

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
BY DEPUTY G.C.L. BAUDAINS OF ST. CLEMENT
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 26th JUNE 2012**

Question

Would the Minister state whether he has concerns that the increasing loss of parking in St. Helier (residents parking schemes, loss of parking in Tunnel Street/Gas Place area and pedestrianisation) may affect Jersey's economy by encouraging buyers to shop on-line and, if so, whether he has entered into discussions with the Connétable of St Helier, the Minister for Transport and Technical Services and others to address this problem?

Answer

As demonstrated by the recent retail survey, the retail sector faces significant challenges. As such, I have held two meetings so far to discuss issues facing the retail sector, particularly in St Helier, with the Assistant Minister for Transport and Technical Services (TTS), the Connétable of St Helier, and others including representatives from the Chamber of Commerce and the Town Centre Manager.

One outcome from this was that TTS undertook a survey of parking availability across town car parks at 10am, 12pm and 3pm on a Saturday. At all times, over 50% of parking spaces in St Helier were available. This does not mean we should be complacent, as in some areas of town there were shortages and we must address concerns members of the sector have with regard to parking. However, parking is not the only issue. We must assess this as part of a broader strategy to address the barriers preventing people coming into town and using the significant number of parking spaces that already exist in central car parks – such as Sand Street – on the most popular shopping day of the week.

I have received recommendations to address parking issues by members of the group, but these come with an associated cost to States budgets in the form of reduced revenue to TTS. As such they require further consideration to establish that they will have an incremental impact and not just reduce revenue for the same number of visitors to town. Therefore, a sub-group have undertaken to produce a broader report to address the wider issues facing retailers, such as how to encourage shoppers in the current economic climate, address the increased price sensitivities of customers and increased competition from online retailers. I expect this by the end of the month, and this will be presented to the group for consideration of next steps.

The Deputy may also wish to be aware that in addition to this, TTS have already recognised that the existing system of car park regulation and payment does not provide the flexibility that many of customers and the Department would like. To address this, TTS are trialling new technology involving Automatic Number Recognition in the Autumn of 2012 in Sand Street car park. The proposed system will relieve the motorist of having to predict the length of their stay in advance and provide the ability to stay longer than three hours if required.