

2016.02.23

3.4 Deputy J.A. Martin of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the public consultation on the new site for Jersey's hospital:

Will the Minister advise whether any independent companies (such as Ipsos MORI) were consulted prior to the publication of the public consultation on the new site for Jersey's Hospital in order to ensure that it contained no leading statements and all 4 options were presented totally without bias?

Senator A.K.F. Green (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

I thank the Deputy for her excellent question. Let us be clear, the consultation has not yet started and will not start until the first week in March. But I think, like Deputy Martin, I want this public consultation to be as comprehensive, as robust, as fair, and as transparent as it is possible to be. To this end, we have appointed an independent organisation experienced in health and social care public consultations. That is the Consultation Institute who is advising us on preparing for the consultation. It has a rigorous quality control assurance process during both the consultation and following the completion. A key part of the Institution's contribution will be to review any documentation and any materials before they go out so that the merits of all options will be presented with no misleading statements and totally without bias.

3.4.1 Deputy J.A. Martin:

The Minister then split the consultation period from 1st March to this last 4 weeks and ongoing engagement period. Can he confirm that this consultancy firm have not been brought in, in the engagement period?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

That is correct. We are out for engagement at the moment and one of the pieces of work that the independent organisation, the Consultation Institute, has already advised me on is good practice for consultation is 12 weeks not 8 weeks, and so we have already added that. We cannot obviously put any paperwork in front of them to look at until we know the outcome of P.3.

3.4.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

I will repeat the question for the Minister then since the Minister for Treasury and Resources refuses to answer. How can he consult the public, who will be making the decision, without some breakdown, partial or otherwise, of the costs involved in each particular site?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I can give headers so that people can see what sort of things were considered. I can give a total at the bottom, as an indication of the price. There is no conspiracy here. These figures are worked out by independent, experienced hospital builders, reviewed by qualified and experienced accountants such as Ernst & Young. But some of this information is commercially sensitive. If you put all the information out into the public domain, and I am quite happy and have already shared a lot of it with Scrutiny... if you put it all out in the public domain, lo and behold when you go out to tender for the preferred choice you might find that the figures come in exactly as per the money estimated rather than people taking part in a proper, competitive tendering process.

3.4.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is it not the case that the People's Park, option E, only became viable when they reduced the size of the hospital required?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

Yes, that is true. If we were to pick up the service that we are providing in the hospital and in the community today, and try and transfer that to a new hospital, we would need to build the hospital far more expensive than the one that we are looking at, at the moment. We would need to build a hospital in the region of 400 beds. But we know from the information, the consultation, that went out on P.82, that the public have told us very clearly that wherever possible they wish to be treated within the community.

[10:15]

That means it is a different type of modern health service to be provided. We still need to provide more beds than we currently provide. But it will not be a 400-bed hospital, it is nearer 282, I think.

3.4.4 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Does the Minister agree with me that the reason that the People's Park option has come out as the most affordable option is because the land value attached to it has been done around car parking spaces; 500 car parking spaces? Unlike the Waterfront option which has been valued at residential prices, which is obviously going to inflate the Waterfront option over the People's Park option and they are simply not comparing apples for apples.

Senator A.K.F. Green:

When I became Minister I was quite anxious that we did compare things on a like-for-like basis. But I cannot make up the figures as per the land value. The land value is what the land value is. But in order to try and be fair, in order to ensure that we are looking at apples and apples, we know that the Constable had a desire at one time - I do not know if he still has - to put an underground car park under the People's Park and therefore it was valued as that. It could have easily have been valued as just open space.

3.4.5 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Is the Minister suggesting that because the Constable suggested that an underground car park might be acceptable on the People's Park site that the Council of Ministers have decided that that is the value of it? That the Parish of St. Helier could turn round and say: "Well, if we are considering it for development we are going to put a block of luxury flats on it", which would increase the value of the land.

Senator A.K.F. Green:

If there was a block of luxury flats on it we would not be having the discussions we are having later on today.

3.4.6 Deputy M. Tadier:

Would the Minister clarify that it is more expensive to use a piece of land which is in States ownership rather than buying a piece of land, which does not even belong to the States and which the owner does not want to sell?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

When you are looking at the price of something, you have to look at the cost of that land, the value of that land, the opportunity costs. I have tried to be absolutely straight down the line. I do not play

games but people want to try and make it that I do. But I do not play games. We have had professional assessments done by independent people on a like-for-like basis. I am sorry, the figures are what the figures are and people must make of them what they want. There are some options to be taken into account here. There are some trade-offs to be taken into account, including access and all the rest of it. That is what I want to consult with the people. It is their hospital, and I want to hear what they have to say. The figures speak for themselves.

3.4.7 Deputy J.A. Martin:

I would like the Minister to email States Members details of this company and their experience in consultation independently, on hospitals in particular. I look forward to that. Also why this company has not ... the question is: why they were not brought in, in the so-called engagement round. Surely the precursor to the consultation is getting the message out there without bias. Does the Minister not agree?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

No, I do not agree with everything the Deputy said. But I do agree that we need to get the message out there without bias. That we need to have a proper, fair, open and robust consultation. I will certainly send with pleasure the information on the company that we have engaged.