

3.20 The Connétable of St. Helier of the Minister for Treasury and Resources regarding the refurbishment of the Le Seilleur building at Oxford Road:

Does the Minister accept that it would be in the best interests of the community if the Le Seilleur building in Oxford Road could be refurbished in early course and put to a use which complements the Millennium Town Park such as a community centre and, if so, what action is he taking to achieve this?

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

Deputy Noel will answer this question.

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

I am advised that the Minister for Health and Social Services is effectively the sole trustee of the H.E. Le Seilleur Fund and must act in the best interest of the fund in her capacity as trustee. In doing so, the Minister is required to have obtained best value for the building, should it be disposed of. Subject to formal confirmation from the Minister for Health and Social Services that the property is to be sold, Property Holdings will market it in the usual manner, through a local agent, to seek the best price for the fund. I would welcome bids from the Parish of St. Helier, or indeed any community groups, which will need to be considered alongside any other bids received. Let me be clear here; the trustees' hands are tied. They have no choice but to obtain a market value of any trust property disposed.

3.20.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Would the Assistant Minister like to comment on the wide gap of time since this property was made available to the States, the dereliction of the building in the past several years? Does he believe this represents good stewardship of States' property and is it an encouragement to members of the public to leave property to the States of Jersey?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I agree with much of what the Connétable has just said. This property has been left in a poor state for far too long. It is unfortunate that the States did not agree to its sale a number of years ago and hopefully, with the formal request from the Minister for Health and Social Services, that property will be put on the market in May.

3.20.2 Deputy R.J. Rondel:

He just finished up there with the answer I was seeking; when would it be forthcoming. But this has been going on for a long, long time now. Is there a way that an option could be given to the Parish of St. Helier into possibly having the chance of purchasing the property?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

Indeed. I thought we had an agreement with the Connétable of St. Helier. The Connétable met with myself and the director of Property Holdings on 24th January this year at a meeting in his office and we agreed at that time that, subject to an independent valuation, we would effectively give the Parish first refusal on the Oxford Road property. That offer is still there but it must be done at an arm's length market transaction.

3.20.3 The Connétable of St. Helier:

24th January is indeed quite a while ago. The Assistant Minister talked about best value and it is possibly a question more for the Minister for Health and Social Services but I think he will know that best value was not in fact the key point about the covenant governing these buildings, the Le Seilleur Trust, but it is about the uses to which those properties are put.

Does he not agree with me that a community centre serving this extremely important public park that we have already been discussing this morning would be highly desirable if it I can be achieved.

Deputy E.J. Noel:

As with any trustee, a trustee has to act within the confines of our trust legislation and best practice. Therefore, the trustees' hands are tied. Any disposal of a property within that fund has to be done at arm's length, market value.