

23.07.17

18 Deputy C.S. Alves of the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture regarding Jersey Sport (OQ.164/2023)

Given that in his Ministerial priorities the Minister states that he wishes to develop a co-ordinated approach to sport across Government to help in the delivery of Ministers' strategic priorities, will he advise what action has been taken to address this priority and what the role of the arm's length organisation Jersey Sport is in addressing it?

Deputy L. Stephenson (Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture - rapporteur):

I would just point out that I would have hopefully been answering this question anyway were the Minister here. A new sports sector officer was appointed earlier this year to provide additional resource to this priority and her work to date has identified a number of opportunities for improving a co-ordinated approach. A new government group has also been established to discuss, agree and co-ordinate the Government's sport and physical activity priorities and determine how these will be delivered and by whom. Another example of cross-government working which falls under this priority to date is the establishment of a play strategy steering group, which I am chairing, bringing together representatives from various government departments as well as other stakeholders, including Jersey Sport. In line with Ministerial priorities, a review of sport and physical activity policy, strategy and delivery is currently under way. Jersey Sport, as the arm's length organisation, is the key delivery partner for any outcomes of this review and in supporting the implementation of the Minister's priorities for sport and physical activity.

4.18.1 Deputy C.S. Alves:

Can the Minister advise when we will be seeing the completion of the work that she just stated there with the priorities and who is delivering what?

Deputy L. Stephenson:

Some of that work will be ongoing. For example, the Government group that has been set up is something that I would like to see as an ongoing, continuing piece of work that will not have a conclusion as such. Other pieces of work within it may well do, and I would expect the review that is currently under way to speak to that point as well and perhaps make some suggestions about how something like that could be formalised in future. That review is currently ongoing. The public consultation part of it closed on Friday and there have been a large number of submissions which are quite detailed, so our timescale for publishing the results of it has been pushed back slightly. We expect that to now be October. Then the play strategy steering group that I mentioned, we would expect towards the autumn to be potentially publishing some results and starting to talk about that work. We have held 3 meetings, I think, to date on that, which have all been establishing terms of reference and bringing together quite a diverse group of people. But as soon as I have more information on that I am very happy to share.

4.18.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:

In terms of priorities in this question, can the Minister confirm whether it is the case that Jersey Sport spent more on branded merchandise for Jersey Sport than they did on, for example, funding Jersey Football Association?

Deputy L. Stephenson:

I do not have the details of the accounts of Jersey Sport to hand but they are published annually and are available online for anybody to have a look at.

4.18.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I ask whether, if that is the case, the Minister thinks this is the right priority in terms of developing our sport? Is it not about grassroots funding for, for example, football, women's football on the Island, girls' football? I would say that that is not happening in some areas simply because they do not have changing rooms. Is that not the priority that should be made and not the branding for an arm's length organisation?

Deputy L. Stephenson:

The review that is currently under way is taking a look at all of the priorities both within Government and within Jersey Sport and how the 2 work together. I expect that once that has been completed we can move forward in a far more productive way to perhaps recalibrate where necessary and work together towards some common goals. It has now been over 5 years since Jersey Sport was established and I think it is a very sensible moment to take a look at that and move forward from there.

4.18.4 Deputy A. Howell:

I just wondered if the Minister could let us know when we will have the result of the roof of Fort Regent, please, and whether some things may be able to return there after the vaccination centre closes.

[17:00]

Deputy L. Stephenson:

I am not aware of a timescale on the roof work. I can liaise with the Minister for Infrastructure and come back to the Deputy.

Deputy A. Howell:

The other bit of the question was whether we are going to be able to return to using the large hall in the Fort when the vaccination centre closes?

Deputy L. Stephenson:

As I have said in answer to a previous question earlier today, we are continuing to press ahead with the decant of sport from Fort Regent. But the delays to the Oakfield project mean that Fort Regent needs to stay open for the time being until that project is delivered, which we currently anticipate to be another year. A bid has been made as part of the Government Plan to ensure that that facility can stay open. My view - and it is still a sports facilities site at Fort Regent - is that while there is a space there and if people want to use it and we can make that happen, recognising that there are challenges around staffing the site and where certain areas may have been closed off, but if there are suitable places that can be used in a pragmatic way while the site is still open, then I would be very keen to see that happen.

4.18.5 Deputy L.V. Feltham:

In her answers to the questions the Assistant Minister has mentioned a lot of reviews and steering committees, could she confirm the cost of the reviews and administering the steering committees and also the anticipated benefits and what will be delivered?

Deputy L. Stephenson:

The cost - I have previously published as well of the review - is around £12,000. I believe that we have just agreed for another day or so's work of that individual because there has been such a high interest in meeting with him from various groups and organisations. I think that represents extremely good value for money for the work that we want to complete there. As I have said earlier, I believe that is a really important piece of work that is going to carry out a very timely review of our relationship with Jersey Sport, among other things, and then provide a really good base from where we can reset and move on in a productive way. Everything else that I have mentioned in there, the steering group and others, is all within existing resources and the steering group particularly brings together a really diverse and interesting group of people, some of whom are stakeholders from outside of Government and it represents arm's lengths working with us. Charities, some individuals with interests and qualifications in that area as well, all of whom are giving up their time within their own existing resources to work with us on this.

4.18.6 Deputy L.V. Feltham:

Even though the Assistant Minister has said that this work will be done within existing resources, it will indeed come at a cost. It would be good if the Assistant Minister could quantify how many hours she anticipates these people spending in meetings and what work may not be done because people are spending time having a chat in meetings.

Deputy L. Stephenson:

I really would take issue with the way that question was asked because if, for example, take the play strategy, a commitment was made by this Assembly as part of the Bridging Island Plan that 3 Ministers would work on exactly this. It has then come up as a priority across various conversations that some joined-up thinking needs to happen on this, so that is exactly what is being done now. I would argue that compiling some figures, as the Deputy suggests, would be a waste of time and resources.

4.18.7 Deputy M.R. Scott:

Could the Assistant Minister just clarify the extent to which Jersey Sport is being involved in the development of policy, as well as the delivery of policy and, if it is the case, how this conflict of interest might be addressed and the risks associated with it addressed?

Deputy L. Stephenson:

I think it is fair to say - and the Deputy will know this from some of our previous conversations - that I think there is a lack of clarity around this area, which is one of the key drivers for the review that I have mentioned earlier. I very much see Government as setting the policy and Jersey Sport as delivering on that work. But recognising that those employed by Jersey Sport and the organisation itself are very valuable and experienced and passionate about sport and the aims of delivering for Islanders there should be mechanisms in place for them to be consulted and to feed in on policy. I hope that helps.