

2.9 Deputy J.A. Martin of the Minister for Treasury and Resources regarding the convening of a public meeting on the relocation of the Police Station to Green Street car park:

Will the Minister undertake to arrange a public meeting as soon as possible on the relocation of the police station to Green Street car park and ensure that the traffic impact study is published before this meeting and, if not, why not?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf (The Minister for Treasury and Resources):

Deputy Noel is ably handling matters concerning the police station so I would ask him to be rapporteur.

Deputy E.J. Noel of St. Lawrence (Assistant Minister for Treasury and Resources - rapporteur):

I am grateful to Deputy Martin for her question as it allows us to explain the consultation that has been and is continuing to take place. As part of the extensive communication strategy for this project, a meeting is planned to take place on the evening of Wednesday, 1st August. This follows a series of meetings held in February as part of the consultation process. These meetings included an open public meeting but others were particularly targeted at neighbours and other interested parties. The planned meeting on 1st August will focus on responding to the comments made during the consultation exercise and on ensuring that those with an interest in the project are as informed as possible before a planning application is lodged. Separate meetings for States Members and relevant staff are also planned for earlier on in the day on Wednesday, 1st August. The traffic assessment has been prepared by the project team in conjunction with officers from T.T.S. and will be published when a planning application is tabled. However, I am happy to release the completed version to Members in advance of the meeting scheduled for 1st August. Naturally, there will be further opportunities for members of the public to comment on the proposed development when a planning application has been tabled.

2.9.1 Deputy J.A. Martin:

I know the Assistant Minister does not mean to mislead, but he knows through email and the question I am asking for a public meeting. I have been in the area drop-in sessions, again, planned for States Members; drop-in sessions. Myself, I will say to the Assistant Minister, I have had people with expert knowledge in this House come up to me and say as a Deputy of that area: "Do you know this? Do you know that?" This needs to be aired in a proper presentation to States Members in a public meeting held at the Town Hall by his officers. Will the Assistant Minister commit to do this? It is not "head them off at the pass" because it will come back and bite him if he does not have this proper public meeting. Thank you.

Deputy E.J. Noel:

As I have already said, a public meeting will be taking place on 1st August. The venue is yet to be decided because we are looking at the availability but it is likely to be in The Willows or The Limes where we held our previous meetings. The reason for this is the people that are directly impacted upon by this proposed development live in that area and it is easier for them to get to that area than it is to Town Hall.

2.9.2 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I have to echo what Deputy Martin said: the meetings were drop-in meetings. That is a big difference to an actual publicised public meeting. The Willows are not really suitable, in my opinion, and as the Deputy and Minister will know, I have put forward the idea of using the Town Hall. For some reason - I am not sure what - Lime Grove House is a very interesting subject to the public, and would he not undertake to put out very strong advertising right now so

that as many people who are going to be impacted by what will be a major change can have their views and put forward their ideas before we reach the point of no return?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I would just like to take the opportunity to remind Members of the public consultation that we carried out in February. We had a series of drop-in meetings for States Members on 21st February; we had a media briefing on the same day. Specific meetings with neighbours were held on 22nd February. They included local businesses, the residents of Lime Grove Apartments and the staff and the residents of The Limes. We also did a mail-shot in the area to some 1,500 addresses and a public drop-in meeting was held on 29th February. We have done a substantial amount of pre-planning application consultation on this; we are continuing on that. We have a planned consultation and communication strategy and we are going to continue with that. We have names and addresses of those who provided them to us and they will also be getting additional information when we lodge the planning application. All those in the area are going to be fully informed of what we are doing and why we are doing it.

The Bailiff:

Assistant Minister, I think the question was whether there would be a fully publicised public meeting.

Deputy E.J. Noel:

As I said, there is a public meeting to be held on 1st August.

2.9.3 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I would like if the Assistant Manager could advise how many people dropped in to this drop-in meeting and does he not accept that this affects everyone in the Island, not just the immediate vicinity?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I do not have the precise figures but from memory there were probably close to 100 people that dropped-in during the evening of 29th February. I am happy to get the precise feedback figures from the department and pass those on to the Deputy.

