

2018.09.11

**4 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the provision of public toilets in St. Helier: [OQ.120/2018]**

Further to his response to Oral Question 87/2018 about the provision of public toilets in St. Helier, that he would take the matter up with the Chief Minister and his department, will the Minister advise whether he has made any progress in that regard and, if not, when does he plan to do so?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour (The Minister for Infrastructure):**

I thank the Constable of St. Helier for his triannual question regarding toilets. The good people of Jersey come into town not just to admire the wonderful architecture but to avail themselves of the wonderful shops and stores we have in St. Helier. These self-same stores pay high rates, which goes towards the amenities provided, such as toilets, *et cetera*. Should the Constable wish to dispose of this responsibility I am more than happy to give him some numbers of people who will come and clean the toilets for him. Should he wish Infrastructure to take over this responsibility then we can come to some arrangement. That is a conversation we can have, and I am more than happy to meet up with the Constable and discuss that.

**4.4.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:**

Could I ask the Minister to answer the question? The question is: has he met the Chief Minister, as he said he would, and his department, to take the matter forward?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Yes, I have discussed this with the department. Regarding another conversation I was having with the Chief Minister, I did mention this. The Chief Minister obviously is dealing with important matters of State, Brexit, *et cetera*, I did not want to burden him too much with toilets. But I repeat, I am more than happy to have the conversation with the Constable of St. Helier if he wants to make another arrangement. I did sign an agreement with the Constable many years ago saying that he would clean everything within the ring road and what was then T.T.S. (Transport and Technical Services) would clean everything outside of the ring road. If he wishes to alter that arrangement or if he wishes Infrastructure to take over that facility that is a conversation that we can have.

**4.4.2 Deputy M. Tadier:**

I am intrigued by the apparent *non sequitur* of the comment of St. Helier shops paying higher rates and then the link to visiting public conveniences in the capital. Is the Minister saying that there is a presumption that anybody who uses the public convenience in St. Helier should have first visited a shop in town and spent money there or that there is some other intrinsic link that we are missing?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

I am not sure if the Deputy hangs around the public toilets **[Members: Oh!]** ...

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

Minister, no. Could you withdraw that please?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

I withdraw that, Sir, yes. I say in jest, Sir. But as I say, if people live in St. Helier they are paying rates anyway. If they come in from outside of St. Helier they do so to shop, *et cetera*, and obviously all the rates payable by businesses go towards the facilities. If the Constable would like me to take over responsibility that is a conversation we can have.

#### **4.4.3 Deputy M. Tadier:**

I do not have the habit of hanging around public toilets in St. Helier, or in any other Parish, and I am sure the Minister might have seen me if I did have that habit. However, I do think it is important that however the public toilets are funded that they are funded promptly, not just for tourists but for locals who can expect clean and usable toilets. That it should not necessarily fall disproportionately to one Parish to fund toilets that are used by the whole Island, including the tourist community, is that not a reasonable position?

#### **Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

As I pointed out, many people come to town to shop. I do not think it is unreasonable that the Parish who provide those facilities, as many people - locals, residents, businesses - pay rates towards that. I have said many times, if the Constable would like me to take over those facilities that is a conversation we can have. I cannot make that any clearer.

#### **The Deputy Bailiff:**

This appears to have gendered an enormous amount of enthusiasm.

#### **4.4.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

The Minister appears to be offering to take over the Parish-run toilets. Will he be doing so on the basis of a living wage to anybody he employs to take over these toilets?

#### **Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

As the Deputy is aware, I was not in favour of outsourcing but outsourced it has been, and I have taken over the department, so whoever takes over it will be a contractor. I would not be party to that. If the Constable would like me to look at that, I am more than happy to do so or to recommend somebody that could do it for him, or if Infrastructure take it over then that is a conversation we can have.

#### **4.4.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Would the Minister mind answering the question: would that be on the basis of the living wage rather than minimum wage workers, which has already happened to outsourcing, but in this new outsourcing surely the living wage should be a factor?

#### **Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

I would hope so. I am not privy to that information. If something is outsourced it is outsourced. But it will be on the same conditions as they are being cleaned at the moment. I am not sure what the situation is with the Constables, whoever it is is cleaning the toilets at the moment. I am not aware of that.

#### **4.4.6 Deputy R.J. Rondel of St. Helier:**

It was my understanding that the Minister gave a commitment to Deputy Wickenden to provide a list of all toilet facilities throughout the Island that were the responsibility of the Department for Infrastructure and the Parish of St. Helier. I wonder if he has yet to produce that list?

#### **Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

I have the minutes of the meeting here and the question. It does not say so there. But I am more than happy to do that for Members.

#### **4.4.7 Deputy S.G. Luce of St. Martin:**

The Constable of St. Helier still has not had an answer to his question, which is: would the Minister advise as to whether he has made any progress? Are we to assume the answer is no?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Define “progress” with toilets. I cannot make it any clearer than I already have. We need toilet facilities in St. Helier, the Parish is already providing them. If the Constable wants us to take them over that is a conversation we can have. I cannot make that any clearer.

**4.4.8 The Connétable of St. Helier:**

The Minister has made it clear that he sees no unfairness in the fact that ratepayers of the Island’s capital fund the provision of public services; not just toilets, but parks, gardens, street cleaning and so on. Whereas the vast majority of such services in the other Parishes are paid for out of general taxation. Is the Minister aware that addressing this inequity was part of the last Strategic Plan and is he going to take it forward in the next one?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

I am more than happy to discuss that with officers and we will see where we can go with that. But it does seem quite bizarre that the Constable insists on closing toilets down, converting them into cafés, *et cetera*, and having to build new ones. We are more than happy to take over any existing toilets by arrangement, and that is a conversation I am more than happy to have with the Constable, and I will take this up with officers.