

## **7. Statement by the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding the lifeguard service at Havre des Pas**

### **7.1 The Deputy of St. Ouen (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):**

Included in the 2011 Comprehensive Spending Review proposals put forward by Education, Sport and Culture was the cessation of a lifeguard service at Havre des Pas. I am aware that since this has been publicised and put forward as a proposal it has caused some concern among members of the public and also with some States Members, particularly Deputy Lewis, Deputy De Sousa and Deputy Le Claire. As a result of these concerns, and having taken note of the proposition lodged for debate by Deputy Le Claire, I wish to give a commitment to continue to provide a lifeguard service during the summer months at Havre des Pas and I will ensure it is included in the Education, Sport and Culture Annual Business Plan for 2011 and beyond. In turn, after discussion with Deputy Le Claire, he has agreed to withdraw his proposition P.88/2010 which will allow us to move forward together on this important issue as quickly as possible. As a result of this decision the proposed savings will need to be found from elsewhere in the Education, Sport and Culture budget and I will work with my department to identify these savings over the coming months.

#### **7.1.1 Deputy T.M. Pitman:**

That statement certainly hit the right note, I have to say, before Deputy Le Hérisier says it. Could the Minister just advise is it correct that an external agency have offered to undertake these duties free of charge on behalf of the department and if so does it have any bearing on costs and implications for the department?

#### **The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

In discussions with all 3 Deputies, but in particular Deputy Le Claire, we decided that it would still be worth looking at the issue to see whether other opportunities existed. However, the more important point is that a lifeguarding service will continue to be provided at Havre des Pas.

#### **7.1.2 Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

I congratulate the Minister most sincerely for his decision to retain the lifeguards at Havre des Pas and I also appreciate the need to make savings but does the Minister not agree that savings should be made from the top down not the bottom up?

#### **The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

I direct Deputy Lewis to the Business Plan, the proposed savings that we have detailed to date, and he will see that quite properly, firstly, they are all real savings and, secondly, they are for the most part targeted at areas which do not affect frontline services.

#### **7.1.3 The Deputy of St. John:**

Will the Minister look at making savings by turning off the lights at Victoria College as a start of savings from the top down?

#### **The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

As much as I understand the Deputy's desire to save money, I think it is important that some of our more well known landmarks are recognised and enjoyed even at night. However, if the Deputy still has concerns I would direct him to the Headmaster of Victoria College who I am sure would like to answer his question.

#### **7.1.4 Deputy D.J. De Sousa:**

I am very pleased to hear the Minister's statement today that he is retaining the lifeguards at Havre des Pas. Will he guarantee that while he is Minister we will not be put in this position again with regards to the pool?

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

I have given a number of commitments, as I say, with regards to the facilities at Havre des Pas and I am absolutely clear that I need to work with the Deputies that have raised the concerns to look at the issue of Havre des Pas and whether or not there are opportunities to not only provide additional services in that area but that they meet the needs of the community.

**7.1.5 Senator A. Breckon:**

Does the Minister believe that he finds himself in this position because departments make emotive frontline cuts which are unacceptable to the Members of this House and the general public?

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

I will stand up here and admit to the fact that the department produced a number of areas where savings could be delivered and I believed, perhaps wrongly, that this was an area where I could deliver a saving. I have obviously been proved wrong.

**7.1.6 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:**

I would like to thank the Minister and his department for having listened. I was not at all movable on this and fortunately I do like to withdraw propositions if I can. I think it is much more important to get the job done than have the big debate. Can I just get a 100 per cent guarantee from the Minister, an unequivocal guarantee from him that the existing service will be retained - we talk about "a service" in this statement; I have just picked up on Deputy Pitman's question - and that what we are working to do is look at augmenting that existing service?

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

We have got to make sure that a lifeguarding service is retained and remains at Havre des Pas and I have given an absolute commitment to make sure that that is provided. I also want to work with the Deputy and all of the Deputies, and indeed perhaps some of the individuals that are based at Havre des Pas, to look at this issue, to look at Havre des Pas, to consider what facilities are required and let us provide something that meets the needs of our community. I have said it before, and I have said it in this statement, that I give the guarantee that a lifeguarding service will remain permanently at Havre des Pas while I am Minister for Education, Sport and Culture.

**7.1.7 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:**

I do not want to turn on phrases but the fact of the matter is I am going to withdraw my proposition, based upon the fact that it is a paid for States of Jersey lifeguard service that is going to be retained and not some form of voluntary service that is going to be maintained. I would like to get that from the Minister, and I will be happy to withdraw my proposition, that a States of Jersey lifeguard service, fully paid for, fully manned, fully qualified will be retained, not a voluntary service which can be augmented.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

I am not suggesting that it is a voluntary service and I understand the Deputy's concerns but to commit to a particular service which may or may not - and I add "may not" - meet the needs of the users of Havre des Pas and the community I think would be wrong. I have given a full commitment that a lifeguarding service will be provided and we need to make sure that that is the case. The Deputy is shaking his head. Perhaps I will sit down and just allow him one last chance so that I am clear.

**7.1.8 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:**

With your leave, Sir, in order to try to save Assembly time later in the day I am very happy to withdraw the proposition, based upon the fact that, having investigated the issue, a paid for service of the States of Jersey is going to be retained. A form of voluntary service is not going to

be adequate in these circumstances and unless the Minister can guarantee that the paid for service is going to be retained in its current form I am unfortunately going to have to debate my proposition.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Yes, and the budget will be, as I said before, retained within the Business Plan.

**7.1.9 Deputy J.A. Martin:**

Could the Minister advise if he did take - and I may call on him if he has some information - legal advice on this? I do not think it was just a choice that if a lifeguard was not at the swimming pool that the gate would have to be lifted and there would be no pool. I wonder if the Minister had spoken to the Attorney General's office on this or sought legal advice. If not, before he ever brings any suggestion like this back will he take that legal advice?

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

I have not sought legal advice. The proposal and the suggestion was that a service could be provided which would not necessarily be the one that currently exists and as such that is why the proposal was made in good faith. I accept that some believe it is wrong. All I would say in defence is that there are many areas around this Island where people quite properly enjoy swimming and other activities on the water where no lifeguards are present and there is ultimately a responsibility of the individual to ensure their own safety when undertaking these sort of activities.

**7.1.10 Deputy A.E. Jeune of St. Brelade:**

Would the Minister agree with me that voluntary lifeguard services are provided very successfully in other countries?

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Yes.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

That was very brief and we have used up our 10 minutes.