

STATES OF JERSEY



HAVRE DES PAS SWIMMING POOL: RETENTION OF LIFEGUARD SERVICE

Lodged au Greffe on 22nd June 2010
by Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire of St. Helier

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

- (a) to agree that the proposal in the Comprehensive Spending Review that the lifeguard service at Havre des Pas swimming pool should be discontinued should not be implemented, and that the lifeguard service should continue to operate and be funded by the States; and
- (b) to request the Chief Minister, in consultation with the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture, to make adequate provision for funding this service in Annual Business Plans for 2011 and beyond as part of the net revenue expenditure of the Education, Sport and Culture Department.

DEPUTY P.V.F. LE CLAIRE OF ST. HELIER

REPORT

The swimming pool in Havre Des Pas represents the closest free swimming facility for the vast majority of Town residents. It was recently refurbished by the Waterfront Enterprise Board to the tune of £1 million.

The swimming pool at Havre des Pas attracts a great many people every year. The pool itself is a marvellous example of a Victorian swimming pool. It is one of the oldest in existence.

The people who use the facility do so for many more reasons than just swimming.

It is the lifeguards whose jobs are primarily to save and safeguard bathers who normally end up running a hybrid role of security guard, information and public relations officers, cleaners and lifeguards. There are life savings annually. There have been at least two fatalities in the swimming pool in my memory; and for whatever the reason for the deaths, be they drowning or heart attacks, the lifeguards represent the first sign of government intervention to the public and tourists alike, when there is a major incident and this demonstrates our ability to provide safe facilities for locals and tourists alike.

The facility is a needed one, much like the Fort used to be. It is popular. When the Fort Regent swimming pool was closed, the rationale behind the closure was that it was losing money. This hid the fact that it needed to close in order to make room in the market, for the Waterfront swimming pool, to be viable. The deal that was done also included the fact that there were to be no other public swimming facilities within a 9 mile radius, guaranteeing the operators a healthy footfall. The reality was that the Fort swimming pool was costing £125,000 a year to run and £92,000 of that was on lifeguards. The rest was on management. So the Fort was not losing money, it was vintage States spin.

The reality now is that the Waterfront pool is not only less than what it promised to be, it is also costing the taxpayer much more than was anticipated by even the most sceptical of us. The costs now are in excess of £450,000 a year. It reminds me of the Bus contract and JMT. It is a demonstration of the political ineptitude of the leaders that have come before, and it is a demonstration financially of what would come in the future if we are to continue to allow the same politicians and civil servants the right to do these types of deals to, allegedly, save money and increase transparency.

Financial and manpower implications

There are no financial or manpower implications. The task is currently being undertaken by the States. If there were to be any, in any event I would suggest that the States should continue to pay for this from the budget of the Education, Sport and Culture (ESC) Department. I understand that there are 4 Directors for ESC, one of which has remained vacant for some time. I believe that post is in the lifelong learning post. By not replacing that individual post that would more than cover the costs. There should be in place a policy in any event, in my belief, that all Directors' posts should not be filled wherever possible and managers and that any replacements are introduced at a saving of 5% at least of the salary of the post-holder before. The world has changed and we need to change but not at the expense of public safety.