

2019.01.15

14 Deputy M.R. Higgins of the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture regarding the provision of additional funding to the Jersey Reds Rugby Club: [OQ.13/2019]

Will the Minister advise whether any additional funding is planned to be provided to the Jersey Reds Rugby Club other than the additional funds already announced and whether there are any plans to have a full States sponsored rugby team and, if so, under what terms?

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

Senator Pallett will be taking this question.

Senator S.W. Pallett (Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture - rapporteur):

Can I firstly thank the Deputy for his question? There is currently no agreement to provide additional government funding to Jersey Reds Rugby Football Club beyond the £150,000 sanctioned by the Minister for Treasury and Resources in November of last year. Neither are there any plans to have a full States sponsored rugby team and I can add or, for that matter, a full States sponsored team in any sport. Government is however actively engaged with Jersey Reds both to resolve their structural funding deficit and as part of a broader programme of work to develop a comprehensive sports facility strategy for the Island. Sustaining the club in its current form and ensuring it forms part of the wider consideration of the Island's sports facilities' needs will create scope to consider bold features that will benefit the full range of sporting activity in Jersey. This work will be overseen by a professional oversight group comprising Economic Development, Treasury and Infrastructure and I am hoping that that particular group will meet very shortly.

3.14.1 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

First of all, I would just like to say that I am delighted to hear that the Minister is looking at other sporting organisations as well, including the Jersey netball team who are struggling. I would ask the Minister if he would relook at question 30, the written answer to the question I asked on this subject. I believe it is inaccurate and also it did not set out what conditions were attached to the funding. Can the Minister tell us if any conditions were attached to the loan that was given to the Jersey Reds, the £150,000?

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Just to be clear, it is not a loan. It is grant funding. It is to cover the shortfall in funding this year. Not all the shortfall in funding for this year but for the shortfall in funding to allow the Reds to carry on. I think the Deputy will be aware of the reasons behind some of that. Clearly, there is a funding deficit this year and being unable to cover that deficit would have meant the club folded and stopping and the potential benefit to the Island through all sorts of benefits, be it hospitality in the Island, flights and all the other things that go along with the Jersey Reds would have been lost immediately. So I think it was important that Government understood that and we reviewed it to really understand and get to the real bones of what the club were about and what they offered the Island. I think the economic benefit was large, estimated at over £2 million a year, so to have lost that would have been desperately hard I think on a lot of local businesses including hotels, restaurants and the like. In terms of what conditions were put to it; the one condition that I wanted to see was that it was part of a full sport strategy review. That is about to take place. We have done

an initial review to look at the overarching needs of the Island, which will include netball. I met netball last week to make sure that they understood that they are right at the heart of that work. There are no other terms or conditions to that. It is what it is. It is a grant this year to help them through what is a very difficult period.

3.14.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

I would like to thank the Assistant Minister for his answer but I would ask him to revisit question 30 because I do believe it is inaccurate.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

No, sorry, I should have answered that. I will go back to the Minister and go back to officers just to check that everything on here is correct. I thought it was. If it is not, then I will get back to the Deputy and other States Members.

The Bailiff:

I take it you mean the answer is inaccurate and not your question?

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

You are correct, Sir. Thank you.