

Item 1.67

Questions from Hansard asked by Connétable Crowcroft and other States Members in the States : Nursery Provision

Provision (Please note a number of questions are duplicated from your Items 1.5 and 1.20 but included here for continuity)

14th February 2006

2.9 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding responsibility for allocating free nursery places at primary schools:

Would the Minister advise who is responsible for allocating the free nursery places provided at some of the Island's primary schools and what criteria, if any, are used for this allocation?

Senator M.E. Vibert (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

Nursery places at provided primary schools are allocated essentially by my department of Education, Sport and Culture. In allocating places the department tries to take account of the needs of individual children. Particular consideration is given to children with significant social or education needs, from families with particular needs (for example, low income, long-term parental illness, siblings with special needs suspected of being at risk or with siblings at the school involved). In applying these criteria, the department takes account of the date of application and also tries to ensure that in each class there is a gender balance; the social and educational needs of the group are balanced and manageable; and that no more than 20 per cent of the children come from outside the schools involved catchments area.

2.9.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Does the Minister not think it would have been preferable to have sorted out the inequity that exists in the provision of such subsidised nursery places before continuing his increased provision of them around the Island?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

In reply to that, can I say we have a policy agreed by the States that as primary schools are developed a nursery class is added and that provision is made in the funding to staff that nursery class. The previous Education, Sport and Culture Committee under my presidency issued a consultation document (R.C. 54 of 2005) about early years education and care which looked at that policy and put forward a number of options and suggestions. We are considering the responses. Can I say I am very disappointed that the responses only included one response from a States Member who has currently left the States and no response from the Constable of St. Helier?

2.9.2 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Can I respond to that last charge by saying that my department has been in contact with his department and I refute it. The actual question I asked as a supplementary was the inequity that currently exists. Could the Minister say whether he agrees with me that the current system of giving some people a free nursery place and other parents having to pay for it is inequitable?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

If the Constable had paid the attention that he says he did to R.C. 54 of 2005 he would have seen

that is the reason why we are reviewing early years' education and care because of the previous Committee's concern about that very inequity which had not been addressed previously.

2.9.3 Senator B.E. Shenton:

Would the Minister explain whether there is an actual policy concerning nursery care? This government spends about £3 million on providing free nursery care. Guernsey does not spend anything and leaves it all to the private sector and I have been speaking to a lot of private nurseries who say that there has been hardly any or no consultation with the Education Department and that they tend to just go off and do whatever they wish. Will the Minister confirm that there is an actual policy to do with nursery care and the private and public mishmash that is there at the moment?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Yes, there is a policy. I will provide it for the Senator and I would urge the Senator to read our consultation document, R.C. 54, and I would be quite prepared to accept a late submission from the Senator or any other States Member who wishes to comment on it.

2.9.4 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Could the Minister indicate when he will be bringing to the States the document and when he will be seeking to have this inequity addressed.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I have raised the issue with the Council of Ministers and I hope to be bringing the options that we have been looking at, and the costings and so on, to the Council of Ministers in the first half of this year and then subsequently - depending on what the Council of Ministers decide - to bring it to the States.

2.9.5 Senator B.E. Shenton:

The Minister mentioned that they look at the social backgrounds of people when they are allocating nursery places. Could he tell me where he gets this information from, bearing in mind that we do have quite strict data protection laws regarding the transfer of information?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

We gather that from the application forms made out by the parents themselves and also from other agencies that we work very closely with in our integrated children's centre, which is now based at the old St. Mark's School and has been called The Bridge.

2.9.6 The Connétable of St. Helier:

In his answer to my first question, the Minister said that the places are allocated centrally by his department. Is he in a position to tell us how many staff are involved in that allocation and in the regulation of nurseries around the Island?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

They are 2 separate things. The regulation of nurseries comes under a law which we administer and there is one person in particular, who is helped sometimes by another person, who does that; and for the allocation of nursery places one person in particular is allocated to do that. It takes up a considerable amount of their time at certain parts of the year but not at the rest of the year, but of course other officers will help as and when needed.

