

23.07.17

**6 Deputy S.G. Luce of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding new sporting facilities (OQ.148/2023)**

Further to Oral Question 73/2023, will the Minister list which of the new sporting facilities at Le Rocquier School will be provided for in this year's Government Plan?

**Deputy T. Binet of St. Saviour (The Minister for Infrastructure):**

I wonder if I could be permitted to hand this question on to Deputy Stephenson who is the Assistant Minister with responsibility for healthcare facilities. Sorry, sports facilities, yes. Apologies.

**Deputy L. Stephenson of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter (Assistant Minister for Infrastructure - rapporteur):**

Jersey Property Holdings, Jersey Sport and C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills) are still working with Le Rocquier School to reach a final agreement on the options to take forward. This comes in the wake of accepting that the initially-proposed figure of £70 million for a comprehensive eastern sports centre was not going to be available. The final sum to be attributed to the facilities at the school is still under discussion so it is not possible, at this stage, to identify the facilities in detail, although it is likely to focus on a 3G pitch and extension of the current sports hall. The figures will be published in September as soon as the Government Plan discussions on capital projects have been finalised.

**4.6.1 Deputy S.G. Luce:**

The current sports hall is very old and has many, many defects. Built in the 1970s, it has had few upgrades since then. The disability access is poor - very poor - non-compliant with current standards, the girls' changing rooms are upstairs and there is no lift. I just want a guarantee from the Minister, given that this building is currently not fit for purpose, that she will do this work in this year's Government Plan.

**Deputy L. Stephenson:**

I visited the building myself and have seen many of the problems that the Deputy outlines there and I am sure there are others that I could add to that as well. The reason for moving forward, as I have explained in a previous question, in this manner was because I absolutely want to see this work progress. For me and for others around the table, the way to ensure that we could deliver for the school, which is the immediate priority, is to reframe this work into something that is achievable in the current climate and current situation with other pressures around capital projects, hence why this project has now been handed over, as it were, to C.Y.P.E.S. with others working with them. That is all I can really say at this stage because it is out of my hands and I am not involved in the ongoing discussions about them. Those questions would perhaps be better directed at the Minister for Children and Education.

**4.6.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

In the answer, the Assistant Minister mentioned that Jersey Sport were involved in the decision-making process over this facility. Can I ask the Minister what their role is in making that decision?

**Deputy L. Stephenson:**

A member of staff from Jersey Sport works within the Infrastructure Department as part of the Inspiring Active Places project and offers project support on these kind of things. A lot of work has

been done with Jersey Sport and then through the Inspiring Active Places project looking at sports needs and requirements around the Island and this individual is seen as an expert in that area.

#### **4.6.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Given that Jersey Sport with their very particular idea of the way that sports look across the Island, is one of the issues that the specific needs for Le Rocquier School, a state school on the east of the Island, may not be seen as clearly given that this was an arm's-length organisation with different drivers in terms of its outcomes?

#### **Deputy L. Stephenson:**

Within this piece of work and others around the Inspiring Active Places project, the individual in question's priority is to the Island and to the terms of references as part of that piece of work, not to Jersey Sport's priorities. I would just reiterate that they have been working extremely closely with the school throughout, both in previous incarnations of this project and currently, to ensure that it is absolutely based on the needs of the school and the wants for the future as well.

#### **4.6.4 Connétable M.O'D. Troy of St. Clement:**

Assistant Minister, we are surprised out east that we are not being given not what was promised but what has been offered. We have had the carrot of £70 million, £40 million, and now we are seeing that what we are doing is replacing old and forgotten sports facilities in education, not new sports facilities as was offered out in the east of the Island. Would you seek to give us a guarantee that during the next wave of government expenditure the east of Island will not be forgotten? The east of Island I refer to is St. Clement, Grouville and St. Martin, at the very least, and that we dearly need good, up-to-date sporting facilities for all our generations out east.

#### **Deputy L. Stephenson:**

I have a slight issue in that some of the things that have been previously promised were grand plans but did not have any funding back to them. They, at some stages, did not even have numbers but they did have pretty pictures. When it comes to delivering on these things, which is the point we are trying to move forward in the east with this project, it then leaves those of us here today in quite a tricky situation. So I very much appreciate that things have been over-promised and undelivered in the past, which is why I say we have approached this particular project in the way that we have done because we want to make sure that the needs of the school are met, as Deputy Luce has shown. There are some real issues there and it needs to be a priority that this school gets the facilities that it deserves, which is why it has been prioritised as it has.

#### **4.6.5 The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Assistant Minister, who are we best to speak to on this because it is clear that we have got now 3 of the Minister for Treasury and Resources' who have got no money. Who are we supposed to speak to to get proper representation on these issues: C.Y.P.E.S., the Education Department or Jersey Sport?

#### **Deputy L. Stephenson:**

I think all are very willing to have those conversations. As we have shown with work on F.B. Fields not so long ago, there is a want and an interest to look at the opportunities that are available, particularly in the east of the Island, and there are facilities around St. Clement's Sports Club, for example, that are doing some really great work down there and have ideas for the future. There are other private ones in the east of the Island that have plans for the future as well. So engagement and discussion with all stakeholders, including the Parish, is very important to all of those people.

We have really got to work together to deliver on this. What I would just add to what I have said previously, the world has changed since the grand plans were promised a couple of years ago and we do have to set a vision and go out to achieve things together, but we have also got to be realistic as well. We have seen reports from the likes of the C. and A.G. (Comptroller and Auditor General) and others about what Government can deliver in terms of capital projects. All of those things have got to be taken into consideration. We are an Island 9 by 5 and we have got to be realistic and work together.

