

3.2 Deputy D.J. Warr of St. Helier South of the Minister for Treasury and Resources regarding the provision of play facilities for teenagers (OQ.90/2025):

Will the Minister advise what consideration, if any, was given to the provision of play facilities for teenagers, the lack of which was highlighted in the Jersey Youth Parliament “Right to Play” campaign, prior to the significant investment of £1.5 million in a new soft play facility at the Waterfront for younger children; and, if no consideration was given, will the Minister explain why not?

Deputy M.E. Millar (The Minister for Treasury and Resources):

To go back to my previous remark, the Play strategy does not sit with Treasury, so I am slightly confused that this question has come to me. However, the provision of play facilities for teenagers was and remains a key consideration in deciding to make the investment into new soft play facilities at the Waterfront. The delivery of this new facility is a key step of the Regeneration Steering Group’s plan to deliver a new all-weather leisure facility at Fort Regent. Members received a detailed briefing on the proposals for a regenerated Fort Regent yesterday. It is clear that facilities for the Island’s youth, including teenagers, are at the heart of those proposals. The move of the soft play facility is an essential enabling activity towards the Fort’s imminent closure, ensuring continuity of this important facility for the Island’s younger children, while also ensuring that the major investment into the Island’s leisure offer, to the benefit of everyone, including teenagers, can happen as quickly as possible.

3.2.1 Deputy D.J. Warr:

A bit more jam tomorrow there in that answer. We have an Esplanade site, a Gas Place site, perfect for meanwhile use, which have remained unused for years. Why is it that instead of providing appropriate facilities in a timely fashion ahead of various closures ... there were provisions for teenagers as an afterthought rather than a strategic priority? Can the Minister explain to our teenagers why her department - I am saying “her/his” and I appreciate the Minister is unsure about answering this question - is so slow in providing adequate provision for the needs in a timely fashion?

Deputy M.E. Millar:

Again, that is a question for another Minister.

3.2.2 Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

Will the Minister explain the process she goes through, in particular with the provision of the soft play, with S.o.J.D.C. (States of Jersey Development Company) and how she works with or gets briefed by S.o.J.D.C., just so Members understand how she was involved in the decision-making process?

Deputy M.E. Millar:

Again, I am not responsible for how other Ministers meet their objectives. However, I meet with the board or the executive team and some of the non-executive directors of S.o.J.D.C. and all the other States-owned entities quarterly. They update me on what they are working on and their plans. I am not sure that I specifically remember soft play coming up, because it is a relatively minor thing to help the Fort continue, but it seems to me entirely logical that we need a soft play facility, and moving it from the Fort to another venue in town with adequate parking nearby makes complete sense.

The Bailiff:

Supplemental question, Deputy Curtis? Supplemental or perhaps you could tell me if you are not going to ask a supplemental rather than discussing it with other Members.

3.2.3 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour:

Does the Minister not agree that, seeing as all Ministers are corporate parents, all Ministers should be aware of policies relating to children and take an interest in them? How will she ensure that there is sufficient funding for play facilities across the Island for children of all ages, including teenagers?

Deputy M.E. Millar:

The Deputy will be aware that funding is approved in our Budget, which we approved in November. We discussed play facilities at some length in November. If a Minister wishes to follow a certain initiative, they will come to the Treasury and that will be prioritised alongside everything else. But to take the Deputy's analogy, if I am going to be responsible for every child I also have to be responsible for every patient in the hospital and every road crossing, and I cannot oversee every Minister's performance with their own objectives.

3.2.4 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I thank the Minister for her answer. Given the lack of suitable play facilities across the Island, will the Minister support any bids in the next Budget for improved play facilities?

Deputy M.E. Millar:

That is a matter for the Assembly. Ministers have to come to the Council of Ministers with proposals. Once they are approved at the Council of Ministers, they will be part of our draft Budget and will be debated in the normal way.

3.2.5 Deputy I. Gardiner:

Would the Minister clarify to the Assembly if she is responsible for ... as a representative of the Government, as a shareholder, the States of Jersey Development Company, she should ensure that the government policies and States decision are followed through and, if it is not her responsibility, which Minister is responsible that we will know who to ask?

Deputy M.E. Millar:

I believe Fort Regent sits with the Minister for Infrastructure and the decisions in regenerating Fort Regent and how we take the preparatory work to get Fort Regent vacated so that work can be done quickly and efficiently sits with the Minister for Infrastructure primarily. It is not my job to oversee every single Minister for what they are doing, that is simply not feasible, but I think when the Minister makes a proposal to S.o.J.D.C. where it makes absolute sense. Clearly if I thought they were doing something idiotic I would question it but I do not. I think it makes absolute sense to move soft play from Fort Regent to the Waterfront so that that facility continues to exist for younger children. I really struggle to see why it is quite so controversial.

3.2.6 Deputy I. Gardiner:

There was a States decision in the Bridging Island Plan that each developer should ensure there are play areas in the big residential development. The S.o.J.D.C. presented plans that are lacking of facilities for play for teenagers. Is it the Minister's responsibility to ensure that the Bridging Island Plan policies will be incorporated in the S.o.J.D.C. planning?

Deputy M.E. Millar:

I believe that the S.o.J.D.C.'s last consultation went down very well with the public. Anything they do will have to meet the Bridging Island Plan, and I do not think that I can say any more than that.

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

I appreciate that the Minister says this is not totally in her responsibility. But could I suggest that the £1.1 million for new soft play, if they have even £20,000 left, they can actually build a Viking swing, which the Jersey Youth Parliament is very keen on. Because we built one in St. Martin. I think for £20,000 you could get some really good facilities for teenagers and I have a good brochure with other things.

The Bailiff:

Connétable, that definitely is a speech and I think it is a request for action, which is a legitimate point of a question.

Deputy M.E. Millar:

Personally I think it would be a great idea. Where this Viking swing is going to go in the middle of town I do not know. But it is a decision for another Minister. Again, that is a policy area that sits elsewhere.

3.2.8 The Connétable of St. Martin:

If they would like help with finding somewhere to put the Viking swing, I would like to help. Would she agree that that would be okay?

Deputy M.E. Millar:

I am sure that the Minister will be delighted to have the benefit of your experience and expertise in play areas for older children.

The Bailiff:

Conscious as I am of the date **[Laughter]** I would just like to notify people sometimes it is quite difficult for the Presiding Officer to tell whether something is a joke or not. Read into that what you will.

3.2.9 Deputy D.J. Warr:

It is just interesting to see who is answering this because I think my basic question is: who carries responsibility for children's well-being and play? In my view it is clearly shared. Does the Minister for Treasury and Resources not feel that she plays a major part in that?

Deputy M.E. Millar:

As I could say, I play a part in that as part of the Council of Ministers. It takes me to the same question I had before. Is he suggesting that I take attention to the care of every patient in the hospital? I cannot do everything. It rests completely with the Ministers for Infrastructure and Children and Families directly. It is with the new portfolio, and they then have to account to the Assembly for how they fulfil their roles.