

QUESTION TO BE ASKED OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICES COMMITTEE ON TUESDAY 4th MARCH 2003, BY THE DEPUTY OF ST. JOHN

Question

- (a) Will the President inform members of the original estimated cost of renovating St. James Centre and whether there was any overspend in this regard, and, if so, by how much?
- (b) In November 1994, when the States approved the lease of the former St. James' Church, Vicarage and Gardens to the Jersey Arts Trust, certain concern was expressed by the then Connétable of St. Helier regarding the cost of ongoing maintenance works arising from the renovation of the buildings. Will the President confirm whether there is currently a water ingress problem with the windows of the St. James Centre building, and, if so, whether any remedial work will be taken and at what cost to the States, and whether there are any other maintenance works to be undertaken and the cost of such works, to the States, if so required.

Answer

- (a) The former Planning and Environment Committee published a report on the structural works and conversion of the former St. James Church on 8th February 2000, following the Deputy's previous questions. As reported in RC. 2/2000 the works were undertaken by the Jersey Arts Trust and accountability for this project rests with the Finance and Economics Committee.

The former Planning and Environment Committee's report explained that its Director of Property Services was not appointed as project manager by the Arts Trust until the later stages of their contract when the Trust encountered major problems, with instructions to complete the contract containing additional costs.

After completion in November 2000, this project was subject to a Treasury audit report in which the cost was stated at £1.49 million. This amount exceeded the amount voted of £1 million but was consistent with the original estimated cost of £1.5 million. The project cost has since been finalised at a total of £1.53 million.

The majority of the additional cost (£307,000) incurred was attributable to the rectification of dry rot discovered within the roof structure during the course of the contract, details of which were published in RC. 2/2000.

- (b) There is a known problem of dampness to the window reveals of the former St. James Church the symptoms of which suggest the underlying cause may either be the result of penetrating dampness or condensation. The Department of Property Services is currently investigating the problem and the cost of remedial work is not yet known.

A planned maintenance survey was produced in 2000 estimating maintenance costs at St James of £98,000 p.a. over a ten year period including works which would normally be the tenant's responsibility of £38,000 p.a. The former Planning and Environment Committee, in requesting funds for this work, advised the Finance and Economics Committee that the Jersey Arts Trust have not been prepared to approve a draft lease for St. James which provides for tenants liability.

A similar situation applies to the Opera House, where an annual cost of £77,500, including tenants items of £40,000 needs to be provided for which the Jersey Arts Trust will not accept responsibility.

Similarly the Jersey Archive Centre which requires annual maintenance of £30,000 per annum, including £20,000 of tenants items where the Jersey Heritage Trust have declined to accept the draft lease for the same reason.

In the interim, the Committee is in a very unsatisfactory position having been allocated a capital vote of only £75,000 in 2003 to cover the maintenance of all States properties which are in use by these two Trusts.