

2019.02.26

5 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier of the Minister for Treasury and Resources regarding the delivery of purpose-built youth facilities in the north of St. Helier: [OQ.54/2019]

Further to the Assembly's adoption of Deputy R.J. Ward's amendment to the Common Strategic Policy that a purpose-built youth facility should be created in the north of St. Helier, will the Minister advise whether she has had any discussions with ministerial colleagues, Andium Homes or within her own department about the allocation of funds to this project and what timescale does she envisage from design to completion of such a facility?

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

The Assistant Minister will take this question.

Deputy L.B.E. Ash of St. Clement (Assistant Minister for Treasury and Resources - rapporteur):

There have been various meetings currently being undertaken between Treasury, Andium and other departments to produce an updated capital programme for the Government Plan. It is expected this work will be completed in order to meet the Government Plan deadlines. I, along with the Minister for Children and Housing, met with Andium last Friday. We were presented with their strategic business plan and during these discussions I asked whether any consideration had been made to the provision of youth facilities within their build programme. I am pleased to say that they are eager to assist in whatever way they can and they are looking at these plans. Indeed, I think I speak for the Minister for Children and Housing as well in saying that it was obvious that they placed their social obligations very high on the agenda. Both the Treasurer and myself will endeavour to ensure funds are available when required, but as for a timescale, until we know which site is to be used and that planning approval has been given, it would be very wrong of me to speculate.

4.5.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

A fortnight ago we learnt that the funds we voted in the Budget for the Liberation Square refurbishment project might not be made available after all and that another pot would have to be raided. Is it going to be the same here or is the £5 million voted set aside safe for the development of youth facilities?

Deputy L.B.E. Ash:

As I said, the Treasurer and I will endeavour to make sure that that £5 million is available. I respect what Deputy Ward put through the other day, but I cannot really make any comments on how much would be needed until we see the planning permission. The Connétable is aware of the problems of achieving planning permission in St. Helier where often the best sites are made unavailable due to political issues.

4.5.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:

I just want to confirm given it was a very specific commitment in the Common Strategic Policy both in terms of its vicinity and its costing. Can you confirm that you will stick to those promises that we have made and that it is a purpose-built facility, not just a tagged-on facility into a small area of an Andium development?

Deputy L.B.E. Ash:

As I say, the actual plans are very much ongoing so I cannot really confirm as to what nature they will take. I know that Andium have looked at the possibility of using Le Bas Centre there, but it is still very early and until we know which building will be available for them and where we can get planning permission, I will then be able to give further details as to the exact spec involved.

4.5.3 Deputy K.F. Morel:

In deciding what youth facilities to put in the north of town, will the Minister ensure that young people and young leaders are consulted as to the needs that they need to have met rather than leaving it just to a bunch of grey-suited gents in a boardroom?

Deputy L.B.E. Ash:

As a grey-suited gent I rather take exception to that comment, but I will be making sure that we consult with every single person. We will consult with the youth authorities. We will consult with Deputy Ward, who brought this, and there will be full consultations along with the Minister for Children and Housing, who obviously takes a great interest in it.

4.5.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Has Andium given any indication of the timescale under which it will return to talk to the Minister and, if not, will the Minister ask Andium to inform us of any timeline this decision made ... oh, that was incoherent.

Deputy L.B.E. Ash:

As I said, we cannot really have any timelines until we find the site and when we get planning permission for a site. There are a number that are ongoing, so probably the question would be better asked of the planning officers than myself. But we will definitely - and I know again the Minister for Children and Housing will join me in this - monitor the situation and it will be at the top of our agenda.

4.5.5 Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:

Will the Assistant Minister instruct his officers to keep informed the Constable of St. Helier, Deputy Ward and the Minister for Education about any developments in this area so that questions in this Assembly do not necessarily need to be lodged?

Deputy L.B.E. Ash:

As I say, and I think I have answered this already, we will be keeping everybody in touch and will consult with everybody, including the steering committee that I believe is already in place.

4.5.6 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Given the size and population of the area we are discussing, possibly the most densely populated part of the Island, is there a case in the Assistant Minister's view for more than one facility of this sort being delivered when you have areas as far apart as La Pouquelaye, Rouge Bouillon, perhaps the site of the former police headquarters, and so on?

Deputy L.B.E. Ash:

I think there is a case for very many of these things being delivered but as always it comes down to the finance that is available, so I think we will start with one at a time.