2.9.4 Deputy J.H. Young:

Would the Assistant Minister advise the Assembly whether he considers that public consultation needs to be properly informed and that there is a difference between drop-in meetings and token consultation and arranging for plans to be properly on display, for officers to be there to explain the traffic layout and parking and so on, with an opportunity for the members of the public who view those plans to make comments? Would he not consider that those processes are appropriate consultation for this project?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

We did that and, in fact, did do most of that apart from have a formal public meeting. The public meeting that we did have was on a drop-in basis. There were experts there from the architects, from the police, from T.T.S. to provide the road traffic information. That type of environment is better for members of the public to get their detailed questions answered where meetings are perhaps maybe dominated by politicians asking questions or members of the public asking questions. It gave individuals who live in that area, who are going to be impacted by this development... to ask their questions in a non-intimidating environment. I believe that that is the best method for those individuals to have their questions answered.

2.9.5 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Given my willingness to hold a non-intimidating public meeting in the Town Hall if necessary on the evening of 1st August so long as the Visite Royale has finished by then, is the Assistant Minister willing to attend with his officers so that we can have the public meeting that people obviously want?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

As I already said, I would prefer that the venue is closer to the residents of the area affected. I will give that consideration and I will revert my answer back to the Constable in due course.

2.9.6 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Could I just press the Assistant Minister to accept that the residents of the whole Parish, and indeed the whole Island, will be affected by the location of the new police station, and really the Town Hall is the appropriate place to have that meeting?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I am happy to agree to disagree with the Connétable and I said I will consider the matter and get back to him.

2.9.7 Deputy M. Tadier:

I do not know how the Deputy does things in St. Lawrence but in St. Brelade when we have a public meeting we either use Communicare or the Parish Hall and we invite the public along and they can ask questions in an open forum and then the Ministers or the Deputies respond accordingly in a public forum, not behind a closed door. It seems to me that what the Assistant Minister there has been describing is basically a propaganda exercise, which occurred in February, and another propaganda exercise which is planned for 1st August. Does the Assistant Minister agree and will he not take up the offer - a very generous offer - of the Constable of St. Helier, which I presume is to use his hall for free? Will he also perhaps state whether he has to pay to use the current location where the quasi consultation is taking place at the moment?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

There are a number of questions there. I have already answered the question concerning the offer by the Constable of St. Helier. I do not agree that this is a quasi consultation process.

[11:00]

This is a fair way to meet the people that are directly affected by this proposed development. It has been a detailed plan. We will continue along that plan to make sure that all those affected have an opportunity to get the information that they require. Let me say again, this is part of a process. The formal actual part of the consultation process comes when we lodge the planning application.

2.9.8 Deputy M. Tadier:

The offer has only just been made by the Constable of St. Helier and the Assistant Minister has not even had the chance to speak to the Minister or his department as to whether they want to take up the offer. Is he not being a bit premature in rejecting it now and should he not consult perhaps, even behind closed doors, with his own Minister and the department?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I think Hansard will prove that I have not rejected the offer. I said that I would get back to the Constable after considering it.

2.9.9 Connétable D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence:

What will the Assistant Minister and the department do if there is an overwhelming rejection by the public at the meeting proposed by the Constable of St. Helier?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

If there is a lack of strong public support for the proposed development on that site, that will come out in the planning application process. If that is the case and a planning application is not granted, then I will have to liaise with my colleagues at Home Affairs and further colleagues in the Treasury to see if we have an alternative solution. Until that time, I think we need to go through the proper process, which is the planning application process.

2.9.10 Deputy J.A. Martin:

For open consultation, I do not think I have met such resistance from an Assistant Minister to not say we will have a public meeting. As for affecting the residents in the area, what about the knock-on effect to my residents and the Constables' residents in Ann Court, say, because we have parking there that will now not move to Green Street? The Assistant Minister is being so blindsided about the few people who live in the area that he is absolutely missing the point. It would have been better if he had called the meeting. It is obvious he has not. The Constable has offered the meeting and he will get support from St. Helier representatives and there will be a public meeting. If his officers are not attending, so be it. I ask the Minister to reconsider now. He has been well-briefed by his Minister and he can have an answer.

The Bailiff:

That is your question, is it? Your question is would the Minister reconsider, is it?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Yes, and with the answer being yes, please. [Laughter]

The Bailiff:

I am not sure the Standing Orders allow a questioner to dictate the answer.

Deputy E.J. Noel:

Deputy Martin has said that I have said there will not be a public meeting. That is simply not true. There will be a public meeting on 1st August. As the venue has not been decided yet, I am considering the kind offer of the Constable. A public meeting will take place. I do not know the venue but, as soon as I do, I will let Members know.