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Deputy Richard Renouf
Chairman, Health and Social Security Panel
Scrutiny Office
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Via scan D

Dear Richard,

Hi Phil,

Further to your letter of 9th February, I shall endeavor to respond to your questions regarding the support that the Rector and Wardens have at their disposal to support those on Low Income.

1. The monies received from Don De Faye, which comes to us a few weeks before Christmas, was (2015) £2,721.67. This sum varies from year to year.

This is supposed to be distributed "at the sole discretion of the Rector and Churchwardens to needy Parishioners of all social standing in each Parish annually, during the third week in the month of December."

I inherited a situation where the Wardens were distributing circa 100 or so poinsettia plants around the parish to the elderly at Christmas. A well meant but token gesture - and in reality the only people benefitting were the florists. We have moved to an arrangement whereby we maintain a reasonable float for contingencies throughout the year, and largely rely on being tipped off in relation to need by the Deputy and local Head Teacher who can help us keep grants discreet and dignified. Eg Fuel bills, school uniform and assistance with inclusion on school trips where the costs might otherwise inhibit participation. In reality we meet two or three such needs a year.

Concerned that we were building up funds, we made a decision, based on a recognition that Parishioners from across the Island, including Trinity, who fall on hard times tend to migrate to St Helier, that we would make grants of £500 to those who work with some of the most vulnerable: Shelter Trust, Grace Trust, Outreach Group and Women's Refuge.

The Charite funds we have to disperse are nominal, each don amounting to a few hundred pound and maybe a couple of thousand in total, and all restricted according to their own terms. Many of these dons were until recently held in the form of old war bonds, and while these have been redeemed, in the current economic climate, they earn no interest to speak of.

The reality is that all of the above provide nominal amounts and fall a long way short of our being able to give systematic help or support to a household over any period of time.

There is in my mind a more substantial and underlying point to be made which was articulated at the time when as an Island we moved away from Parishes providing 'welfare' at the discretion of the Connetable or, in some larger Parishes a committee; and it is about the *discretionary* nature of that support and the inevitably subjective judgments we bring to the requests we deal with. Part of the argument for centralising and making uniform social and economic support for the low earners was to remove that subjectivity and what was for many perceived as the requirement to go 'cap in hand' to the Connetable or Rector, and hope your face fitted.

Now States budgets are under pressure there is a danger that statutory levels of support are shaved away to such an extent that people are again asked to turn to the discretionary nature of support from charitable funds, surely a retrograde step.

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