

**QUESTION TO BE ASKED OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE HOUSING COMMITTEE ON TUESDAY
20th MAY 2003, BY DEPUTY G P SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER**

Question

Health and safety considerations recently interrupted refuse collections on a St. Helier States' housing estate. Will the president inform members when the Housing Department was first made aware of the health and safety problem, and, if this was some time ago, the reasons for the time taken to resolve the problem?

Answer

The responsibility for refuse collection in St. Helier is that of the Parish not the Housing Department. The Department has been working with the Parish to replace paladin bins since July 2002, following notification from the Parish that they wished to phase out this particular type of bin. However, the Department has never received notification from the Parish of a specific Health and Safety problem.

The Department was first made aware of a Health and Safety issue on the day that the collections ceased. This unilateral decision was not communicated to the Department but only became apparent when enquiries were made by the Housing Department as to why refuse collections had not been made as scheduled.

To date, no formal or informal notification has been received from the Parish as to the exact nature of the Health and Safety issue, merely that the refuse collectors had declined to collect a certain type of bin, which has been in common usage for 20 years or more, on Health and Safety grounds.

It is understood that the Health and Safety Inspectorate are investigating matters. Given the standard design of this bin and its common usage throughout the United Kingdom and indeed, other Parishes within this Island, it is quite possible that no significant health and safety issue will be identified, provided the refuse collectors observe a safe method of working.

The replacement of the paladin bins in St. Helier, in excess of two hundred, has been a major exercise, at a cost of over £23,000. It could only be done on a phased basis. With only some three weeks to go before the last of the paladin bins on Committee estates in St. Helier were replaced, it is most regrettable that action was taken by the refuse collectors to stop emptying paladins - action which achieved nothing but caused a great deal of hardship and some distress to tenants.