2.9.7 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Just a point of clarification, my understanding is that there are 2 members of staff at the department who inspect nurseries: one does the private sector, one does the public sector. Is it not the case that there are in fact 2 persons involved in the regulation plus however many are required in the allocation of places?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I did mention 2 people. I said one primarily. As the Constable said, there is one primarily with responsibilities for the private sector nurseries and one for own provision but one of the officers involved also has other duties.

28th February 2006

2.7 The Connétable of St. Helier of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding the response of the Parish of St. Helier to the consultation on nursery car provision:

Would the Minister confirm whether he received the response provided by me on behalf of the Parish of St. Helier on 28th October 2005 in response to the consultation process on nursery care provision? If so, would he confirm that the Statement he made at the last meeting that no response had been received was incorrect and inform Members of his response to the concerns raised in this submission?

Senator M.E. Vibert (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

The closing date for responses to Investing In Our Future, which was presented to the States on 5th July 2005, was 30th September 2005. Prior to that date, the Department for Education, Sport and Culture received a submission from the St. Helier Parish nurseries and the St. Helier Parish finance departments. This was circulated along with all other responses to the then Education, Sport and Culture Committee members. Subsequently, I am informed that around 28th October 2005 - 28 days after the closing date for submissions - the same paper was resubmitted to the Department of Education, Sport and Culture signed by the Connétable of St. Helier. I am informed the paper contained no additional comments so it was not recirculated. If this is the response the Connétable is referring to, then I can acknowledge its receipt and confirm that I am aware of its contents. I would also like to assure the Constable that the issues raised by the Parish will be taken into consideration along with the other 29 submissions that have been made as we continue to develop and consider the feasibility of the various options outlined in the original report and correspondence.

2.7.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Notwithstanding the fact that the Minister appears to have received the submission twice, he seems to have avoided answering my question: would he confirm that I and my team did, in fact, respond to the consultation process and, therefore, his comment at the last meeting was inaccurate?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

If I was the Constable I would not have asked this question. I can confirm (and I have a copy of it here) that on 30th July 2005 we had comments to be made to Education, Sport and Culture by the Parish nurseries and Parish finance department to our consultation document. There is no indication in this document of any input of a political nature whatsoever or any indication that the Constable was involved. As I said, that was received in time, within the consultation period. Twenty-eight days after the close of the consultation period, the same document, but this time signed by the Constable of St. Helier, was resubmitted to my department. I say if this is the response that the Constable is referring to, then I can acknowledge its receipt out of time and confirm that I am aware of its contents.

2.7.2 The Connétable of St. Helier:

I am sorry to press the point, Sir, but for this Minister "sorry" does appear to be the hardest word. Does he not accept that the Parish nurseries and, indeed, the finance department of the Parish of

St. Helier come under my direct control and the fact that he received a submission twice does not remove the fact that the Parish of St. Helier did, indeed, respond in the consultation period and, therefore, his comments at the last meeting were inaccurate?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I totally confirm, Sir, that the Parish nurseries and the Parish finance department, which are part of the Parish of St. Helier made comments on Investing In Our Future. Until 28 days after the closing date, there was no indication that this was a direct political document. If the Constable wishes to go through with me the document submitted by the finance department and the Parish nurseries, it certainly appears to me that it is a different document to what I would expect to be submitted by a Member of this Assembly.

28th March 2006

2.2 WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE BY THE CONNETABLE OF ST. HELIER REGARDING THE INCLUSION OF A NURSERY UNIT IN THE REDEVELOPMENT OF ST. PETER'S PRIMARY SCHOOL AND THE ALLOCATION OF FREE PLACES IN STATES DAY-NURSERIES

Question

Would the Minister confirm whether a nursery unit is being created as part of the planned redevelopment of St. Peter's Primary School and, if so, would he explain the reasons why given his recent admission that the current system of allocating a limited number of free places in States day-nurseries is inequitable?

Answer

I confirm that a nursery class will be built as part of the planned redevelopment of St Peter's Primary School. In 1996 the States approved the strategy of the Working Party on Child Care. This included a recommendation that the former Education Committee continue its programme of developing nursery classes at provided primary schools.

In 2005, the former Education, Sport and Culture Committee declared its intention to continue with this strategy until 2009 when a nursery class at St. Peter's School would be completed.

