

2020.09.08

16 The Connétable of St. Helier of the Assistant Chief Minister regarding building the new hospital on People's Park: (OQ.222/2020)

Given that, on 13th February 2019, the Assembly decided against building the new hospital on People's Park by adopting my Amendment to P.5/2019, and that the same site had earlier been removed as an option before P.3/2016 could be debated, will the Assistant Chief Minister explain why officials have been instructed (or allowed) to spend time and money investigating the same site as an option for the new hospital?

Senator L.J. Farnham (Assistant Chief Minister):

When the hospital was previously considered the process was criticised by the Hospital Policy Development Board at that time, which felt that there had been political intervention in the site selection process for the Future Hospital scheme. This time the political oversight group asked officers to design a clear and comprehensive site selection process, which included a public call for sites and enabled Islanders to identify potential locations for the new hospital. It has been an important principle from the beginning that this process is kept free from political input. During the process many Islanders proposed People's Park, despite the existing Assembly decision against building the new hospital there. The Political Oversight Group felt it important to uphold the integrity of the process and have, therefore, allowed People's Park to be included to the stage it is now. It is worth also mentioning that Gloucester Street, which the Assembly also voted as part of P.5/2019, which the Connétable successfully amended, was also included earlier on. The process took the shortlisting from 83 to 39 to 17 and to 5. If Members are interested, Gloucester Street fell out when the list went from 39 to 17. It is the process that is being used to identify the most deliverable sites for a new hospital from an engineering and technical perspective with the perimeter set out in the report, R.54/2019 entitled *New Hospital Project: Next Steps*. We have stuck to the process outlined in that report as closely as possible.

4.16.1 Senator K.L. Moore:

Following on from the Constable of St. Helier's question: could the Minister explain why time and money has been spent including Overdale as a potential site for the hospital, given the comments of the planning inspector in his previous review?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

As I have just outlined, we have followed the process, we have worked in line with the planning brief and the site selection process, which has been laid out to Scrutiny, has delivered these 2 sites.

4.16.2 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Could I ask the Minister why he felt it necessary to change the red line around one of the 5 sites after the shortlist had been published?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

I have to say that that was an administrative error. It was an error of the officers. There was no decision to change the red line.

[11:15]

It was just not put in the right place in the first place and it was corrected. With hindsight we should have provided better communications on that. I was not informed, the Political Oversight Group

were not informed and I apologise for that. The matter was dealt with internally and, fortunately, that site has now come off the shortlist but that is all it was. There was no intention to mislead the public. It should have been that from day one and it was overlooked.

4.16.3 The Connétable of St. Helier:

The Deputy Chief Minister speaks of integrity, principle and process and he suggests that political input has got no part to play in the current choice. But would he not agree with me that the Council of Ministers now ride roughshod over the wishes of Backbenchers in the States Assembly, even when those wishes are given the support of the democratically elected Members?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

I am going to base my answer in relation purely to the hospital project and we all remember what happened last time. We started the process some 10 years when it was decided that we had to start planning for a new hospital. The last process was derailed because of political tinkering and politicians deciding where they wanted the hospital to go, not based on a proper longer-term vision. This process has achieved more in the last year than we have done in the last 10 years. I do understand and respect the Constable's concern about the People's Park but the insurance is this will be a States decision. I felt, given the long-term importance of the hospital, it is not a one-off spend. We should not necessarily just focus on the cost of the hospital because, as I have said previously, what is more important is what goes on inside the hospital in the next 30, 40, 50, 60 years. But I thought it is important, given the cost and technical implications, that all sites were considered. When States Members do get to decide, they can fall back on a process that has been thorough and transparent. I hope Members will appreciate that when we come to make the very difficult decision that lies ahead.