

2019.03.12

3 Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the maintenance and improvement of community facilities at the former La Pouquelaye Primary School: [OQ.66/2019]

Will the Minister explain what plans, if any, are in place to maintain and improve the community facilities at the former La Pouquelaye Primary School?

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

This property is set out on a 21-year lease to the Jersey Society for the Provision of a Children's Resource Centre, or Centre Point, under a fully repairing and insurant lease, which commenced in 2010. So, any questions regarding these facilities, in these properties, would therefore need to be directed to the tenant.

6.3.1 Deputy I. Gardiner:

Does the Minister think this is ethical to saddle such an enormous repair obligation to a charity? What if any, future plans do Property Holdings, which is the States-owned property management, have to improve the site, or he is expecting the charity, Centre Point Trust, to continue to invest in such an outdated structure themselves?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

When the contract was passed, the rent was £10, and each party met their own fees in connection with the lease; the public's fee being £4,500. So, they are getting a fantastic deal at the moment. The Department for Infrastructure is not able to sponsor, directly, other premises of this nature and would be down to some other department.

6.3.2 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Would the Minister like to tell us when he will be bringing forward a States property plan on the basis, perhaps, of need rather than just ... he is gesticulating. If he would bring it forward on the basis of need, rather than just maximising income?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

It is a bit wide of the mark, so I was gesticulating. Yes, I would be more than happy to get that to States Members as soon as possible. I will speak to the Property Holdings officers regarding that.

6.3.3 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier:

Does the current arrangement contain a break clause and, if so, when does that trigger?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, it does contain a break clause. There is an option to break the lease by giving 12 months' written notice, if the property is required for redevelopment. But Property Holdings would undertake to replace the premises with a like for like. So, similar premises would be found for the lessee.

6.3.4 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier:

I accept that this is not entirely the Minister's portfolio, but does he not agree that, as a Minister, and as a member of the Council of Ministers, it is incumbent upon him to make sure the Property Holdings Department is properly resourced in order to make sure that community facilities, not only in St. Helier, but across the Island, are fit for purpose and meet the needs of the community?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, I would agree with the Constable. But, as this is basically rent free, I think it is incumbent upon the tenant to make suitable repairs. I will ask my department to inspect the premises, once more, to make sure everything is together.

6.3.5 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Will the Minister confirm that when Centre Point were given the use of that particular building, it was of great benefit to the States, because they were moved out of the Jersey College for Girls, so it could be developed for housing? So, really, the benefit to the States was greater than the benefit to the body. So, to talk about peppercorn rents is misleading, considering the benefit that came to the States.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Not misleading at all. We have given the premises on a peppercorn rent. If some other departments, or some private individuals, wish to sponsor the organisation then, I would say, congratulations to them.

6.3.6 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

I did ask the question: would he confirm that they got the premises because they were moved from Jersey College for Girls and that is why they got the cheap rent? Because it was beneficial to the States.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

They do perform an excellent service, I am not sure I can add to that.

5.3.7 Deputy I. Gardiner:

My concern that hundreds of young people use this building every week and given the state of this primary school was a replacement 2 decades ago, would the Minister agree to a long-term strategy for the site needs to be developed as a matter of urgency? Will he agree to undertake such a study?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I do not believe we have been contacted by the tenant to that effect, but I am more than happy to check with officers.