The inequity in the current system is not caused by the provision of nursery classes but by the fact that there are not sufficient free places across the Island for all three and four year olds.

25th April 2006

1.4 The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture tabled an answer to a question asked by the Connétable of St. Helier regarding the provision of a nursery unit at St. Peter's Primary School.

Question

Would the Minister inform Members –

- of the date when the decision was taken to build a nursery unit as part of the rebuilding of St Peter's Primary School?,
- supply the capital and revenue costs for the nursery unit?
- whether discussions were held with the Parish over the feasibility of using existing premises in the area to avoid the expense of new build?
- whether he took into account the impact of the new free States nursery on private sector

nurseries in the West of the Island?

Answer

The decision to build a nursery class as part of St. Peter's Primary School was taken by the former Education Committee in 1999 when it made an unsuccessful bid for its inclusion in the States Capital Programme. A further bid was agreed by the Committee in December 2002 and, early in 2003 this scheme was included in the States Capital programme.

In October 2005, the Committee agreed a feasibility study for the scheme and in February 2006 the Minister approved the submission to a detailed planning application.

The cost of the nursery class will be £225,000. The annual revenue cost will be £90,000.

Discussions have not taken place with the Parish over the feasibility of using existing premises in the area because the intention is to provide a nursery class for educational reasons; to prepare 3 and 4 year olds for starting school. The policy to continue building nursery classes to provide young children with an educational experience was approved by the States in 1996. These classes offer a term-time only experience during school hours. It is anticipated that many working parents will continue to need the year-round, all-day childcare provision offered by the private sector.

16th May 2006

1.3 WRITTEN QUESTIONS TO THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE BY THE CONNETABLE OF ST. HELIER REGARDING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE, AND THE PROVISION OF A NURSERY UNIT AT THE NEW ST. PETER'S SCHOOL

Question 1

Would the Minister inform members –

(a) whether officers and members of the former Education, Sport and Culture Committee attended the meetings organised by the Parents Action Group in the Town Hall on 13th July and 22nd September 2004, at which concerns were raised about the States' policy on early years child care and, if so, how many members and officers, and which members?

(b) whether the Minister of Education, Sport and Culture, or the former Education, Sport and Culture Committee, received representations by letter or email from members of the Parents Action Group or Jersey Early Years Association about the States' policy in early years child care, and/or suggestions as to how more equitable provision might be achieved and, if so, when were these received?

(c) of the exact date when the decision was taken to build a nursery unit as part of the rebuilding of St. Peter's Primary School?

Answer

(a) Three members of the former Education, Sport and Culture Committee and three officers attended the meeting at the Town Hall on 13th July 2004. Three members and four officers attended the meeting on the 22nd September 2004. The members who attended one or both of these meetings were, Senator Michael Vibert, Deputy Ben Fox, Deputy Judy Martin and former Deputy Julian Bernstein.

(b) Representations in respect of the States' policy for early education and care were received from both the Parents Action Group and the Jersey Early Years Association prior to 30th September 2005, the closing date for consultation.

(c) The decision to continue building nursery classes at provided primary schools was taken by the States on 18th February 1997, when the former Education Committee lodged its Proposition in respect of Child Care Provision. Whilst the former Committee had been considering the refurbishment of St. Peter's School for some time, it was formally submitted as a bid to the Capital Development Plan on 24th March 1999.

Question 2

Would the Minister supply a detailed breakdown of the capital and revenue costs provided on 25th April 2006, in relation to the nursery unit at the new St. Peter's School?

Answer

The capital costs of £225,000 were determined by calculating the savings that would accrue to the project if the nursery class was not built. As the nursery unit is an integral part of the specification for the building a detailed breakdown of costs would need to be undertaken by the quantity surveyor. This would incur additional fees.

The revenue costs at 2005 values would be:

1 x Nursery teacher	£43,952
2 x Teaching Assistants	£42,040
1 x Lunchtime Supervision	£ 2,000
Total:	£87,992

It is likely that further costs of approximately £9,000 per annum would be borne by the school's budget in respect of supplies, services and premises.

