

22.11.22

7 Deputy L.V. Feltham of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding funding for the road safety strategy (OQ.120/2022)

Given that, in response to Written Question 164/2022, the Minister stated that a business case for funding the road safety strategy had been submitted for inclusion in the Government Plan 2023-26, will the Minister explain why there is no revenue expenditure growth allocated for this purpose within the published Government Plan 2023-26 and why delivery of the road safety strategy does not appear within his Ministerial plan?

Deputy T. Binet of St. Saviour (The Minister for Infrastructure):

I thank the Deputy for the question. I can confirm that our department did submit a business case into the Government Plan 2023-26. All Government business cases are assessed and subjected to a prioritisation process. Regrettably in this instance the bid was not successful against competing government-funded priorities. Regardless of this, I will continue to seek ways to deliver this important initiative, and to that end I have asked officers to review alternative funding options, such as through the Car Park Trading Fund.

3.7.1 Deputy L.V. Feltham:

Given the level of risk of injury to people and potential death due to road safety or roads being unsafe, why did Ministers not consider this to be a priority?

Deputy T. Binet:

I would refer the Deputy to my earlier response. But I would add that on a personal level this is extremely important to me, and I know it is to other Ministers, and we are determined that we are going to fund this one way or the other. I think the Deputy can rest assured that this will proceed, regardless of what is or is not within the Government Plan.

3.7.2 Connétable K. Shenton-Stone of St. Martin:

I believe this proposition was passed unanimously, so I am really disappointed in the Government for not pursuing this. Could the Minister please confirm to the Assembly how he intends to prioritise in improving road safety as part of his Ministerial brief? There is not a pot of money being put aside for this for the Government Plan, how he intends to implement the recommendations of the road safety strategy during the lifetime of this Assembly?

Deputy T. Binet:

Once again, if I can refer back to my answer to both of the previous questions, it is going to be achieved and we are looking at various ways of funding it. It may be slightly delayed as a result of not being funded from the outset but I do not think this will delay it very much because we are continuing with the process with existing funding. Nothing has stopped, the business case is ready and it is going to be subjected to review very shortly. I think the Constable can be rest assured that it will proceed on time.

3.7.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I ask the Minister, how many road safety schemes are currently outstanding and awaiting completion, particularly around schools?

Deputy T. Binet:

I am afraid I cannot answer that question as to what individual schemes around schools are currently in place. I am sorry, I cannot answer that.

3.7.4 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Perhaps I can help the Minister. There is one around Springfield School; it has been waiting for years. I would like to know whether the Minister is going to prioritise those schemes where hundreds of children, hundreds every single day are put at risk because there is such a delay in road safety schemes.

Deputy T. Binet:

I am very happy to look at prioritising that.

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

I share the Assembly's consternation that the Council of Ministers does not regard road safety as a sufficient priority to be in the Government Plan. I do not hold this new Minister accountable for that in particular because it is the whole Council that must bear responsibility. But will the Minister agree with me that to raid the Car Park Trading Fund for unfunded initiatives by the Council of Ministers is not a good way to do business and that if this matter is important it should have been in the Government Plan?

[10:30]

Deputy T. Binet:

I do not really consider it to be a raid. I think we are going to be able to manage the Car Park Fund this year without raising it in accordance with the cost of living and still fund this project. I do not consider that to be a raid. There is only a certain amount of money to go round and different things have to be funded in different ways. I do not make any great apology for this because the work will go ahead.

3.7.6 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Is it not the case that the Car Park Trading Fund will only be taking funds from the pockets of people who use the public car parks, who are forced to use the public car parks because that is their only option of getting to work or getting to the shops? A much fairer system would be to take the money from taxation through the Government Plan where everybody in the community will be contributing to this important initiative.

Deputy T. Binet:

As the Constable will know, we have discussed this issue and some other suggestions have come about as well in trying to share the burden more fairly. We could be coming up with some other ideas as well but they are very much in their infancy. The Constable is aware of them because they were his suggestions, so I thank him for that.

3.7.7 Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat of St. Helier North:

Can the Minister please confirm how much money was requested in relation to this matter?

Deputy T. Binet:

The money that would be required would be in the order of £375,000 a year at the outset.

3.7.8 Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

How much money is available in the Car Park Fund, as the terminology used, raid that fund? How much is available?

Deputy T. Binet:

The terminology “raiding the fund” was not mine. What we are looking to do is increase car parking charges going forward and it is with that in mind that we might be looking at the fund.

3.7.9 Deputy L.V. Feltham:

At a recent meeting I attended with the Minister’s officers, the officers informed me that due to lack of resources available, when they are prioritising roads to make safe that they use a data-driven model. The data that they use is the number of casualties on the road, rather than the risk. Does the Minister agree that we should be moving to a place where we are not waiting for casualties to happen and we are reducing risk and not putting lives at risk?

Deputy T. Binet:

I can say I think the department is extremely efficient and they are constantly reviewing the way that they go about their business. I do not think there is a particular concern in that regard.

Deputy L.V. Feltham:

Excuse me, Ma’am, could I just ask the Minister to answer my question please? Does he agree that we should move to a point where we are reducing risk, rather than reducing casualties?

Deputy T. Binet:

Could I say that I am familiar with what the department do and they are constantly trying to do both?