

3.19 Deputy C.S. Alves of the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture, regarding investment in Jersey's cultural sector: [OQ. 96/2018]

Further to the issues highlighted in the open letter, published by Jersey's States-funded cultural organisations on 13th May 2018, what action, if any, is the Minister taking to address the "chronic underinvestment" which they have said exists in Jersey's cultural sector?

Senator L.J. Farnham (The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture):

My department carried out a strategic review of culture, arts, and heritage, in conjunction with BOP consultants. The strategic review sets out the findings of an extensive programme of research and consultation on Jersey's culture, arts, and heritage. It makes 20 detailed recommendations, which set out how the extraordinary potential of culture and the whole sector can be realised. The report was finalised in February of this year and, among other things, did find that culture, arts, and heritage, in Jersey, the spend was lower with comparable jurisdictions. For example, the E.U. average is one per cent and in Jersey we are at approximately 0.7 per cent. The report also sets out an ambitious vision for the sector, as an integral part of the overall ambitions for the Island's future and, as I have said, includes 20 recommendations to make the vision a reality. The report has been submitted to the Corporate Strategy Board and implications arising from the recommendations are being actively considered by senior officials, in consultation with the stakeholders. It is the intention of the department to publish the report, once it has been shared with and discussed by all of the stakeholders in the culture, arts and heritage, sector.

3.19.1 Deputy C.S. Alves:

When does the Minister envisage the well-publicised capital and budget shortfall for the Opera House and Jersey Arts Centre will be resolved?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

These are discussions that are ongoing, but I would say, and I have said it previously, that although I do not believe there is chronic underinvestment in the sector, there is underinvestment. For example, the budget for supporting Jersey Heritage, Jersey Opera House, the Arts House, the Art Centre, is running at about £4 million a year and has been fixed at that since 2016. So, in real terms, taking into account inflation, we are reducing funding in the arts and that is something that has to be addressed. Deputy Tadier has been appointed as an Assistant Minister at Economic Development and at Education. I am not quite sure where culture will end up, but I look forward to working with Deputy Tadier, in the meantime, to make sure we get on and start addressing some of these important issues.

3.19.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Minister said that the report had been completed back in March. It is now 4 months on. Can he give a proper reason why he should be holding this report secret?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

It is not particularly secret. As I explained in my answer, it is with the Corporate Strategy Board and also it is being discussed with all of the arts organisations. We may well, as a result of that, refine the report. But I think it was only courteous to the sector to make sure we discuss the findings of the report with them, before making it public. Having said that, I will discuss it at our next ministerial meeting with Deputy Tadier and we will consider releasing the report. It is a very good and very

interesting report and highlights the importance of culture, arts, and heritage and gives very good reasons why we should be doing more and investing more in it.

3.19.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

I do not think he attempted to answer the question again, but can I ask when he anticipates that we will all be able to see this report, in all its wondrous glory?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

I would hope by the autumn at the latest.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

My question has been asked.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I can take another one then, so I shall add you to the list.

3.19.4 Deputy K.F. Morel:

Would the Minister, or does the Minister accept, that cultural investment produces wider benefits than the purely economic and that it is, therefore, vital, and it is vital for education and community building, in particular, and will he ensure that the report, when published, does show this?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

Yes. Jersey's distinctive cultural assets make it an exceptional place to live and are an integral part of the high quality of life enjoyed by all residents. Much is done by the heritage sector and also we see huge benefits for the economy and for tourism, so that is a priority.

3.19.5 Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

As part of the report and going forward, will the Minister look at the impact of the loss of the Cultural Development Officer, Rod McLoughlin, who is no longer in post? However, his position is still on all our States of Jersey websites, as he is seemingly still in position. That, obviously, sends out a message of unsurety, I believe, to members of the cultural societies. So will he, as part of the report, look at the impact of the changes and the loss of this role?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

Yes, I will seek to confirm clarification of that as soon as possible.

3.19.6 The Deputy of Grouville:

Will the Minister make culture a priority, because it has been woefully neglected? The panel members and trustees that give their time freely are on the verge of leaving, because they can no longer perform, or see anything through, because the organisations are at breaking point. The budget, the monies allocated, are used to repair leaking roofs and such like and, as Deputy Pamplin has just referred to, the cultural officer has retired and there has been nothing done about finding a replacement and I think that symbolises exactly how culture is regarded by this department. Can he make culture a priority, because it is important, it is the glue that holds us all together and we ought to be celebrating our heritage and advancing cultural activities in this Island? Can he make it a priority?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

My department has been and is making it a priority; I would say more so than it had been in the Education Department. The States of Jersey has a responsibility to provide access to culture for individuals. The responsibility is delivered by the 4 key arts organisations, who are in very

constructive consultation and working closely with my department. The culture is delivered by skilled professionals, using an arm's-length approach with these models; they are autonomous, the arts bodies. The model is cost effective, albeit we are underfunding them. They offer a diverse and engaging range of programmes. But, what has happened is that over the years the States and the Government have not effectively integrated culture into its policy-making process and I, and a number of other Ministers and Assistant Ministers, intend to ensure that culture takes an important, if not a leading, role when we work together to deliver the new Strategic Plan.

3.19.7 The Deputy of Grouville:

So, we learned today that this report is going to be released in the autumn. What timescale does the Minister have for updating the cultural strategy that is more than 10 years old - probably about 14 years old now - and what plans does he have for writing a creative industries strategy?

[11:30]

Senator L.J. Farnham:

Those are discussions we are yet to have within the department. We have produced this new report, which I will make public sooner than the autumn if possible; I would like to discuss this with Deputy Tadier, but the Deputy and the Assembly can rest assured that culture, arts, and heritage, is a high priority for our department but, ultimately, it is going to be this States Assembly that will decide on its funding.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Final supplementary, Deputy Alves?

Deputy C.S. Alves:

No thank you. Thank you for your answer, Minister.