Question 3

Would the Minister indicate whether he intends to fulfil the pledge made in the consultation document, Investing in Our Future: a vision for early childhood education and care for children in Jersey (R.C. 54/2005), that following the consultation period which ended on 30th September 2005, all the responses received would be used to assist in the formation of more detailed options for the future which, it was stated in the report, were due to be published later in 2005 and, if so, when will he do this?

Answer

As I indicated previously in my answer to this question on 28th March 2006, the development of an Early Childhood Education and Care strategy is a complex piece of work partly because it involves predictions based on significant uncertainties including the availability of additional States funding but also because any resultant model needs to dovetail with the new Income Support System due to be introduced in 2007.

Discussions continue between the Departments for Education, Sport and Culture and Employment and Social Security to develop proposals which will be presented to the States in due course. However, I would remind members that the vision of the former Education, Sport and Culture Committee, set out in the document "Investing In Our Future", was an aspiration to take effect in 2008.

3. Questions to Ministers without notice - The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture

3.1 Deputy J.A. Martin:

In written questions this morning to the Constable of St. Helier: Question 3 - "Would the Education

Minister indicate whether he intends to fulfil the pledge made in the consultation document called *Investing In Our Future: A Vision for Early Years*” and the final line of the answer says it is sort of being looked into but the aspiration was to take effect in 2008. Could the Minister square this with the Strategic Plan which, under “skilled and motivated and qualified local workforce, able to meet the Island’s economy and social objectives and increasing more people back to work” he states - and I am assured that this document was written by our 10 Ministers with a very small officer input at the L’Horizon over a weekend - at 2.6.1: “Bring proposals to the States in 2006 for an earlier strategy which will increase the number of children with access to affordable early years education and care.” Now, could the Minister tell us which is the correct statement, please? Thank you, Sir.

Senator M.E. Vibert (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

Certainly, Sir. Both. I intend to bring proposals in 2006. It is very complex and in the document it was an aspiration for those proposals to take effect from 2008.

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

In his answers to written questions at the last sitting, the Minister said that the decision was taken to commission the work at St. Peter’s Primary School nursery in February of this year, yet in his answers today, when I asked for the exact date - I meant the day of the month - he takes us back to 1997. Could he please enlarge upon the decision that was taken this month that that capital project should go ahead and give us the exact date when it was taken, please?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I cannot remember the exact date offhand but, of course, it will be in the Ministerial Decisions on the website and that was when I signed the plans and the contract. But the decision to go ahead with a nursery class at St. Peter was taken by a previous Education Committee which had been considering it for some time and it had been in the plans because it was part of States policy for some time and then the date given was when it was put forward for inclusion in the Capital Programme.

3.6 The Connétable of St. Helier:

In his comments to the *Jersey Evening Post* on 24th January 2006, the Minister promised to tackle the inequity between private and public sector nursery provision and I quote: “We hope to get this resolved in the next few months” he said. That was in January. Could the Minister account for the fact that in February, one month later, and notwithstanding the comments and chorus of concern from the private sector nurseries, he went ahead and signed an order for another private sector nursery to commence?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Unfortunately, trying to find an answer to inequity in early years provision, particular education as opposed to care - and there is a difference - has proved a very difficult issue to resolve and a very wide issue. We are in discussions with the Department of Social Security and trying to tie-in with the income support system there. While this is happening there is an extant States policy and that is to provide nursery classes attached to primary schools when they are redeveloped. That is why I have signed an agreement that there should be a nursery class provided at St. Peter’s School. It will provide a wonderful early years education which is a great investment in the future for children who attend and in the catchment area of St. Peter’s School.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Could I make a point of clarification? I should have said another public sector nursery, not private sector.

3.7 Senator B.E. Shenton:

The Minister has been building-up the number of States nurseries and he has also been increasing the number of teachers employed by the Island at the time when there is a Pensions Fund black hole in the Teacher’s Pension Fund. Does he think it is wise to build-up the number of teachers before sorting out this problem?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Yes, Sir, I think it would be absolutely irresponsible not to provide the correct number of teachers we need for teaching our children on the Island and I hope that would have the support of every Member of the States.

27th March 2007

4. Questions to Ministers without notice - The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture

The Greffier of the States (in the Chair):

I come now to questions for the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture. I invite questions.

