



Education and Home Affairs Panel

Jersey Music Service Review Hearing with FoJYM

FRIDAY, 19th APRIL 2013

Panel:

Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour (Chairman)
Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade
Connétable M.P.S. Le Troquer of St. Martin

Witness:

Mr. K. Sunter (Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music)

[13.30]

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

First of all, can I begin by saying thank you very much for seeing us today and offering your perspective. It was helpful in that you sat through the previous hearing, so we are at a level footing with regard to that. I wonder if I could just start with a general question and just ask for you to highlight any of the issues or concerns or comments that you would like to raise with the panel.

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

As the Chairman of Friends of Jersey Youth Music, we represent the parents of the children who are taught by the Jersey Music Service. We represent perhaps a quarter of those children who are part of the Friends of Jersey Youth Music and they pay a donation to the Friends of Jersey Youth Music in order to be part of the Jersey Music Friends. The funds that we gather in go directly to the Jersey Music Service to buy new instruments, to buy music and also if children cannot afford to pay for certain things like trips to Europe or Disneyland we help with that as well. That is what we do. The introduction of these charges that I have been listening about today could

not be better. I think it is a wonderful idea that we can spread right across the Island, to all schools, to allow all children to have music tuition. At £5 a week it really cannot be that much and as you will have read in my letter to Deputy Ryan, I think it is a fantastic idea, that this can allow other schools who do not take part with the Music Service to take part. Finances I know nothing about and it is not for me to comment about, but I think if 1,000 children now take part with the Music Service, perhaps 2,000 children will take part with the Music Service as the system grows. In my letter I mentioned Poole and Dorset, which is part of the Dorset Music Service. They have a system where parents subscribe to teaching of children and they have 9 different sorts of groups of music ranging from the orchestra down to really the pop group. The service here does not provide that. The best the service can do here is to provide a wind band and an orchestra and a small dance band. When it comes to pop groups or when it comes to barbershop quartets or choirs, that is more restricted other than the songsters, which is a very small group of children who do take part in the Music Service. Dorset has profit from charging. Their charges are greater. They do instrument hire, but what they do is provide a thing called a hub where children go to that hub either through school, after school or in holidays and they learn how to play music and they do music. What the proposals are is not different to that in order to allow all the children and therefore the Music Service can expand to provide a hub perhaps like they do in Guernsey with the E.C.S.O.C. (Elizabeth College Summer Orchestral Course). If that can happen, that is fantastic. More children will then play music, more children will become engaged with music and the social aspect of music and the singing of music, and the playing of music is just boundless when it comes to growing up and when it comes to real life. I am a lifelong musician. I can tell you my background. I was a musician in the Army. I left the Army and I have been a musician in the Island since 1979 when I arrived here. I play with all sorts of groups and bands and my contacts through music are just incredible and the amount of social skills I have gained through music all my life. I have paid for music lessons. My parents were ordinary people on very low incomes and they paid for me to do music. I had the choice of the Northern College of Music or the Army and I chose the Army. That was brilliant and that has been for me all my life. I am now in my middle 50s and this is just fantastic that this can happen here, plus it is working especially in Dorset. It also works in the Highlands of Scotland where everybody pays; different levels, of course. But the Dorset one is great, the groups that they do. They sell clothing. They have sponsorships and the next concert for the Dorset Music Service is at the Albert Hall on 3rd May. Would it not be great if we could take Jersey Music Service to the Albert Hall on 3rd May next with a group to play in the Albert Hall? That is where I come from as a parent of a child with music and also as Chairman of F.o.J.Y.M. (Friends of Jersey Youth Music) to allow the parents the opportunity to do this. The minimal charging that seems to me the correct thing to do would allow more children. As I say, 1,000 children at the moment. As you will have seen if you had been at the Spring Concert, there were 1,000 children sitting there playing music. If that expands to 2,000 marvellous; 3,000 even

better. It could cope with that because it is not user-pays, but there is a charge to pay and that will then fund teachers to teach these children music.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Thank you. Do you have any questions?

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes. I am impressed by your enthusiasm. What instruments do you play?

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

I am a brass player. I am also a string bass player and I am also an electric bass guitar player.

Deputy M. Tadier:

We are pleased to have you here.

