

3.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding any studies underlying the decision to move elderly residents from Overdale:

Would the Minister identify the relevant studies, if any, such as cost benefit and value for money studies, which underlie the decision to move elderly residents from Overdale to private facilities?

Senator S. Syvret (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

The Health and Social Services Department has developed an initial outline business case, which has looked into the feasibility and desirability of closing Leoville and McKinstry wards on the Overdale site, as they are no longer fit for purpose. Alternative options for providing the service have been considered, particularly considering the costs and benefits of each alternative. These options included keeping the existing beds open in the current accommodation, with an upgrade to the fabric of the building, a new-build or the purchase of 54 beds from the private sector. The proposal to move clients to private sector facilities, where this is appropriate, was identified as best meeting the needs of the clients in an affordable manner. I have approved in principle the recommendations of the business case so that significantly better patient facilities may be procured in the private sector to better meet patient need. I am not prepared to provide any financial information at this time as the Department is currently conducting the tender process for these beds in the private sector, and such information is, therefore, commercially sensitive. It must be pointed out that the initiative to move these residents from Overdale to private facilities has not been driven by short-term financial constraints and objectives. It has been driven by the need to provide appropriate care facilities that are needed now and to develop facilities and multi-disciplinary support mechanisms to meet expected long-term requirements of the Island in response to the aging demographic.

3.3.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Would the Minister put in the public domain the general sums of money that are involved, so that a learned judgment can be made on whether this massive shift to the private sector has, indeed, been done in the context of a well worked out policy. Secondly, Sir, would the Business Plan upon which this move is now being conducted also be placed into the public domain?

Senator S. Syvret:

I think I have already said in my answer that the answer to both of those questions is “No”. To put them into the public domain at this stage would disadvantage the public interest, as it would give commercial information, commercially sensitive information about costs and other things to potential bidders for the contracts. I say now, as I said on Radio Jersey last night, I am happy to make this information available to the Deputy and, indeed, any other Member of the Assembly, on the basis of strict confidentiality. Of course, to make it public at this stage would disadvantage the public interest.

3.3.2 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

In the process of these changes, could the Minister advise as to whether ultimately the number of beds available will either be less, more or the same and is there any

intention in the future that the occupants might have to pay all or part of the cost that arises?

Senator S. Syvret:

There will be no variation in the cost for those clients currently using the facilities. As has been made plain on numerous occasions before, it will simply be a case of moving people out of those facilities into better, private facilities. We believe that 54 beds are required. Those are the numbers that we might be looking to commission from the private sector. We do not know quite where yet. There are now a variety of very high quality facilities on the Island which will provide people with private rooms, en suite facilities, facilities of that nature which are completely absent in the 2 existing wards which are being used at the moment, where there is no privacy. Terminally ill patients and their families are simply kept partitioned-off by curtains from other people, other visiting families. It is a wholly unacceptable setting. People that need continuing care are essentially living in what should be a home-type environment. The 2 wards at present, built in the 1930s as they were, simply comprise of a hospital ward-style development. It is not, therefore, appropriate for long-term care.

3.3.3 Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour:

In light of local rumours, would the Minister for Health and Social Services confirm that he has absolutely no intention to sell, lease or otherwise dispose of, or privatise Overdale Hospital?

Senator S. Syvret:

Yes, Sir, I am happy to give that assurance absolutely and categorically. I have no idea where the rumour started that the Overdale site was going to be sold. There is not a grain of truth in it. Indeed, Health and Social Services have made very substantial investments of taxpayers' money, running into some millions of pounds, on new buildings on the overall site at Overdale. So, there is no question other than it is going to be in the ownership of the States for providing health, social care and other facilities for the public into the future. The issue, as far as the old 1930s buildings are concerned, is that the States of Jersey simply does not have in its capital programme at the present time the money to demolish and rebuild them now. But we might do in 5 years' time. We do not know. We will have to see how the money is going.

3.3.4 Deputy A.E. Pyrke of Trinity:

Would the Minister inform the House, when the residents are moving to the residential homes, what is going to happen to the staff in place at Overdale?

Senator S. Syvret:

The staff will be redeployed throughout areas of need Health and Social Services. That has been made absolutely clear to the staff on numerous occasions. There will be no redundancies, no job losses. Those people that wish to continue to work for Health and Social Services will continue to do so. They will be deployed to other areas of need.

3.3.5 Deputy J.B. Fox:

I was pleased to hear the reassurances about the site after the processes going through at the moment for improvements to health care, but there are residents in the area, that

would probably have been listening to the rumours as well, that would like reassurance that the fine mature trees - some of which have got history - will be retained on any future build or other requirement that Health would produce. Can you give that reassurance today?

Senator S. Syvret:

I certainly strongly support the preservation of trees, so, I am certainly happy to look into it in terms of any future plans for redeveloping the site that may exist. But I would have thought it would be most unlikely that trees and other attractive features of the area would be damaged or removed in any way. The area, it has to be remembered, includes the crematorium and the crematorium gardens, which are areas obviously that have to be treated with reverence and respect. So, at any future States of Jersey redevelopment of some of the old buildings on the site, all I can say is environmental factors, such as preservation of trees, will be taken very seriously and any such development will be undertaken with the utmost sensitivity.

3.3.6 Deputy P.N. Troy of St. Brelade:

I have previously asked the Senator for costings. He did say he would provide them to me. I have not received anything at all and he is now saying today that he cannot provide costings. I think he should certainly consider passing information to States members. I certainly could keep any information in confidence. The question, Sir: patient care certainly is very important and I would like to ask the Senator would a bed manager be appointed to these 54 bed? Would there also be proper counselling for people who are coming into respite care and arrangements made to ensure that people are not shunted around from one facility to another?

Senator S. Syvret:

Yes, Sir, patients will be engaged in discussions about their own circumstances and where they are going to go. There is no question of patients, without reference to them or their families, simply being shunted to this place or that. There will be proper further discussions with all of the clients of the service facility there. It has to be remembered that there are 7 respite bed facilities there. Most of the rest are long-term care beds. It has to be said for the respite facilities there, take-up has fallen very significantly because of the extremely poor quality and inappropriateness of the building. Yes, Sir, the clients' needs will be taken into consideration as they have been already. Before this exercise really got underway, clients and their families were surveyed to find their wishes, and most quite clearly said they would much prefer to be living in far better or private, more modern accommodation than that which they are in at the present time.

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

The Minister said that he did not understand where the rumours were coming from about the possible sell off of Overdale. Could I point him to the fact that the Housing Department is selling off its stock? Public Services is talking of selling off substantial chunks of property and the Chief Minister is talking about privatisation. Will the Minister assure the House that he will keep communications open with the public sector workers for whom he is responsible and assure them that their jobs will not be sold off along with many others?

Senator S. Syvret:

Certainly, Sir, I am very happy to give that assurance again. It has already been given to the staff in question. I am not aware of any other Department or other Ministers having plans to sell off parts of Overdale. All I can say to the Assembly is that, as far as I am concerned, there are no such plans and never have been such plans, and it is difficult to concede, given the other uses on that site, how it could be that parts could be sold off. It is very, very difficult to envisage any future for that site other than it remaining in the long-term in the social care and health portfolio of the Island.