4.5 Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

What argument was put forward by the Minister in his recent unsuccessful attempt to secure additional funding towards early years education?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

When I addressed the Council of Ministers on the proposals that I have brought forward for nursery education on the Island, I used numerous and many cogent arguments involving the fact that nursery education has proven to be of immense value, not just to the child, but to society, and is a fantastic investment in the future. Unfortunately, at present, the Council of Ministers cannot find a way under the current funding to meet the funding requirement, but I am continuing ways of looking at this because I believe that introducing the concept of an amount of free nursery education for all 3 to 5-year olds on the Island will be one of the best investments in the future of Jersey the States could ever make.

4.5.1 Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

A supplementary, Sir? Would the Minister advise the House how he thinks, retrospectively, his argument could have been more robust? **[Laughter]**

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I am not sure, Sir, how I could think retrospectively. I not only made the argument, I produced a report which has been published which makes those arguments. Unfortunately, the States has set a spending ceiling. There are lots of demands for that money from all the various departments but, as I said, I believe that this issue of access to early years education is an investment for the future and I will be continuing to work on my fellow Ministers to persuade them it is something we should go ahead with.

4.7 Senator B.E. Shenton:

At the moment, some of my tax goes towards payment of nursery care of wealthy friends with pre-school children. You are proposing that in future I pay for the nursery care for all my wealthy colleagues with pre-school children. The Minister often advocates means testing; why does he not apply these standards when it comes to his own department?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I may like to inform Senator Shenton and others that his tax money goes to free education for all children in the Island between the ages of 5 and 16, regardless of their parents, and it is also used between the ages of 16 and 18 for free education. I do not know if he is suggesting that everybody should pay for all education on the Island. It is a question of when that free education starts. We looked at means testing and for that age group it can be very counterproductive, and result in children who would really benefit from nursery education and care not being able to access it. So it is a question of is an amount of it provided, as we do with all other education from 5 to 16, 5 to 18, as a free right or do we means test it? I believe that the best benefit to the Island will be to offer a certain number of hours free nursery education for all children and it will be repaid so many times over in the future when we have less problems when those young people attain adulthood.

4.9 Deputy I.J. Gorst:

Senator Shenton did ask the Minister my question, albeit with a slightly different vocab. In light of the Minister saying that his preferred option for early years care is to provide something like 20 hours free to every child in that age group, has he considered the impact that this may have on the excellent private provision which is already being affected by his current policy?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Absolutely, Sir. In fact the proposals are wholeheartedly supported by the private providers,

because it would involve them in the provision of this care, saving us from continuing the current policy of building nursery classes when we redevelop primary schools, which is a States' policy, and also funding those nursery classes through an increase from the subvention from finance. So, the private providers are very, very much in favour of this because they see first hand the benefit this would bring to the Island.

18th September 2007

9. Annual Business Plan 2008 (P.93/2007): Objectives and Performance Criteria for the Education, Sport and Culture Department

The Bailiff:

The debate continues upon the Annual Business Plan and the next mini debate is on the key objectives and performance criteria for the Education, Sport and Culture Department as detailed on pages 46 and 47 of the annex. I call upon the Minister to propose them.

9.1 Senator M.E. Vibert (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

In proposing the Education, Sport and Culture objectives set out in the Annual Business Plan I would wish to draw members' attention to the fact that they demonstrate that what E.S.C. (Education Sport and Culture) provides are essential services. Many of the services E.S.C. provides are statutory - laid down by law, such as our schools - but all are essential and are needed to meet the numerous strategic planned commitments already agreed by this Assembly. Education, Sport and Culture is a people business, to use modern jargon. We provide essential services for everyone in the Island throughout their lives, and four-fifths of our budget goes on staff, the vast majority of whom are frontline staff. Teachers, special needs support, youth workers, librarians, sports centre assistants and others directly interacting with the public. The largest part by far of the E.S.C.'s budget goes, of course, on schools and colleges. E.S.C. has an enviable record for helping Jersey's young people and not so young people achieve their potential witnessed by our outstanding public examination results. Jersey, Sir, has good raw material in our young people but it is developed to its potential by E.S.C.'s outstanding teaching workforce and those that support them. We have developed a highly successful learning agenda incorporating critical skills and assessment for learning initiatives which are ways of teaching that give young people the skills they need to be successful in life. We need to extend and improve that education at both ends. Jersey should be offering the opportunity of early years' education to all three to four year-olds and members will have the opportunity to vote for this later in this debate. At the same time we must extend the opportunity of skills based education for our 14 to 16 and older age range. The States back changes to our higher education funding to cope with increased costs from outside our control. We will be monitoring the impact of this as it comes in from this current university term to ensure the new system does not have any unintended adverse effects. E.S.C. will also continue to provide facilities and encourage local people to be fit and healthy through our Sports Division, and I am pleased to report that our Active Card membership scheme now has more than 4,000 members. E.S.C.'s role in relation to Jersey's arts and heritage is also vital to the cultural life of the Island. We will be implementing the cultural strategy for the Island which has been approved by this Assembly and working closely with our key partners and stakeholders in this area. Sir, E.S.C. works towards ensuring that everyone in the Island has the opportunity to be well-educated, fit, healthy and cultured, making Jersey a stronger community, and I propose the objectives.