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

Thank you.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I think we have seen the potential for the service and the way it has been presented to us, but one area of my concern is will the service be a victim of its own success if it does expand in the way we envisage it? We know that ultimately the amount of money being put in essentially from the Government will either be the same or be going down and it seems to me that means the input from parents is going to surely have to go up if it does grow because it will not be matched equally by the Education Department. Is that a concern? It may be £5 a week now. It could go up to £10 a week.

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

That is where perhaps F.o.J.Y.M., where I speak from as Chairman of F.o.J.Y.M., would come into it. We have a fund. We asked the Music Service do they want to take from that fund to buy a bassoon. We bought some timpani last year which was £3-4,000, which the service could not afford. So Friends of Jersey bought the timpani. It is catalogued right through back to when Mr. Amos started this Friends of Jersey Music to supplement. Now, this is, what, 20 years ago he started. We bought trombones the year before. We bought cornets and we bought, as I say, a bassoon which is being used as we speak. That is what we do. I do not know if it would impinge on the family to say: "You pay £5 a week for the term" which is only 3 or 4 weeks per half term, so it is £55 per year, shall we say. To increase that might not be that difficult for some people. Of course it will not be difficult for those on high incomes and those, as has been said, on income

support will not pay. Those would simply have reduced amounts. I could not agree more with what Dr. Cox is trying to do, despite the difficulties and the resentment perhaps that there is from some people. I have spoken to a lot of parents of F.o.J.Y.M. and virtually to a man they have said: "This is a good idea if it makes the service a better service, because it is outside of education." Polyphony at Jersey College for Girls is oversubscribed and that is not because of the financial aspect. It is because the children want to play music. Polyphony is being taught by, I think, 3 people and they are teaching about 70 children and they are all paying for that service for polyphony. That is where the Music Service could expand into, as could all the other places. Bring in De La Salle and Beaulieu, who have wonderful musicians, absolutely spanking musicians. They would come into the service and they could then get the service that they need to make them into better musicians and enjoy the fun a lot more.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

You said how it was formed. Was that Mr. Amos who originally formed it?

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

Yes.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

It is not a club. It is an organisation of how many members?

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

At the moment, of the children who receive music tuition from the instrumental service, about a quarter of those parents have paid to join the Friends of Jersey Youth Music.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

I see.

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

Donations vary from a minimum of £15 but we had a donation last week of £150 to the Friends of Jersey Youth Music for the Music Service. There are about 250 registered members, of which it is Mr. and Mrs. So you have got perhaps 500 people arguably, but there are Mr. and Mrs., so it is the parents of each child.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

A management committee or a ...

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

We have a committee of chairman and vice chairman and secretary, somebody who runs the funds and 3 or 4 committee members. What we do is we go to the Spring Concert and we help sell programmes and we help sell raffle tickets. At Christmas we help dish out tea, coffee, biscuits, which we provide, and ask for a donation. Again, that money goes back to pay for what the Music Service would like, if they have any particular music. I think it would be fair to say that when we went to Disneyland Paris 2 years ago, had it not been for the Friends of Jersey Youth Music's ability to help the children who could not pay, of the 60 or 70 children that went to Disneyland Paris we might have only got perhaps 40 or 50.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Do you not feel that you are a third party trying to assist the States rather than the States should be doing something themselves?

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

Without doubt, this music charging is absolutely fantastic. That is why I am so for it.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

But you as an organisation, do you think you are being taken for granted ...

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

No.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

... and that is something the States should be doing?

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

No, I think the Friends of Jersey Youth Music ... it is also a wonderful thing to do. I feel very pleased that I can donate money to my children's musical education, as do the other parents who join into the world itself, the Friends of Jersey Youth Music. We want to give money to help the children get a better go at playing music.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I am going to rephrase the same question. I suppose the question is from the great work that you and your association do, is there not a perhaps more systemic problem in that - this might be why you are making your case - there is centrally a shortfall of funding to go for the service? We know, for example, from what we have heard today there is not enough money to put into instruments and things like that.