#### **4.6.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

In terms of Jersey Sport's facilities, to what extent does the Minister have on the consideration possibility that by reducing, or if necessary reducing to zero, the charge for facilities and spaces that we own, that would encourage the health and fitness objectives of her department? Has she got that under consideration and, if not, why not?

[15:45]

#### **Deputy L. Stephenson:**

There are a number of policies already in place which do speak to this kind of point around free access and very low price access. For example, a certain number of care leavers get free access to the Active scheme every year. Some young people, if they have parents already in the scheme, get access as well, as well as lower price points and concessions for certain ages, whether that be young people or old people. So it is very much part of the considerations.

#### **4.6.7 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Does the answer we just received mean that she has under consideration the possibility of reducing the costs of hiring a hall, et cetera, or not? Because it was not clear to me whether the policies that were in place include that because until recently it was a policy to charge, to ramp up the cost of hiring a hall, but that is counterproductive in terms of fitness and health in society. Will the Assistant Minister try and make it clear as to which answer she has given?

#### **Deputy L. Stephenson:**

There is a fine balance to strike between ensuring that these facilities can generate some of their own money to ensure that it can be reinvested into the service that is provided and the facilities as well as recognising them as a public service, exactly as I think the Deputy is suggesting there. As I say, there are a number of policies already in place and it is very difficult to explain in 2 sentences. There is not one overarching policy when it comes to renting halls or fields. For example, some groups - I think around charities and others, but again there are different arrangements in place for different groups - are given discounts. Then there are different concessions in place for the Active scheme as well. There is not one answer that fits all people, I am afraid.

#### **4.6.8 Deputy M. Tadier:**

We have heard about needing to be realistic when it comes to money that is available. I remember when I asked for 1 per cent to be given to the arts and culture in Jersey I was told that was not realistic and it was not affordable, but the difference was I think I had a vision which I brought to this Assembly and the Assembly at the time got on board with that vision. Could the Assistant Minister tell us what her vision is for sport in the east of the Island and what it looks like?

**Deputy L. Stephenson:**

I would just point out at this stage that I think I am a very different politician to the Deputy who asked the question, who I understand brought that move in a certain situation at a certain time. I want to work collaboratively with my colleagues and recognise that government spending is a full package of money, it is not for fighting over among ourselves. We have a Common Strategic Policy that all Ministers are working towards. My vision for sport in the east of the Island in the short term is to push this project in a realistic and achievable way, which means handing it back to C.Y.P.E.S. so that schools' priorities can be met. In addition to that, this Assembly agreed a few weeks ago to amend the covenants that govern F.B. Fields and we hope that that move will be given approval by the Privy Council later this year. We are currently on track for October, given how busy things are with the Privy Council. I would then like to create a vision around F.B. Fields, as I set out in that meeting a few weeks ago, around the community and sport and what is, I think, an exciting opportunity in the east.

**4.6.9 Deputy M. Tadier:**

I do have a supplementary. Let us talk about the £70 million that was proposed because the £70 million now is much more affordable because inflation has gone up. So we should be looking for more than £70 million. Was it not the case that it was the Minister for Treasury and Resources, who was a former Deputy of St. Clement, who promised that money and was supporting that and that now we have a Minister for Treasury and Resources who is also a former Deputy of St. Clement and - I may be mistaken - a governor of Le Rocquier, certainly he has been in the past? Should it not be the case that while we must work collaboratively, I am sure, from a Government point of view, a little pressure applied to the Minister for Treasury and Resources' wallet might find that it is the case not that he does not have any money but that he is maybe being too reluctant to open his wallet up now for what is essentially still part of the heart of his home constituency?

**Deputy L. Stephenson:**

It felt very much like a question for the Minister for Treasury and Resources, not for me. I do not really have a view on that at this stage. As I say, all I can do is work with my colleagues collaboratively and try to achieve what I think is realistic and deliverable.

**4.6.10 Connétable M. Labey of Grouville:**

In support of my fellow Connétable and Deputy Luce, I would just like to state that the sporting facilities in the far east of the Island are woefully inadequate in comparison to those in other parts of the Island. I would just encourage the Minister, if I may, and ask her: is this project at Le Rocquier School solely for the purpose of the pupils therein or is this going to be open to members of the public in the east of the Island?

**Deputy L. Stephenson:**

While the priority is on the school's needs and the facility will be for the school during the day, the brief that has been provided to those working on the project is that it should then be community use outside of school hours.

**4.6.11 Deputy S.G. Luce:**

I am increasingly concerned by the Assistant Minister's answers. I accept that we live in a changing climate financially and the world has changed, but the Minister does not want to talk particularly about spending money on these facilities at Le Rocquier and prefers to mention F.B. Fields and her plans there. I wonder where the money is coming from. Le Rocquier was part of, with Springfield

and Oakfield, what we were going to do when we closed the Fort down. We know what has happened to Springfield. We know Oakfield is not even out for tender yet, and now we are faced with the possibility that we may lose funding for Le Rocquier. Is the Minister satisfied that coming out of the Fort was the right decision?

**Deputy L. Stephenson:**

This is not a case of losing funding for Le Rocquier. There was never any funding in the first place. As far as the question around Fort Regent goes, I still believe that the move to decant sport from Fort Regent is the right way to move. I have not seen any evidence at this stage that we could keep people in the Fort and do the work around them that is needed. I have read a number of reports which make it clear there are very challenging situations around electrics, plumbing and others, all of which will require work regardless of what it is decided happens at Fort Regent. As far as I can see so far, recognising that there are others involved in this as well, there is no evidence that it would be right to leave people there in what are currently not fit for purpose from a sporting perspective facilities only to try and work around them in the future.