The Bailiff:

Is the proposition seconded? [**Seconded**] Does any member wish to speak?

9.1.1 Deputy A. Breckon:

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The Bailiff:

I call upon the Minister to reply. Do you wish to speak?

9.1.2 Senator J.L. Perchard:

A little bit late. It was just to ask the Minister about the early years' programme and under 3

(1) of the Objectives he proposed to increase the numbers of three to five year-olds receiving the early years' education programme. Commendable I must say but I do want to ask him about his policy for funding three to five year-old education programmes. Will he be able to fund the three to five year-old early years' programme with this budget, and if not, when does he anticipate he will be able to fund the programme, Sir?

9.1.3 The Connétable of St. Helier:

I would like to follow up that question on early years' funding with a request for confirmation from the Minister that the current budget allocation for nursery or pre-school education and care amounts to 30 hours a week free to those parents that can access it during term time only or could he specifically tell us what the current offer is to those parents who are able to access it? I would also like to ask him to say a little more about his opening remarks. He said - and we do not disagree with him - that Education, Sport and Culture provide essential services. Four-fifths of the budget is spent on staff, the vast majority of whom, he said, are frontline and I would just like to know a little bit more about that vast majority. In other words, what proportion of staff are not there at the frontline but are employed in management, Sir

9.1.4 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

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9.1.5 Deputy S.C. Ferguson:

I notice in the various objectives and performance measures there is mention made of the reduction of the pupil numbers in primary schools, because of the falling birth rate. Can the Minister please give us a forecast of the nursery school numbers? I presume that also, looking at the statistics that we get from the Registrar, that those numbers also are falling? I am also a bit concerned about the sort of reduction and playing around with the vocational budget - that is for good solid trades courses; plumbers, electricians and so forth. We have a shortage in apprenticeships and there are a number of young people who would like to do the courses in fact, but I understand that they have to have a job before they are accepted on to any of the courses, which it is a bit of a circular argument to me, so I would appreciate the Minister's comments.

9.1.6 The Deputy of St. John:

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9.1.7 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I wonder, Sir, if the Minister could clarify whether Highlands is going to take a cut in its grant this year, and whether following on my question earlier to the Assistant Minister of Economic Development, is it the intention to move across the whole Highlands budget to the Skills Executive or not? Secondly, Sir, under Objective 5 could he indicate whether included there, and I am sure Deputy Fox might have something to say, whether there is a real shift from formal youth clubs to informal? Will there be, for example, more street workers as part perhaps of this shift? **[Laughter]** Street youth workers. It is terrible, Sir, the imaginations of some people here but I will not dwell on that. Thirdly, Sir, the issues of nurseries has been raised. Could he confirm whether by having, I suppose originally a parish school system, but by having a nursery system based on the Parish school structure, will this make it very hard to deal with a decline in cohort? Because you have some very high fixed costs in that kind of system.

9.1.8 The Connétable of St. Peter:

Continuing on the theme of the pre-school education, and on page 50 at the top of the page dealing with the pre-school education there is an estimated almost £2 million set aside in the 2008 expenditure, or the estimated expenditure, and there is a comment on the financial summary of a

new nursery planned for September 2008 at St. Peter's School. Could I inquire, is there any relationship with the cost attributed out of that estimated expenditure of almost £2 million and if so proportionately how much of it is set aside for that particular project?

