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5.8 Deputy R.J. Renouf of St. Ouen of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding when it was decided to close The Limes Nursing Home:

Why is it that the Ministerial Decision relating to the closure of the Limes Nursing Home, announced on 8th December 2015, has not been placed on the gov.je website as at 14th January 2016, 25 working days later?

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

I am pleased to say that it is now there and the delay was entirely down to timing. My priority was the information around the closure of The Limes was shared first with the people most affected, the ones that really mattered, that is the residents, their families and the staff. Instead the provision of care has been widely praised since the decision was made. In an ideal world the closure announcement would have been made after Christmas but comments started to appear on social media, and I felt it was important, as I said, that those affected were advised immediately. I would add that the M.D. (ministerial decision) in an accompanying report provides no new information for the reasons for closure and so those conspiracy theorists looking for mention of a car park for the police station remain disappointed.

5.8.1 The Deputy of St. Ouen:

The Ministerial Decision and the report accompanying it refers to structural problems with the building, environmental failings and fire control risks. Before deciding the building was unfit for purpose did the Minister for Health and Social Services see appropriate professional reports dealing with these issues as none are referred to in his decision?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

Yes, I did see appropriate reports. One has to remember that this was designed as a residential home, a home for those who are mobile, a home for the walking wounded, if you like, not for a nursing home, and every single patient is in a wheelchair. That makes life very difficult for the staff although, as I say, the quality of care was excellent. That makes evacuation in the event of a fire difficult and we had already decided that at the very least, based on professional advice and reports, we would have to close the building, move everybody out and then renovate it. Even then we did not have an ideal environment but you had a better one. It was the best decision given that there was capacity in the open market, the best decision for the patients and their well-being was to close.

5.8.2 Deputy J.A. Martin:

Can the Minister for Health and Social Services confirm that The Limes - he keeps referring to it - was a residential home? It has always for many years been dual registered and it has been a high dependency nursing home. Will he also confirm that the Willows Court and Willows Day Care Centre have nothing to do with this closure because myself and the other 2 Deputies of this area have some very terrified residents in Willows Court? Will he talk to the Minister for Treasury and Resources and get him to write to him and tell him where they stand?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

Dealing with the latter 2 parts of the question first: I made it quite clear when I issued my media statement that Willows Court and the Willows Day Centre had nothing whatsoever to do with this but I am not responsible for the scaremongering that goes on. The Limes was designed, as I said, as a residential home. It then moved to more of a mixed home, not ideal but just about workable. Now it is 100 per cent nursing home, it is just not suitable, and I use a very simple rule when looking at the care of patients; yes, based on professional reports; yes, based on plenty of advice that if it is not good enough for my family it is not good enough for anyone else's. I am sorry, it is not good enough.

5.8.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Minister for Health and Social Services keeps repeating that there is ample capacity in the private sector to cater for in this case what is a closure of a residential home or originally a residential home. Can he bring the data to the House that will satisfy us as to that capacity?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

Of course I can but you do not need to be Brain of Britain to know that there are 25 people requiring accommodation, 20 now because 5 have found alternative accommodation. There is a new capacity of 40 more units coming online almost as we speak, plus vacancies occur from time to time, but I am happy to provide any information requested by Members.

5.8.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Supplementary, if I may. I was a bit slow on my feet there. Is the Minister for Health and Social Services satisfied that there is no requirement for a residential home rather than a nursing home on this particular site?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

Yes, I am but of course with my colleague, the Minister for Infrastructure, we will be looking at alternative uses. That is not necessarily alternative health uses although we may look at it. I believe if it is not required by health it would make an excellent social housing site because you have Willow Court where people live independently. You have the Willows Day Centre alongside some really good sheltered housing would be even better but that is not a matter for me. That is a matter for the Minister for Infrastructure and the Council of Ministers.

5.8.5 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

A couple of weeks ago it was reported in the *Jersey Evening Post* that a number of elective surgeries had to be cancelled because of a lack of beds. Can the Minister for Health and Social Services tell Members whether he has considered using The Limes as a step-down or step-up facility in order to move those people from the hospital but who still require nursing care, thus freeing-up hospital beds?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

Yes, we did look at that. That would have cost in the region in initial build something like £1.82 million and it is not required. What is required is more support within the community, which is what P.82 is about and what they are spending money on as we speak.

5.8.6 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Can the Minister for Health and Social Services confirm that the reason some of the elective surgery was postponed was because they simply ran out of beds and not because they did not have the nursing staff to nurse all the beds available in the hospital?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

As the Deputy says, we simply ran out of beds. It happens from time to time at this time of year, and for Members that are wondering all the bays were open on Corbiere Ward and fully staffed with nurses.

5.8.7 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Can the Minister for Health and Social Services confirm that all other nursing homes under his Health Department's care meet the standards required to be a nursing home or will we see further closures at other buildings?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

The only nursing home that immediately springs to mind, apart from those providing mental health services which, apart from Orchard House, the others have been relatively recently upgraded. We will need to find a replacement for Orchard House but that is something that we have to do. The only other nursing home we have is at Sandybrook, the name escapes me at the minute but the nursing home at Sandybrook. I think it might be Sandybrook Nursing Home and that does comply with the current guidelines, regulations and best practice.

5.8.8 Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour:

Today I have a constituent who is being moved from The Limes nursing home, luckily another bed has been found for her. I believe the Minister for Health and Social Services alluded to 40 beds coming online very shortly. Can he inform the Assembly where these 40 beds are located please?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

Not that everyone would want to go there but there is a new facility at Cheval Roc where the Cheval Roc Hotel used to be, and I am not doing an advert for them, but they will be providing 40 nursing beds, as I say, online recently plus the normal turnover that one gets in the community.

5.8.9 The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Referring to the timing of this information, given the obvious concerns and confusion that has arisen as a result of the decision which was announced in early December, and that decision having only just been placed and made public, does the Minister for Health and Social Services consider there are lessons to be learned about being promptly accountable for the decision made?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I think there are lessons to learn. People need to be more responsible with their postings on social media.

5.8.10 The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Does the Minister for Health and Social Services consider there are lessons to be learned within his department?

[11:45]

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I think that it was, given the speed at which it had to be done, a model of how to do things. We briefed the media. We spoke to the staff. We spoke to the patients and we appointed somebody to liaise with every single patient and their families by the end of January. That has been exceeded. That was done much earlier. The only thing I would say is if people stop speculating and allowed us to do with dignity and at the right pace what needs to be done and then they can speculate as much as they like.