. Ministers share my view that the importance of this decision means that the site should not be removed from consideration before States Members and the people of Jersey are clear as to the merits or demerits of the different locations.

5.6.1 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Speaking of merits and demerits, does he not consider it to be an absolutely fatal demerit, the fact that the public are so against this, and does he not consider it to be the more prudent thing to do, which is frankly to stop wasting all of our time right now on an option which is the least viable one?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

That is a view that the Deputy may have. This is a matter now for the States and for the public. I intend to go to extensive public engagement and consultation. I am keen that we get on and provide the hospital Jersey wants but I want to hear the views of the public based on the merits and demerits of every site that we have shortlisted. That is foresight.

5.6.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Will the Minister confirm whether he has the unanimous support of all of his Council of Minister colleagues that People's Park should remain on the list of options?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I believe that to be the case.

5.6.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is it not the case that there is a split among Ministers over the merit and demerit of this particular site and that he will press to lift collective responsibility from this Ministerial Decision?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

As with all these things, this is an important issue and, just as the States Members will have different views, the public will have different views and there has certainly been robust discussion at the Council of Ministers. But it is quite clear that I have the support of Ministers in leaving this site on the shortlist.

5.6.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will the Minister press the Chief Minister to lift collective responsibility on this issue of conscience?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

That is a matter for the Chief Minister.

5.6.5 Deputy A.D. Lewis of St. Helier:

Did the Minister say how much credence was given to public opinion when he drew up his criteria for selecting the sites?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

Members will have seen, and I am being a bit cautious because I want to take Members through the journey that I have been through properly, and I have to be concise today. As Members will see at the presentation, we have weighted all the different considerations including the possibility that some sites might be more popular than others.

5.6.6 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Can the Minister confirm that he will be informing States Members at the lunchtime briefing of the Council of Ministers' choice as regard to the site for the new hospital?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

The Council of Ministers do not have a choice at this present time. They have now listed 4 sites that they wish to consult, first of all to give out information on, so that people can make informed choice about the sort of hospital they would like to have and then consult on which one of those locations best fits public opinion.

5.6.7 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Is the Minister confirming that the Council of Ministers will not be putting forward their preferred site today and that they are just putting forward the 4 sites? I think that is what the Minister just said.

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I think I clearly said we are about to enter a period of engagement to give out information and then formal consultation on 4 sites.

5.6.8 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Would the Minister undertake to make his P.R. (public relations) strategy, his communication strategy, a little more helpful to Members and indeed to the public in the future? Is it acceptable that Members have had little more than 24 hours' notice of a very important briefing? Many of us will have other commitments at lunchtime. Will he undertake to reply to my email of 13th January, which I still have not had a reply to?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

Was that the email asking me not to mention certain things the Constable had asked me not to mention? I cannot remember.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

If I could just clarify. I emailed the Minister for Health and the Chief Minister on 13 January to ask when they would be giving us the result we asked for last year.

Senator A.K.F. Green:

The final bit of information that we required came through on Wednesday last week. We met as a Council on Friday to discuss the way ahead. We need a hospital. We have taken far, far too long. It is no fault of Members but we have taken far too long to get to this stage. Jersey desperately - as I will share with Members later on today - need to get on with this. As for my P.R. strategy, I will not go to the public or to Members until I have all the information. I got that information on Wednesday last week.

5.6.9 Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré of St. Lawrence:

Picking up a remark the Minister just made. Can the Minister really just confirm that no one site has been selected and this is just basically a consultation exercise?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

That is correct. That is the third time now that I have said that. The media speculation as to which site the Council of Ministers might or might not prefer is just that: speculation.

5.6.10 Deputy M. Tadier:

I thought that we established last time that the Minister had said that the People's Park site was his preferred option, at least if not the Council of Ministers; has he now done a U-turn on that decision?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I think when we look at Hansard it will say that I said it was a strong contender.

5.6.11 Deputy M. Tadier:

And are the other options not as strong a contender then for the hospital site?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

That depends what you want in your hospital. There are options, and that is what I want to consult the Assembly and the public about.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I have a couple of Members who wish to ask questions. Can I remind Members that the Minister will be making a statement and there will be 15 minutes of questions following that statement later this morning? So I propose now to move to a final supplementary from Deputy Mézec.

5.6.12 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I have to say that I think the public will be dismayed to hear that the Minister is intent on wasting even more of their money on a consultation that we know what the result will be. I have to say when the Minister answered the question saying he had the unanimous support of the other Ministers I think I saw some nervous faces when he said that. Could I ask him: in the interests of transparency, would he be prepared to push for the publication of the minutes from the Council of Ministers' meeting to confirm that this is and was the case?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

The minutes are normally released anyway. I do not see a problem with minutes being released in due course. Sorry, I have just been reminded our meeting on Friday was not a formal meeting and therefore there is not a minute.