

2018.10.23

6 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the decision to spend funding which had been allocated for the refurbishment of Sandybrook Care Home elsewhere: [OQ.160/2018]

Will the Minister explain to Members the decision to spend £1.2 million, which had been allocated to the refurbishment of Sandybrook Care Home, elsewhere, as indicated in R.132/2018?

Deputy R.J. Renouf of St. Ouen (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

The Treasurer of the States explained, during a recent Scrutiny hearing, that it is good financial management for unspent capital budgets to be returned to central contingencies if there is no longer a current business case supported by a department. This is what happened in the case referred to by the Deputy. But the transfer does not prohibit an updated business case from being submitted for Sandybrook and its refurbishment at a later date.

5.6.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Would the Minister like to explain what changed; that the business plan completely changed, or was withdrawn? What happened that that should be the result?

[10:30]

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

What happened is a story that goes back to 2012 when a business case was prepared for the refurbishment of the care home and a bid was submitted and accepted. That money was released in 2014. The project was not immediately progressed, as the Corporate Management Board of the time wanted to review the running of nursing and residential home provisions. But in August 2016 the Corporate Management Board did decide to proceed with a refurbishment, but it then became apparent, at that time, that there would be a need to install a fire sprinkler system and other works were needed and it became a bigger project than originally envisaged; the estimated cost being £2.4 million at that time. It transpired that extra funding was not available and it was decided, rather than maintain an inadequate budget, to put the project on hold. That is why the work was not progressed, but a review of the facilities at Sandybrook is now underway and a new bid could be submitted under a new business case in the next capital programme; that work is being considered.

5.6.2 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Will the Minister not admit that perhaps it is time that H.S.S.D. (Health and Social Services Department) worked more closely with Property Holdings, who would probably have been able to identify much of the remedial work that needed to be done while the Corporate Management Board was dithering? Is it not time that a lot of the Health estate, which has not been moved to Property Holdings, in fact is moved to Property Holdings?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

That is a strategic matter which can be considered and no doubt is in the course of consideration in the ambit of One Government. It is incumbent upon all sections of government to work together more closely. It is quite possibly the case that, in this instance, a bid was put in and accepted without a full feasibility study. It is difficult to go back to 2012 and work out exactly what was missing at that time and who was perhaps not working as well as they might have done with other departments. But it is a lesson to show that there must be thorough work carried out in assessing these projects and full costings made and assurance that the work can proceed if the bid is accepted.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

A supplementary?

The Bailiff:

Senator, if I may say so, I thought your last question was much wider than the question would ... I should not have permitted it, because this was a narrow question about refurbishment of Sandybrook.

5.6.3 Deputy K.F. Morel:

Would the Minister agree that the demise of the Sandybrook refurbishment is a good lesson in revisiting and second-guessing capital projects and how, when this happens, they disappear, often for good?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I think I have just said that it is important that when these things are assessed they are thoroughly worked through, so that it is known, with as much certainty as possible, that it can happen and the work can proceed. This developed over a number of years and it is clear that as time went on, people took different views of what was needed for refurbishment. With hindsight, it is a great shame that the work could not have been implemented immediately, but we are at this point and Sandybrook is a valued facility. It is a home for 21 residents, but has some spare capacity for up to 26, I believe. The department wishes to care for its residents there and provide them with as good facilities as possible, so we are undertaking a review.

5.6.4 Connétable R. Vibert of St. Peter:

Would the Minister confirm that the safety of patients and residents has not been compromised by the failure to undertake work? As he has just stated, one of the additional measures required was, in fact, increased fire protection.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Yes, Sandybrook Care Home is safe and I wish to assure residents and staff who work there and members of the public that it passes all fire inspections. It has recently had a fire inspection, it holds a fire certificate. In terms of the fire precautions, there is an alarm system, there are fire doors, there are evacuation slides and staff are fully trained in procedures. The reason for the mention of the sprinkler system is that when any work is carried out, substantial work, structural work in a building, then of course that building has to be brought up to current standards and the current fire regulation standards include the provision of a sprinkler system. But that is not to say that buildings that are not being worked upon are unsafe or do not meet fire regulations because they do and Sandybrook does.

5.6.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Minister just said that Sandybrook was safe. Would he go a stage further and say the future of Sandybrook is safe in his hands, in that, will he assure the House that he will revisit this decision and he will satisfy the needs of the 21, potentially 26, residents there and that those vacancies, and those who might apply for the vacancies of healthcare assistant at Sandybrook Residential Home, or senior staff nurse at Sandybrook, it is worth applying for those jobs, maintaining staff and morale at this particular place, which is a wonderful centre and facility? Will he throw his full weight behind the continuation of Sandybrook?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

The Deputy will well know that I cannot give any cast-iron perpetual guarantees that Sandybrook will continue for ever and a day but there are no present plans to change, or close, Sandybrook. It is the

only care home that is operated directly by Health and Community Services. But it has been explained to me by members of staff there ... and I had the pleasure of visiting last Friday afternoon and met staff and one of the residents; I had a conversation for a lengthy time with one of the residents. But it was explained to me that at Sandybrook the States could be seen as the carers of last resort, because they do provide a home for residents who, in some cases, their needs are so significant that they have not been accepted within commercially-run residential homes, but they have been accepted at Sandybrook. Therefore, it is perhaps viewed as a sense of where we provide a home to those who have very complex needs, who might find it difficult to find a home elsewhere, and that is how I view Sandybrook.