

2018.11.06

**5 Deputy S.M. Ahier of St. Helier of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the provision of premises for Brighter Futures: [OQ.177/2018]**

Will the Minister advise the Assembly whether he will support Brighter Futures by providing premises for the organisation from Jersey Property Holdings' portfolio of unused properties?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis (The Minister for Infrastructure):**

Jersey Property Holdings have been provided with a list of requirements for the property needs of Brighter Futures. There are no properties within the existing portfolio, unused or otherwise, that meet these requirements. Officers of Property Holdings are happy to work with Brighter Futures and officers of the relevant client department to identify any properties on the market that could meet their needs. Any proposals would need to be supported by a business case that identifies a source for one-off and ongoing funding requirements.

[10:15]

**The Bailiff:**

Just before we come to supplementaries, Senator Moore, may I just ask you, question 7, which you are putting to the Minister for Children and Housing, is this about Brighter Futures as well? It looks like it.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

It is, yes.

**The Bailiff:**

Can I tell Members that question 6 is strictly about property; they are property questions only, which is to go to the Minister for Infrastructure.

**4.5.1 Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

Of course Brighter Futures supports families with complex needs, including parents and carers. They require additional premises in the west of the Island to cope with increased demand. Will the Minister endeavour to find suitable premises for them?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Yes, Brighter Futures is a stand-alone charity. The States has no statutory responsibility for accommodating them but has provided accommodation at the Bridge. But of course it is a wonderful charity and we will endeavour to support them whenever possible by finding suitable premises if and when available.

**4.5.2 Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:**

We know Brighter Futures have started and are looking to extend their provision within Georgetown, but given the lack of community facilities available within that area, can I recommend to the Minister that he look at the Samarès site, not only for perhaps developing community provision there, but also perhaps a school?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Indeed, I am obliged to the Deputy. It is a school that Brighter Futures are occupying at the moment, the former St. Mark School. They do a wonderful job and, if suitable premises can be found, we would be more than happy to support them in that.

#### **4.5.3 Deputy R. Labey:**

Does the Minister know what percentage of properties in the portfolio are currently unused and also can the people of Jersey be forgiven for the perception that the brightest idea that Property Holdings have for most of its portfolio is to sell the properties?

#### **Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

We do not have suitable premises at the moment but we will endeavour to assist this charity in finding suitable premises. We have a varied portfolio of buildings but we will be disposing of some that would be too expensive to maintain and leave empty, so it is an ongoing process. But, as I say, if we can find somewhere suitable for Brighter Futures we would be more than happy to do so.

#### **4.5.4 Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

Brighter Futures is an excellent charity doing some excellent work. However, there are also a number of other excellent charities doing excellent work. One of the things that we have been trying to do over the years is to have one building, which will accommodate a number of charities, so that the administrative costs can be spread. Can Property Holdings not look at that sort of approach rather than each charity coming to them and saying: "I need a property"? Can we not look at a building where a number of charities can work together? For instance, if the western fire station is no longer used, that will be an excellent base for a number of charities in the west.

#### **Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

The Senator makes an excellent point that we could have a huge sort of station for various charities, but, as they say, it is location, location, location, and we do not have anything in suitable locations that would be suitable at the moment. I have an entire list of requirements from Brighter Futures and none of them meet the requirements of any building we have at the moment. But we will carry on looking and should such a building become available we would be happy to pursue it.

#### **4.5.5 Senator K.L. Moore:**

Has the Minister or his officers been in discussions with our social housing provider, Andium, to consider incorporating facilities in their new buildings that will be able to house services for different groups such as Brighter Futures, but also others, perhaps Age Concern who wish to offer services that will enhance the community and offer a greater intergenerational living?

#### **Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Yes, more than happy to take that on board. But, as I say, the size of premises required by Brighter Futures do not match that criteria at the moment. But if suitable premises came on board that could accommodate more than one charity, we would be happy to look at it.

#### **Senator K.L. Moore:**

Sorry, the question was a direct: "Has the Minister been in discussions?"

#### **The Bailiff:**

Have you had discussions with Andium, was the question?

#### **Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

I have not had discussions with Andium but I will check with officers to see if they have.

#### **4.5.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Since this is turning into a bidding war, I may as well get my tuppence worth in, and St. Helier - north of St. Helier - also is in dire need of a community centre. Will he consider talking with my Constable and Andium to seek to identify sites in the north of town?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Well the north of town comes around to Brighter Futures, which is in the former St. Mark's Primary School, which is north of town. Happy to talk to the Constable of St. Helier at any time if he has anything on his property portfolio, but I am afraid we do not at the moment and there is nothing in the private domain that would suit. As I say, I have a list of requirements from Brighter Futures, more than happy to discuss that with the Deputy, but nothing we have at the moment meets that criteria.

**4.5.7 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour:**

If a property is found for Brighter Futures or other charities, would the Minister agree to not charge rent on these properties so that the charities can use their funds for helping the community?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

That is a bit of an awkward situation. If we support one charity we have to support all charities under States funding. But at the moment Brighter Futures operates on licence and at the moment there is no charge for that licence as it is on a rolling programme. Charges are made for obviously periodic testing, lights, building maintenance, bookings, staff areas. There is also a large 25-space car park provided for the Bridge.

**4.5.8 Deputy S.M. Wickenden:**

I do not know if the Minister fully heard Deputy Labey's question, so I will ask part of it again. What percentage of properties that Property Holdings have are currently unused?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

I do have that list somewhere. I will be more than happy to provide that to the Deputy, but, as I say, there is nothing that would be suitable at the moment.

**4.5.9 Deputy K.F. Morel:**

The Minister has referred a few times to the list of requirements that Brighter Futures has given him and given Property Holdings. With any requirements for any organisations there is a prioritisation of those requirements. Can the Minister confirm that Property Holdings is in an ongoing dialogue with Brighter Futures because I am sure Brighter Futures, like any organisation, would not expect every single one of those requirements to be delivered and, as buildings come up, there would probably be flexibility within that list depending on the buildings that are available.

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

It is quite an extensive list but, like with anything in Jersey at the moment, we are 9 miles by 5 miles, so anything that comes up will in fact be a sort of compromise. But talks are indeed ongoing.

**4.5.10 Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

With reference to written question 14 that was tabled today, the answer was that there is a total of 22 buildings that have been unoccupied for over a year. Why are these buildings not being refurbished and being made available for Brighter Futures and other similar charities in the Island?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Simply because they are not suitable. All charities have their various requirements. A lot of buildings are not suitable. Some buildings are maintained, some are leased, some are sold on, it is a rolling programme, but we are more than happy to talk to any charity with their requirements if they come up with a suitable business case.