

2015.12.14

4.1 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the cost of providing alternative care in the independent sector for the residents of The Limes:

What is the annual cost of providing alternative care in the independent sector for the 25 residents of the Limes due for closure by April 2016 and, since there are no redundancies involved, what savings, if any, are envisaged and what costs were estimated for bringing the home up to modern standards?

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

The annual cost of providing alternative care in the independent sector for residents of the Limes will continue - and I stress continue - to be based on their assessed needs through the long-term care benefit scheme. Each resident will have an updated needs assessment which identifies the level of care from the scheme and the charge that is applied accordingly. Health and Social Services charge the same as the long-term care benefit scheme and same as the rates in the independent sector, and these are specified in Article 8 of the Long-Term Care (Benefits) (Jersey) Order 2014. The savings are £770,000 - most of that is to do with building and infrastructure. The cost of refurbishing the Limes to make it suitable and safe - I have to stress that this is not in relation to the care provided by the care staff - but to make the environment safe and suitable. There is a budget allocated of £1.7 million and I am told now that the estimated cost is somewhere in the region of £3 million.

4.1.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is it not the case that this £1.7 million was allocated or was a submission of the department back in 2012 where they put aside £700,000 for refurbishing all 32 bedrooms, installing 4 new bathrooms, to install and upgrade sluices, and completely redecorate the building inside and out, along with £1 million to balance with that from the H.G. Le Seilleur Fund? What has changed since that this planned projected development refurbishment of the Limes has been abandoned? What has changed?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

The Limes was designed and built as a residential home. It is now being used as a nursing home and, as such, the corridors are not big enough; the normal size domestic doors are not wheelchair friendly and, frankly, while the care that the nursing staff and the other staff provide is absolutely first class, it is not the correct environment in which to provide nursing care for the elderly. What has changed is a number of things. First of all, we know that there is going to be capacity within the care sector to be able to accommodate our patients. Secondly, the work is so substantial, you are virtually talking about knocking the building down and, therefore, everybody would have to move out anyway, and then would move back in one and a half, 2 years' time when the work had been completed, and that is not the best way to do it. As I say, there is spare capacity. We have got the care regulations from 2014 which come into effect in my department in 2016 and 2017, quite rightly. We just would not be able to meet that standard given the current building. This is a much better way of providing care for those who need it.

4.1.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Minister failed to even address the question. What has changed between 2012 and now?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

What I said was that the costs now are higher than the money allocated, that there is capacity within the care sector, that patients would have to move out anyway, and I also know that the fire precautions in the building need substantial investment. So a lot has changed and we can do better than we are doing currently. I have a very simple rule when providing services that has taken me right through my public sector. If it is not good enough for a member of my family, then it is not good enough for somebody else's family. This falls woefully behind that which you would require in a well-regulated nursing home.

[14:45]

4.1.3 Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour:

I do have constituents residing at the Limes at present. I would like to ask the Minister what are the plans for the site? Will it be rebuilt as a care home or will it become an office block or a police car park?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

You can jest about the latter, I do not think there is any intention of it becoming a police car park. At the moment, I have brought forward the closure of the home because of the points that I have raised in answering Deputy Southern. What becomes of the site I do not know. It could become a different home for people who are mobile with mental health needs. It could become a site to provide true sheltered housing. That would be a matter for departments to discuss with Property Holdings, to whom the building will go to. It could be that the site will be sold. I do not know. That is the truth. What I do know is it is not fit for purpose. In case people are listening, I would just like to separate the Willows and the social housing that sit on the same site. No changes there.

4.1.4 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St Helier:

Could the Minister explain to the Assembly why it was that the media were briefed on what was happening to the Limes before the residents were and before we, as Members of this Assembly, were briefed?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

Entirely down to me as it happened, because there was a "leak", if you want to call it that, and the fact that the Limes was closing was being bandied about on social media so I moved a week forward to that which I had intended to do, made sure that the trade union reps were told, the media was told and embargoed, and then the residents were told about 4 hours later.

4.1.5 Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier:

Can the Minister tell us when he says "the building is not fit for use", I assume he means as a nursing home? The building itself though, do you have any estimates on what it would cost to refurbish the building for other uses?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I do not, because it does depend what you use that building for. What we know is the Deputy is absolutely right: it is just not suitable for use as a nursing home and as such we will be handing it back to Property Holdings and then departments can bid for it and maybe vacate other sites. It is pure conjecture at the moment.

4.1.6 Deputy S.M. Wickenden of St. Helier:

Could the Minister explain how often these fit-for-purpose reviews are done on care homes in the Island by his department please?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

There are regular reviews but I have to say that there is more emphasis at the moment because of the need for the department, quite rightly, to comply with the care regulations.

4.1.7 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Minister have a shortage of candidates, who are ambulatory, and might have very well been catered for in this building, without such a comprehensive rebuild as he is making out? Or is the fact that we are increasing the numbers of elderly, ambulatory or not, and we are going to need greater facilities in the future? Why is he solely reliant on the private sector?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

P.82 - when people were consulted about that, they replied in the main, where possible, they would like to remain in their homes. The majority of treatment, I think, will take place in people's homes while they are able to move around and while they can be supported. The problem is the Limes is just not suitable for nursing, and that is where the greater demand is within the services at the moment. As I say, while the care is absolutely first class provided by the staff, the environment is not and it is right that we close it.