

2018.09.11

20 The Connétable of St. Helier of the Minister for the Environment regarding implementation of the Future St. Helier initiative: [OQ.122/2018]

When, if at all, does the Minister plan to reconvene the group responsible for implementing the Future St. Helier initiative begun by the former Minister for the Environment?

Deputy J.H. Young (The Minister for the Environment):

I thank the Constable for his question and enable me to circulate the details of the excellent work done by the Future St. Helier Group over the last 3 years to Members. Of course, as he knows, the Council of Ministers is currently working on our current Strategic Priorities for this 4-year term. While it is yet to be finalised and debated by this Assembly, I feel very confident that my colleagues will agree that the Future of St. Helier is critical to our future policies and improvements to our town. It is, in my view, imperative the work of that group is able to continue and that the Connétable is involved fully in it, along with others. Given the position where we are, as it were, in the throes of redeveloping our organisation, the whole approach to the Strategic Plan and the emergence of different policy mechanisms groups and policy boards, it is difficult for me at the moment to be exactly definitive of exactly what structure or what forum or group we will put in place to drive it forward. However, there is no question in my mind it will need to have a focus on implementation and action.

[11:45]

That will need consolidation with our resources in the M.T.F.P. I propose that there will be a group that needs to involve a wide range of stakeholders, including the Parish, and will engage with the local community, as it has previously done. There is a lot of work in progress, but there are fragments of it at the moment, so the big picture, I expect to be in a position in the next 2 months when we see the publication of the Strategic Plan and we know its future, to set in place those arrangements.

4.20.1 Deputy R. Labey:

The Minister reads to us from his notes, I do not know whether he prepared them or his officers did, but he extols the excellent work of the Future of St. Helier project of the last Assembly. But how does that manifest itself in any evidence in St. Helier? What can we see now from that work to back his claims up that it has been an excellent process?

Deputy J.H. Young:

I think another very good question. I share the Deputy's concern. It was one of my main election manifestos that I want to see actions in the base of St. Helier and I think there were some transport traffic management schemes done. But, inevitably, I think the work that has been done is, as I recall it, the planning foundations. There were workshops in May 2015, public workshops in September 2017, there were public surveys and indeed there is an R.T.P.I. (Royal Town Planning Institute) conference that set down a whole agenda of work. The problem is there were no mechanisms in place for the resources and, therefore, there is little ... and I am not being critical of the previous Minister; the group was hamstrung because there was no process to link the Strategic Plan to provide the resources to get this job done. That is something that I shall certainly drive in the new Council of Ministers in the next 4 years.

4.20.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I urge the Minister to include representation from Deputies and also to put children at the heart of any plans for the centre of St. Helier, which is so built up, in terms of areas of play, green spaces and, in particular, providing facilities for youth centres, which are particularly north of St. Helier, is currently very, very absent from that area?

Deputy J.H. Young:

Absolutely. I was so impressed with the preparation work, the conceptual work that was done by our group. I hope Members got a chance to follow the link that I circulated to everybody yesterday. But one of those topics, but one, is about open space and there is no question, we have been desperately supportive of open space for I do not know how long and it has to be put right, and the sufferers of that are definitely children. Children and lack of play space causes bad social conditions, which leads to all these consequences that we all now are having to face up to. There is no question, top priority in my book.

4.20.3 Deputy R. Labey:

What of the North of Town Masterplan, which is an excellent document and has been sitting on a shelf for 10 or more years and is a blueprint for how our town should look; tree-lined avenues, spaces in which the car is always so dominant? Why can we not take an element, even one street, of recommendations on the North of Town Masterplan, Bath Street down to David Place, for example, and implement that? It is already there. We all agreed it is a great plan. Why can we not do something from that instead of waiting for yet another review?

Deputy J.H. Young:

I do not see this as a review at all. I see the process that is going on in the Council of Ministers is how we organise ourselves, both on the Executive side, the officers, and on our political side to get these things done. At the moment there is a complete mismatch between ministerial responsibilities and where the resources are. I feel confident that under our new chief executive and our Chief Minister, as a team we will sort that and we will not be dilatory about it. But, unfortunately, I have to face some practicalities here; just taking stock, work is being done on the south-west St. Helier framework, which we are ready to publish fairly soon. The North of Town Masterplan, yes, it has got strong points in it but there are a number of areas that need to change and improve. We have got the Port Masterplan that I have had a look at early and we have got projects like the Queen's Canopy Project, which I think the Deputy will know about, opportunities. There are all these elements that we have to integrate. That group that the Constable has asked about is going to be a prime mechanism for getting that integration. Because we cannot have *ad hoc* decision making, we have got to have a plan and then work through it as resources allow. But allocate those resources and give responsibility, get it done.