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

That is right, yes. Had the budget been unlimited ... you could have had any budget for the Music Service, of course, and then more children could become part of that, but there is still exclusiveness. There are some primary schools that do not receive music tuition. As a parent and as a musician and as the Chairman of Friends of Jersey Youth Music, I want all children in all schools in the Island to have the chance to play music. Even if they are no good, it does not matter. I want them to have the chance to play music because they will realise how wonderful it is to make a noise on a trumpet or clarinet or just happily to sing. That is one of the great things that does not happen. If the States say yes to this charging, that is going to expand because everybody will have a go at it. The Dorset Music Service has that ability. You can download their form, fill it in and you will then get tuition from your school or you can do it privately at weekends or after school. There are areas where you can go to, especially in Dorset, to go and have music lessons and they are outside of your private music tuition which you can also go to and I think many children do go to private music tuition, but the costs here in Dorset are reduced from what would be private tuition. Arguably £50 an hour for private tuition, Dorset is charging just about £25.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

The Young Musician of the Year, who organises that because we are looking ... anyone who can play an instrument is brilliant to me, but there are obviously some that are going to go further in the musical world.

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

Indeed.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

How do they get to that stage?

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

They teach themselves. It is like reading a book: "How many words can I read?" "Well, I can read 20. If I read a dictionary and I understand what that word means, I can then read 21 words. I play an instrument. I can play 10 notes and now I can play 11 notes." The Music Service teacher will give them that ability to do that, but you have to practice by yourself. It is like everything else. You have to do things yourself. If you are exceptional, you will be seen to be exceptional because you will stand out.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

By your teacher?

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

By your teacher and you will stand out when you come on a Tuesday or a Monday to the bands, to the orchestras. You will be seen to be good.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Sorry, interrupted you. Who takes them forward then? Is that you?

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

It is then taken forward by the music teacher to say: "Who wants to take part in the Young Musician of the Year?" Every child is encouraged to take part in the Young Musician of the Year. Some do and some do not. Some of them do not want to. They are shy. They do not want to do that. PricewaterhouseCoopers do back this and they fund that. I think you know that PricewaterhouseCoopers does the Young Musician of the Year.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

If I can just comment, looking on some of the different websites and social media, some of the comments of people from the public, some from parents, there is a big concern about introducing even a £55 scheme even though there is a bursary scheme, and I think this is the fear, that this will prevent a lot of children being able to access the service. What is your response to that?

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

That will probably happen. As Dr. Cox said, on the first year of introduction of the ones that he was involved with there was a reduction but then they realised perhaps: "This is not such a bad thing. Let us go forwards to that." The service has introduced more people to music tuition and it has grown. Particularly the one in my letter, the one in Poole, is a massive service. I happened to be in Poole and went to one of their concerts. There were thousands of children there doing all sorts of things and if you read their website, of course you will see how they have managed to progress by being part of the national system, but also the system they have in place works. Teachers are motivated to teach. Parents are motivated to get their children to go and learn music and they pay. That is across the board and it is from everybody who lives in the worst conditions to the best conditions and I do not see a barrier between the worst condition and the best condition. Lots of people I play music with do not have a job. One person in particular I can think of has not worked because he is unable to work because of his disabilities. He plays music. He is one of the best musicians I have ever heard. He learned through the Jersey Music Service, but then he went on to learn for himself and he is also now paying to play music because he plays with me. We play away in the U.K. (United Kingdom). We have to pay to go to the U.K. He pays because he saves.

[13.45]

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Then one other question on the matter of consultation. Obviously you represent a parent body. Can you just explain or confirm the level of consultation that you have had with the Music Service?

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

Friends of Jersey Youth Music have direct and a lot of contact with the Music Service. Dr. Cox attends our meetings. He has an input to the meetings, but he is not part of the Friends. We ask him for information about this charging or we ask him for information about what is happening next year: "Do you need anything? Do you need some new music? Do you need some new instruments?" We have lots of contact with him and all the parents will see the teachers on reports and on concert dates as well. Also every Monday and Tuesday when the parents come to collect their children, the teachers are always available to speak to and the Music Service teachers that go to school are always available to the teachers at the school to speak to should there be a concern. As the Chairman of F.o.J.Y.M., I am always very keen for all the parents ... and I email all my parents who are part of Friends to say: "This is happening. Do not forget to pay your subscriptions. There is a concert here. There is a concert there." They turn up to concerts, whether it is outside the Music Service or whether it is inside the Music Service and many people are keen to help just for the sake of it. There is no charge involved. They do not want any money for doing it. They just love doing it and they love seeing their children play music.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Thank you. Any further questions? Anything else you would like to ask?

