

2019.02.12

13 Deputy K.F. Morel of the Minister for Treasury and Resources regarding the funds which had been allocated to the cost of joining Liberation Square and Weighbridge Place for the ‘Liberation 75’ celebrations: [OQ.24/2019]

As the cost of joining Liberation Square with Weighbridge Place for the Liberation 75 celebrations is now being borne by the States of Jersey Development Company rather than the Growth, Housing and Environment Department, will the Minister advise the Assembly of any plans she has for the £2 million that had been allocated in the recent budget to the department for that same work?

Deputy S.J. Pinel of St. Clement (The Minister for Treasury and Resources):

As demonstrated in table D of the Draft Budget 2019, the majority of the funding for this project was to be met by unspent capital sums.

[11:15]

£580,000 was allocated from 2017 underspends and the balance was to be funded by underspends identified in 2018. There have been some challenges over the underspends identified as available, therefore alternative funding routes have been considered in order to allow the Growth, Housing and Economic Department to get on with the necessary work, one funding solution identified being an element of the return due from S.o.J.D.C.’s (States of Jersey Development Company) College Gardens housing scheme. This was identified as an appropriate route, with profits made by the States wholly-owned company being used to pay for improvements in public realm. Officers are finalising this proposal. However, no decision has been made as to the best funding method for the Liberation 75 scheme as yet and therefore no decisions have been made about how best to use the one-off budget this alternative funding route would release. I understand from the Growth, Housing and Environment Department that the scheme is now likely to cost £3 million, not £2 million, and I await an explanation of the variations when I consider the recommendation of officers.

3.13.1 Deputy K.F. Morel:

I am pleased that the Minister for Treasury and Resources is aware that the scheme has increased in price by 50 per cent within 3 months of us passing the budget. I would also like to know when the Minister became aware of this new funding route, when this new funding route or an exploration of this new funding route began.

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

As I said in my opening remarks, the original estimate was made at £2 million, based on a high-level concept design, which was produced for the business case in the middle of last year. The scheme has now been developed up to feasibility stage, which has enabled a more detailed estimate to be produced. This work has highlighted the challenge of the task of rerouting the traffic from the busy road and the need to find a solution for buses, which currently access the bus station through this route.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

That was not, in my view, an answer to my question. The question was: when did the Minister become aware or when did the Minister start exploring this new funding?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

As I said, it is in conjunction with the Growth, Housing and Environment Department as to what their alternatives are for this public realm development, so when we have all the variations, we can work out what the increase or not may be.

The Bailiff:

I think the question, Minister, was when you started looking at alternative methods of financing.

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

Gosh, Sir, that is very difficult to say. It must have been about 5 or 6 months ago, I would have thought.

3.13.2 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Will the Minister confirm that she recalls the promise made to this Assembly and to the people of Jersey that the estimates of between £50 million and £75 million of revenue from the development of the Waterfront and the Esplanade Quarter would be used for urban regeneration schemes and that in the absence of a mechanism for prioritising this funding, the Regeneration Steering Group is the appropriate body to take a view on this? Will she undertake to bring any changes in the funding plans for the joining of 2 open spaces to that group so that they can make the decision about it?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

Absolutely. It would be a terrible mishap if we did not bring the Regeneration Steering Group to the table.

3.13.3 Deputy K.F. Morel:

If the Minister was aware 5 or 6 months ago that a new funding route was being explored or the need for a new funding route, may I ask why the States were asked to vote on this £2 million allocation in the budget, given that it had already been chosen to go elsewhere for this money?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

That was only an alternative in case we could not find the funding anywhere else. We knew that that was going to be the initial request. The £1 million, as I have already said, depends on what the Environment Department come up with as the variation on the theme.