

2024.04.16.

**4.14 Deputy J. Renouf of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the appointment of a new Chair of the Health and Community Services Advisory Board (OQ.56/2024)**

Will the Minister provide a timetable for the appointment of a new chair of the Health and Community Services Advisory Board?

**Deputy T. Binet (The Minister for Health and Social Services):**

Given that the Assembly is due to review the board arrangements in the spring of 2025, and the fact that the recruitment process for the new chair will take approximately 3 to 4 months, I have decided not to proceed with recruitment at this point in time. If a person were to be appointed, they would only have a contract period of around 9 months, and this would probably be too short a period to be attractive to candidates. That said, I am pleased to report that the former acting chair has agreed to chair the board meetings going forward, and she and the remaining non-executives have very kindly offered to share the workload of the chairperson between them. This will be of great benefit as I very much value their contributions. I am pleased to say that they support the actions that I have taken to date.

**4.14.1 Deputy J. Renouf:**

I am still digesting that. The Minister was one of those who voted against the establishment of the health board in June 2023, as did his entire Assistant Minister team, the current Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Infrastructure, the Minister for Children, and indeed the Chief Minister. The Minister has now got rid of the first permanent chair of the board and says he does not intend to replace him for over a year. Can he reassure the public that he is not simply trying to get rid of the board and remains committed to the decision of this Assembly to set up a board as an essential mechanism for driving up standards of healthcare in Jersey?

**Deputy T. Binet:**

Yes, I am very happy indeed to confirm that. I would just remind the Deputy of the reasons that I was sceptical about the board. I made it plain at the time that I did not object to a board at all but I just thought that the single point of failure in having that board reporting to the Minister for Health and Social Services only was not acceptable. That is a matter that I intend to address as soon as I can.

**4.14.2 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Is the Minister planning any other changes to the terms of reference or the remit of this board?

**Deputy T. Binet:**

No.

**4.14.3 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Does the Minister support the continuation of this board?

**Deputy T. Binet:**

I thought I had made that plain in my initial response.

**4.14.4 Deputy M. Tadier:**

I am not suggesting this is the case in any way but perception is an important issue when it comes to accountability of Government. Could there be a perception out there that the Minister might want a board that is compliant? If that is the case, does that then bring into question the whole purpose of the board in the first place?

**Deputy T. Binet:**

The Deputy is quite right, there could be that perception but that would be entirely incorrect.

**4.14.5 Deputy M. Tadier:**

What would the Minister do to try and allay that very real possibility of a perception in the public in his communication strategy? He has just told us about this, this morning, in a fairly shock announcement. Will he be making a public statement about this to reassure the public that the checks and balances in the hospital are fully in place?

[11.30]

**Deputy T. Binet:**

I had not intended to make a public statement on it, and I do not think I will. This is just one particular incident. I made it plain in my initial response that the remainder of the board are very constructive and collaborative. I am enjoying working with them and I hope that the same can be said in reverse. I do not have any issues, the board is functioning perfectly well and I hope the media might report on the comments that I am making here.

**4.14.6 Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:**

It is my understanding that there is a further vacancy on the board, which is for an individual who has specific experience to do with finances. Could the Minister just confirm that for me, please, and confirm does this leave 2 vacancies? Will either of them be filled going forward?

**Deputy T. Binet:**

Yes, indeed, we are looking to fill the finance vacancy. With a bit of luck that might be achievable with somebody local, if all goes well.

**4.14.7 Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:**

I just wonder what thinking has been done about why a chair is not needed for the board when there are certain criteria set out that there should be individuals who have specific skills in finances and in public health arenas, and I think the terms of reference specify it. There is a clear terms of reference that it should be led by a chair. What formal consideration has been given to how that can just be got rid of?

**Deputy T. Binet:**

I was not aware that I had got rid of it. The lady that has agreed to carry on chairing has chaired it very successfully for 6 month, and she is a perfectly well-qualified lady.

**4.14.8 Deputy I. Gardiner:**

The Minister mentioned that the other members of the board are collaborative; does that mean that they are agreeing with what the Minister decided?

**Deputy T. Binet:**

Not necessarily, no.

**4.14.9 Deputy I. Gardiner:**

So, in this case, can the Minister explain what has happened during the 5 weeks from the Minister announcing an exceptional understanding of the health service delivery of Mr. Hayhoe to within 5 weeks Mr. Hayhoe disappears?

**Deputy T. Binet:**

Two things, I do not think this question really relates remotely to my timetable for appointing a new chair. It may do, but I can confirm that I have made an arrangement with Mr. Hayhoe that we would say nothing further, and I intend to stick to that. It was an arrangement that we made and I do not intend to break that.

**4.14.10 Deputy J. Renouf:**

The previous chair was quoted as saying that: “The Minister needs to learn to listen to people more and I am not the only one who struggles to work with him.” Is the Minister concerned that it will be hard to find a suitable high calibre replacement for the chair, when he finally gets around to doing it, given this reputation?

**Deputy T. Binet:**

The Deputy raises a very interesting point. I picked up on what was said so I emailed Mr. Hayhoe to ask him ...

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

Can we remind ourselves of Standing Order 104, which I should have mentioned earlier on? A Member of the States must not refer to an individual who is not a Member of the States by name unless it is unavoidable.

**Deputy T. Binet:**

Apologies to the former chair. Yes, I emailed the former chair, and I heard that comment made on the television and in writing by the BBC. I was assured by the former chair that those comments should not have been attributable to him and I have been assured by the BBC that they should. So that is ongoing and I am trying to get to the bottom of where those comments came from.

**Deputy J. Renouf:**

Could I ask just for clarification on the point that is he worried that his reputation will make it difficult for a chair to be appointed?

**Deputy T. Binet:**

That is a very difficult question to answer; that could well be the case. The fact that we are not intending to advertise for the time being should leave a certain period of time during which it will become apparent that the board is fully functional, so in the longer term I do not see that being a problem.