

20.10.20

15 The Connétable of St. Helier of the Minister for the Environment regarding the development of a public realm and movement strategy and its contribution to the walking and cycling strategies for St. Helier (OQ.284/2020):

Will the Minister advise how he will ensure that the current work being undertaken by Arup Consultants on developing a public realm and movement strategy for St. Helier will contribute to the development of walking and cycling strategies for St. Helier by the Minister for Infrastructure?

Deputy J.H. Young (The Minister for the Environment):

The work being undertaken by Arup is part of the Island Plan project and it will provide a strategic framework for the public realm and movement in St. Helier. After the analysis and stakeholder engagement the strategy will bring about a plan for improvements in the use and management of St. Helier's network of roads and streets, which will have the objective of prioritising movement of walking and cycling and proposes an active travel network. As well as that, the second part is that it will help us better co-ordinate the urban planning work and the infrastructure implementation work being developed under the Sustainable Transport Policy by the Minister for Infrastructure. I think that is progress because in the past I think we have been less joined-up in that work. So the strategic framework will provide a frame for the Minister for Infrastructure and including those elements of the active travel plan and what the Constable's question refers to, and the way that is being done is very close involvement with the team, which is an across team, and the Minister is briefed. That is the overview. It is a complex picture but I am confident this will do better joined-up Government than before in this vital area.

4.15.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

It is good to know that the silos are coming down but could the Minister advise us when the outcome of the Arup work will be passed to Infrastructure because, as he knows, the Minister for Infrastructure has committed to bringing his active travel strategy to the States by the end of the year. Clearly there is not much time left. While he is replying to that supplementary could he also give us an estimate of the cost of the work being undertaken by Arup?

Deputy J.H. Young:

If I may deal with the first question first. The project is being funded through the budgetary provision that was made for the Island Plan, and obviously as a complicated project, a bit like a jigsaw with lots of different facets, what we have had to do is to contract various elements to different partners. Of course the Minister for Infrastructure, the contract was done for the coastal management plan and so on, and this is another one. Now, what we have had to do because of the timescale, Arup, who were originally engaged as our partners to help us provide objectivity to this, have contracted to fill the gaps, as it were, where we lack that resource to get these things done. So the work is going at pace. I cannot give an exact date but I can say that as far as I am concerned, I am being told certainly before the end of the year this work has to come together because obviously the Minister is committed to bring the ... we have got to deliver the objectives in the Sustainable Transport Policy in the 2021 period. So buses, parking plan and mobility are other elements, but of course this is the active travel plan that the Constable is referring to. So I will come back with a specific date on that but it is a very complex project and I have to talk to the team to come back, but I promise the Constable I will come back with that exact date. But it is going to have to be soon because the Island Plan will have to be published in March.

4.15.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can the Minister give an estimated date of any project that would be a tangible change to our transport policy from this? Any one will do.

Deputy J.H. Young:

What we are doing here is complex, it is a top down process and the idea is that the Island Plan will have to set out the big picture. I said at the start of the project I want a fresh look at St. Helier traffic and road schemes because we are putting in a lot of housing there and we have got to make sure that we create decent places to live. Now that work will have to be completed by the end of the year otherwise the Island Plan will be missing a vital element, so that element has to be done. But as far as the actual delivery pieces, these are dealt with by the Minister for Infrastructure. But the team at the moment is comprising the S.P.3 (Strategic Policy, Performance and Population) team, which is part of the chief executive's team now, we have got officers for Infrastructure, officers for Housing, officers for Environment; they are all working on it. So I will stand or fall on delivering this commitment for the big picture Island Plan with that vision and the way we want to see town can work, but putting the nuts and bolts in place will be Infrastructure. The Deputy of course will know that in other places those 2 functions are dealt with by the same civil team. They are not in Jersey; that is what I have to work with, that fragmentation I am trying to avoid.

4.15.3 The Connétable of St. Helier:

I am grateful to the Minister for his candid answers. Does he agree with me that the fact that we currently have no safe designated cycling routes in St. Helier, nor any holistic plan for walking around our town, is something which we are incredibly overdue on; and will he work with me to try to persuade the Minister for Infrastructure to really prioritise these projects?

Deputy J.H. Young:

The Constable knows where my own personal preferences are because I believe this is vital because if we are going to put a very large number of increased densities of new residents in town we have to deal with this problem and make it better for people to move around the town in cycling and walking. We have to do that. Now, at the end of the day I am going to be in the Assembly's hands here because that Island Plan is not in my gift, it will be in that plan and it will be for the public inquiry and States Members to sign up to. I hope that will be and I am always keen to work with the Connétable; the Connétable knows that. For me having a really improved urban vision for our town area is a vital part of future life in Jersey.