

2016.01.19

5.11 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the use of People's Park as the site for the new hospital:

Could the Minister advise when it became apparent that People's Park was the leading contender for the site for the new hospital and state whether the views and desires of the population of St. Helier were considered in this process?

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

As stated in previous answers, the People's Park was proposed as a potential site for the future hospital at a ministerial meeting on 22nd July last year. It has subsequently been subjected to the same assessment process as the other 38 sites that have been considered. At the start of October, the Ministerial Oversight Group for Health Transformation received a presentation that suggested that the site was a strong contender. Following the Council of Ministers on 14th October 2015, further work was required to establish the amenity value of the People's Park, among other matters. That work is still ongoing and in progress and no final decision has been taken by the Ministers. Now, dealing with the second part of the question, in relation to the views of the population of St. Helier, the Deputy may be aware that extensive public engagement was undertaken previously relating to both the wider transformation programme of health services and the redesign of our Health and Social Services, what we have referred to as P.82 and the relating feasibility study for the future hospital within the budget for 2014. We are planning a new hospital for the residents of Jersey. There will be an extensive campaign of engagement relating to the future hospital site selection and ample opportunity for all those who wish to make their views known, whether they live in St. Helier or any other Parish.

5.11.1 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

A supplementary. I thank the Minister for his answer. Does he accept what I think virtually every person on the Island realises now, which is that of all the rumoured sites so far for the hospital that People's Park is the most unpopular? Would he not accept that public opinion does count for something and would he therefore accept the proposition that has been lodged by the Constable of St. Helier and do us all a favour and stop wasting public money on an option which is not acceptable to the public?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I accept that people will have an opinion on any site that we select. I accept that for some people throughout the Island, not just St. Helier, this may be an unpopular choice, but once we have made our decision - which we have not done yet, we are still waiting for that information, as indicated - I ask them to listen to the arguments, look at the facts. I, as Minister for Health, want to have the best hospital that I can get for Jersey within the budget that is going to be allocated. I am not going to accept a second-rate hospital somewhere else for the same amount of money. When we have done our work we will go out to consultation, we will go out and engage with the public, we will go out and let everybody have their views, but I ask them to wait and at least hear all the issues that need to be considered. This is no

small development. If you are going to get clinical adjacencies that are needed for patient safety, we are talking about something in the region of 20,000 square metres, I think it was.

5.11.2 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

In recent times, this Assembly has granted £3 million towards the purchase of Plémont Holiday Village on the north-west corner of the Island to pull it down and restore it to nature. Does the Minister not find it ludicrous that the Council of Ministers is now considering concreting over People's Park, one of the few sizeable green lungs we have in St. Helier?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I do not find it ludicrous that one considers all the options when trying to deliver the best hospital that Jersey can get for its money. I think it is right to challenge the boundaries, I think it is right to think outside the box and it is not unusual, even in cities, for them to build on parks and then replace with suitable amenities with something similar alongside, Addenbrooke's being one.

5.11.3 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Will the Minister admit that the only viable alternative is to purchase the 2 hotels in Kensington Place and rebuild the hospital on its existing site? That is no finder's fee required.

Senator A.K.F. Green:

Yes, if you want to spend £600 million instead of £400 million.

5.11.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

The issue here is it is not just one option that is being considered. It is being put forward as the preferred option of the Minister for Health and presumably the Council of Ministers, as we now have collective responsibility. Does the Minister accept that there is always a risk of people thinking that this has been a *fait accompli*, so whenever any consultation - or opinion management, as some people call it - is ultimately unravelled and unveiled that we need to have all of the options in front of us? Will the Minister immediately, or in very short order, give us and the public a list of all of the options and all of the possible sites that are or have been considered so that we can all make our minds up and not simply be drip-fed the opinions of a small clique that happen to be running the Island?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I will commit to doing this, but not immediately. I will commit to doing it when we have come out with our preferred site and we will share with the public how we have got to that preferred site, the reasons for it and why that site that we prefer works best. I want the best hospital that I can afford to get for the people of Jersey.

5.11.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

Could the Minister suggest how it fits with the strategic priority to keep St. Helier special and to make it a better place to go? Obviously it will be good if you need to get to the hospital, which is right near People's Park, but presumably that is not the spirit of the intention of the strategic priority that was only voted on last year.