9.1.9 Deputy S. Power:

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9.1.10 Deputy A.E. Pryke of Trinity:

Just to follow on from Deputy Le Hérissier's comments, performance Objective 5, number 2; number of partnerships with the Parishes extended. Could the Minister tell us how many Parishes have partnerships and how many he has in the pipeline?

The Bailiff:

I call upon the Minister to reply.

9.1.11 Senator M.E. Vibert:

I thought until my good friend Senator Perchard got involved I was going to get off very lightly, but I am pleased that Members have arrived and shown so much interest in Education, Sport and Culture because it is such an important subject. I will try and answer questions as best I can. Some are quite detailed and if I cannot get the details I will ask members to bear with me and contact me and I will get back to them. Deputy Breckon asked about the Skills Executive and quite right, this is an initiative where we are trying to work together and get more out of it by working together. Unfortunately the £1 million that was originally earmarked for schools in my area when we had the shortfall in funding for higher education, because of circumstances out of our control - i.e. the U.K. Government putting up top-up fees - that had to be subsumed in that, but that does not mean there is no money going into Skills Executive. There was also money put aside in Economic Development's budget and they are working very closely with us so that between us, and with Social Security involved as well, we can get the best possible result from the funds that are available. The Skills Executive is well under way and I believe it will, like the Children's Executive, lead to much more joined-up provision. One of the things of course will be a single career service that will offer advice on careers throughout and we will also be working very closely about what skills programmes we should be putting on and what the Island needs with Economic Development. Senator Perchard asked about Early Years, the policy for funding. I am trying to remember - I cannot even read my own writing - with this budget, when given the funds. Well, the policy for funding - the current policy as agreed by the States a long time ago - is that as and when we build a new nursery class on to one of our primary schools, and it is the States' policy when primary schools are redeveloped if at all possible to put a new nursery class on them, then the Treasury fund the revenue cost with an increase in our budget to pay for the staff needed and the extras needed to provide that new nursery provision, which will be happening; the next one, with St. Peter. The Connétable of St. Helier asked about what is the current allocation for young nursery age children at present. At present we have classes attached to roughly half our primary schools and those who attend full-time will get 25 hours with a teacher and five hours as supervised lunch cover, so a total of 30 hours per week, 25 with a teacher and five hours lunch cover. The Connétable of St. Helier asked about frontline staff, because I said the vast majority were frontline staff. The best figures I have, and of course it depends how people interpret it, is we have 57 staff who are frontline out of 1,478 which is 3.8 per cent. If anybody wishes to visit my department it is like the Marie Celeste and I am open to any other department who wants to move in. We offer very reasonable rent because in the old part of Highlands which we operate we now have empty office space because we have so few administrative staff up there. The one bit of Highlands that is not growing is our car park. In fact I can rent out car parking space to members as well if they wish. Deputy Le Claire asked about access to sporting facilities and I totally agree, it is part of our remit and we want to keep people fit and healthy and we do wherever possible open up our school sports fields and sporting facilities; but we do charge where there is a cost because we get in overall practically half the cost of providing all sports facilities through charging. But we do try to ensure that the least well-off in society can access all our facilities without cost. At the moment we have a system of offering up to 50 free Active Cards to holders of H.I.E. (Health Insurance Exemption) cards so that they can keep fit and access our gyms free. We are looking as to how we can develop this system with the