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Not really. It is a public hearing. What would you say to our fellow colleagues, States Members, to support this? When it comes to debate there will be some people that will ask questions like we have asked this morning. How do you get it across in public now? This gets reported and I think the media have gone, which is a shame.

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

It is not a bad thing. It is an excellent thing. If you can pay you will pay, of course, rather than user-pays. If you can pay you will pay. If you cannot pay you will not pay, but the bottom line for me and for F.o.J.Y.M. is if you want to play music you should play music. Some schools do not allow that to happen at the moment. All schools should allow that to happen. Some schools cannot expand because they have not got the resources to expand. Give me £5 a week, I will send you a teacher to teach that child either by himself or in a group of 8. That is the way I feel

the States should look at it. Yes, it is an economic thing. We all want this, but I cannot think that £5 a week in term time is too much for anybody and if it is, well, they will not pay. That is my view.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I suppose the other thing is those who are unfortunate not to qualify for it will have to pay the market rate, which is a lot more than ...

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

Yes, £50 an hour if they want their children to play music.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes. It is less of a lottery in that sense.

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

Yes. I mean, you could go out to an individual music teacher and learn the piano and you would have to pay a lot of money. I would say there are a lot of good musicians who are not musicians because their parents could not afford to pay. There are a lot of bad musicians who enjoy themselves and that is fantastic as well, but there are a lot of good musicians who cannot afford to pay. Therefore, why not have the Music Service allow them to have that ability, whether it be on a cornet, a clarinet, an electric guitar or a set of drums, because it is already there waiting. It is letting expand like it has done, the one I have looked at, which is Dorset. Let it expand. Thousands of children take part in this across a bigger county than ours. I do not understand finance that well, but I understand what you are trying to say, that we are all in it, but it seems a minimal cost for a maximum amount of effort you will get back when they grow up. We are talking children. I am talking about in my experience, my life experience as a musician. The amount of people I have met, I have played with people like Nicola Benedetti. I have met very famous people like John Eliot Gardiner only because I am a musician. I would not have met him if I was a rugby player. It is these life-changing experiences. I have got those experiences and I want people to have that experience as a friend and as a parent. Not as a music teacher, but as a friend and as a parent.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Do you think there is a sense in which music is not valued to its full extent insofar as, although there are statutory provisions for music in schools, there is no ... if you are a visual artist you go to school. You do not have to have something after school where you can afford to buy materials. It is done for you and you can paint, but as a musician it is a bolt-on, if you like. It is not statutory.

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

No, music is statutory at school. They do learn music at school.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes, I understand that.

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

They learn the rudiments of music, but if you want to play an instrument, yes, you have to buy an instrument and that instrument can cost you anything from £1,000 to £10,000 depending what it is. The Music Service provides instruments that have been bought by the Friends of Jersey Youth Music to allow the children to play it for free. Let us expand that. If it is £5 a week for each child, then let everybody have an instrument. In my experience many children go on to buy their own instruments anyway. Their parents will buy them instruments if they are going to play more and also the fund that F.o.J.Y.M. has can help that happen. There is one case at the moment we are considering. There is one particular person who cannot afford to buy the new instrument in order to progress. Why do we not give that person the help to do that and fund them a little bit of money to do that?

Deputy M. Tadier:

Is there a mechanism whereby you can purchase an instrument over a period of time?

Chairman, Friends of Jersey Youth Music:

Not with us, no, but there certainly is in the music shops a hire purchase scheme, like anything else you buy. That does happen a lot: Island Music, Jenco and all that have these schemes and that allows children to have an instrument. I know of one case where if you hire the instrument and decide 3 months later that is the end of it, well, that is the end of it. There is nothing more to pay. You give the instrument back. That has been in place for a long time.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Okay, as there are no final questions I thank you very much for talking to us today. Your enthusiasm certainly has washed over us. It has been a pleasure and I would just like to thank you very much on behalf of the Panel and we will be combining your comments into what we will submit to States Members for the debate. Thank you very much.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Apologies for the delay as well. I know you have got to get back.

Deputy J.M. Maçon: Thank you very much.

[13.52]