Senator A.K.F. Green:

That depends, and this is the information I am waiting for, what the compensation package might look like. We might end up with something better and a new hospital.

5.11.6 Deputy A.D. Lewis:

The Minister has alluded to giving more information to us all, not least the public, about how he arrived at a decision, but would it not have been better to have given that at the same time? Because he, I know, has the best intentions in mind, he wants to provide us with the best possible hospital he can, but if he could just explain fairly quickly as to how he has got to these conclusions and what process was gone through I think some of the misinformation may well evaporate.

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I am again not responsible for the leaking of information, so that is interesting that we have looked at 39 sites, we have shortlisted 5, studied them at great length, but only one seems to be appearing in the media. When I have all the information, when I have all the answers, when my ministerial colleagues have looked at it with me, then we will release all that information.

5.11.7 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

May I humbly suggest that Members look at our Scrutiny Report, Scrutiny Report 10, which was published in 2014, in section 10, which gives an enormous amount of information about what ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

Deputy, if you could ask the question, please.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

I have got a question, Sir. The Minister told Members at a meeting on 22nd July that the People's Park was put forward as a proposed site. Can the Minister tell Members who put that proposal forward?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I cannot remember that, but I do remember it came up in a conversation when we were looking at maybe the Parade Park might be a suitable alternative.

5.11.8 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Would the Minister agree that the process followed by the Minister for Education in agreeing a site for the new Les Quennevais School is a model of openness, value for money and public involvement and would he explain why the same procedure has not been followed in the case of the new hospital?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

Yes, I would agree. Oh, if it were so simple, because it did not matter - well, there may have been a preference - on which site the school was built, they were going to deliver the same quality school. Every site that we have looked at for the hospital has advantages and disadvantages, significant advantages and disadvantages. Some have great difficulty for people to access; some do not allow us to get the clinical adjacencies, that 20,000 square

metre ground floor space that I need. I think if you are spending circa £400 million, you need to get the best value and the best hospital you possibly you can for the people of Jersey.

5.11.9 The Connétable of St. Helier:

A supplementary. My question really was why did the Minister not involve groups concerned about this? Why did he not involve the public in the way that the Minister for Education did with Les Quennevais?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

That was not the question, but now that is the question. We are not ready. We do not have that information to share. You cannot go out there and say: "Do you want site A, B, C and D?" You need to go out there and say: "Look, we looked at site A, B, C and D and these are the reasons why they do not tick all the boxes that they might have ticked."

[12:15]

I am still getting on a daily basis people coming up with new sites, many of which we have looked at, some which are quite outlandish and some that are outrageous, but everyone has an opinion. When I went up to see the 6th form - forgive me, that is what I call it, it has got a different title these days - up at Victoria College and they asked me where the hospital was going to go, typically I turned it back and said: "Where would you like it to go?" There were 12 people in that room and 4 different opinions on the sites that we have been looking at.

5.11.10 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

In these times of austerity, we know that the Council of Ministers has spent over £2 million so far to come up with what politically is going to be the least viable option. Would the Minister not agree that it would be the more fiscally prudent thing to rule out People's Park now, given what we all know, which is that if they come forward with this as a firm proposal that there will be big protests against it, the Parish Assembly will not approve it, and if they try taking it through a compulsory purchase, it will end up being challenged in court and there will be even more money wasted on it? Would he not agree that the fiscally prudent approach, and also the one which will cause the least political disillusionment, which we have already got enough of this in this Island, would be to just rule it out and we will go for another option and stop patronising us by pretending that People's Park is the only site on the Island where there can possibly be a viable hospital option? That is clearly nonsense, is it not?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I do not regard investigating site options thoroughly and properly for the biggest project the States has ever undertaken or ever are likely to undertake to be a waste of money. In fact, if you were to benchmark the work that we have done so far against similar developments in the U.K. we are well below the sort of money that they would be spending. Whichever site we pick there will be some people against it, perhaps more for one site or another. I ask that people allow us to do our work, present our facts and explain the journey that we have been on, because the people of Jersey deserve to have the best hospital that they can possibly have and not some compromise that might need to be reinvested in in a few years' time.