advent of the new income support system. So, we try wherever possible to offer this but we do also have our Active membership and a lot of people are prepared to pay for the very good value it offers. The next speaker I believe was Deputy Ferguson and she asked about falling numbers in primary and nursery roles and yes, in primary schools and in nursery there are some falling numbers and it is hard to predict. Why I say it is hard to predict, people I am afraid are not terribly predictable and you will have fall in birth rate one year and then for whatever reason - probably not a power cut, we do not have many of those - you will have a rise in birth rate the next year and, in fact, in the middle of two falling years we have one year where there are 70 more children to educate than in the other two years either side of it. That is the sort of issues we have to deal with and plan for. That goes on to what someone was asking about how we plan for space in schools and so on, and that is very different. We have space in our primary schools at the moment, some space. Unfortunately it is not always the primary schools where the people live where the space is and that is a problem for us and it is a problem, if I may go on to what Deputy Power was saying. A particular problem for us in the west of the Island is our secondary school where Les Quennevais is absolutely full, and it is very difficult because there are children moving there of secondary school age and it is practically impossible to place them there. We are really struggling, and I have developed with the Minister for Planning and Environment providing between us much more exchange of information about new buildings and new housing and school capacity in various areas, because it is important that we work together. The Deputy of St. John asked about will student grants go down in future, the money we put towards them? I sincerely hope not because that would mean that we were having less children attending university and I hope we are going to have more in future. It may go down slightly when we get through the bulge and we still have a high number of children going but there are fewer in the year. The changes that were made with the introduction of the student loans and changes to the way we supported grants was to pay and to share the extra cost that has been inflicted upon us. It was not to cut back on the grants that we give because I think it is vital for the future of the Island that we continue to support our young people going away to become better qualified and hopefully coming back to Jersey with those skills. As I say, the last survey we did showed that over 60 per cent of graduates returned within 10 years to the Island bringing those skills with them. Deputy Le Hérissier asked was Highlands taking a direct cut in grants this year? Yes, we had to look for cuts, we have to find efficiency savings. We have protected Highlands in previous years. This year they are taking a cut in the coming year but they also might be getting enhanced funding through the Skills Executive once we have worked out the details with Economic Development. Deputy Le Hérissier also asked about the shift from informal workers - and that is youth street workers I may add - but yes, we would like to improve that but the bigger shift, I would say, is that what we are trying to develop in nearly every youth club is what is termed a drop-in café where young people can go and relax. Perhaps a move in a lot of the youth activities are not so much the formal activities that some of us older ones that went to youth clubs might remember, but more informal activities such as sitting down and chatting with friends in a café-type situation in our drop-in cafes. They have proved very, very successful and I would urge any Member who wishes on a Friday evening to pop down to the drop-in café at La Motte Street and see, when I went there, over 50 young people behaving themselves, just hanging out having a relaxed time with their peers. Of course by doing that it was somewhere they were going and they were not bothering anyone else. It is an excellent example, and where and when we will extend that. The Connétable of St. Peter asked about the money for pre-school education, and as I explained, that is the money in the budget that already pays for all our nursery schools in our provided schools and there will be - when St. Peter's comes online - the normal costs. I can give him an exact budget later if he wants to down to almost £1 of how much will be put into St. Peter's school because we treat it all the same; it is a formula, depending on how many young people they have in and how many staff and so on. They will be funded fully for the new nursery class they will be having in St. Peter's School. Deputy Power mentioned about school capacity meeting demand and I think Deputy Le Hérissier also mentioned dealing with the cohort problem and it is a problem. It is one that we are looking at and that we have to look at in the future because we have a declining primary school population at the moment. We cannot look more than a few years ahead because we can predict the birth rate but, like I said, people make their own decisions on the birth rate and it may go up again. So, we have to keep some slack in the system but we will have to look in the future and I will be bringing forward papers not only for the Council of Ministers but for my Scrutiny Panel and this House about how we may have the options for how we look at this problem in the future. Because it is not a pleasant thing to have to do to close a school, and I think those are last resorts, but we have to realise that if numbers keep dropping we may have to look at downsizing

schools from three forms to two forms, from two forms to one form entry in the primary and so forth. But it is an issue that we are actively working on and trying to get the best possible statistics ahead so that we can make informed decisions. The Deputy of Trinity asked how many youth partnerships we extended to and for the future how many do we hope to? We are in talks with a number of Parishes and I believe we have - I am looking at my Assistant Minister with responsibility for youth - I believe we have five partnerships at the moment and certainly there must be one or two nearing completion. Can I say how valuable those partnerships are? How well we think the work with the Parishes in this way is going? Because it is not just the extra funds they provide that means we can open the youth provision for longer, it is about their involvement in ownership of the projects which adds so much more to the projects and involves the Parish in them. I would urge all Parishes, and we will try to do our best to match them, to get involved in such provision. I hope I have answered all the questions and I move the objectives.