

**REPLY BY THE MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT
TO QUESTIONS ASKED PURSUANT TO RULE 6 OF THE
RULES OF PROCEDURE BY DEPUTY LESTER QUERIPEL**

Question 1(A)

Your department recently decided to undertake a review of the signs placed outside shops in our town, after describing the sign outside of Blacks, in the Pollet as 'garish'. There are three questions I would like to ask in relation to this forthcoming review please.

How much money will the department be spending on the review itself?

Answer

The purpose of the review of signs in the town centre following the publicity surrounding the Blacks case is to ensure a level playing field for businesses and a benchmark when assessing future signage applications. It will also assist efficiency when dealing with future applications, as otherwise such information will have to be obtained on an ad hoc basis for each proposal. It will involve a quick survey of what exists, cross referenced with approvals granted, and be carried out as a very minor element of the normal duties of the planning enforcement team. As such, there will be no additional costs for the Department associated with this review.

Question 1(B)

If the department identifies signs on shops in our town during the review, that are considered to be 'garish' or 'not in keeping', will traders then be asked to remove the signs and replace them at their own expense?

Answer

In the event that unauthorised signs are identified, an opportunity will be given for a retrospective planning application to be submitted. In the event that permission is then refused, there is a statutory right of appeal. Should permission be refused, and an appeal dismissed or not made, it would be expected that the unauthorised sign will be removed.

Question 1(C)

Once the department have concluded the review of signs in our town, will they then be extending the review to the rest of the island?

Answer

No, this review is specifically in relation to signs within the town centre as explained in the answer to question 1 (A) above.

Question 2

Bearing in mind that the bus shelter that has recently been replaced at the top of the Grange, was originally knocked down by a bus driven by a CTPlus driver, have CTPlus been asked to pay for the replacement shelter?

Answer

The replacement shelter was paid for under the insurance policies of the current bus operator, CT Plus.

Question 3(A)

Does the Environment department spend any of its budget facilitating free hot drinks dispensing machines, on their premises and in their offices?

Answer

There are no free hot drinks available to staff and no States money is spent on purchasing tea, coffee, milk or sugar within the Environment Department. On the contrary, staff pay for all beverage facilities, generally through contributing funds to a coffee club. Any guest attending the Department's premises, whether a client, agent, contractor or politician, if offered a beverage, receives that beverage from the supplies funded by the staff. Of course staff are not obliged to fund the cost of visitors' hospitality in this way and do so through simple goodwill.

Question 3(B)

If so, are you able to tell me please, how much money would be saved if the department ceased to operate and facilitate the machines?

Answer

It is clear from the above that at present the cost to the States is a negative figure and hence no savings can be made. If the staffs goodwill is withdrawn then a cost rather than saving will, in future, be incurred.

Question 4(A)

I understand the Environment department are reviewing speed limits on our roads island wide. Currently, two different speed limits exist on some roads e.g. La Ramee has a 25mph limit in one direction and a 35mph limit in the other direction. Also, Le Vauquiedor has a 25mph limit in one direction and a 35mph limit in the other direction. I have three questions in relation to this issue.

Can you tell me the rationale behind having two different speed limits in the same road please?

Answer

This question has, of course, already been the subject of several emails between you and the Departments officers and culminating in emails with me and the question has been asked and answered. To be clear, there is no differentiation in speed limits for individual **lanes** of traffic within the same sections of road either at Le Vauquiedor or La Ramee. In accordance with The Traffic Signs and Traffic Light Signals Ordinance, 1988 speed limit signs are used to indicate the maximum speed permissible in any given **area**. Both Le Vauquiedor and La Ramee happen to mark the transition between the Island's default speed limit of 35mph and entry into what is known as the "St Peter Port 25mph Cordon". In accordance with legal requirements, speed limit signs are, therefore, situated in La Route de la Ramee (just to the north of its junction with Neuve Rue) and at the bottom of Le Vauquiedor (at its junction

with Rue A L'Or) indicating the commencement of 25mph speed limits for traffic heading towards Town. At the exact same locations are 35mph speed limit signs for traffic heading away from Town advising motorists that they have now moved into a 35mph zone. The rationale for the different speeds is therefore simply one of zoning. For many years the Town zone has been defined and the lower speed limit set.

Question 4(B)

Do you think there is any merit in introducing the same speed limit in both directions, on roads where there are currently two different limits?

Answer

As indicated above this is not the case and different speed limits do not apply in the manner suggested by the question. Assuming that your question actually relates to moving the start of the Town zone so that the whole of the Le Vauquiedor and Le Ramee is set at a single speed then there is no merit in that suggestion. There are other parts of the island where different speeds apply to different stretches of the same road. Most typically this is around built up areas and other hazard areas and the speed reflects the issues encountered not the road name applied. There is no evidence to suggest that the change in speed limits at Le Vauquiedor and Le Ramee as one enters or leaves the Town cordon presents a problem.

Question 4(C)

Do you think there is any merit in reducing the speed limit in Le Vauquiedor, past the main entrance and exit to the hospital, to 20mph in both directions?

Answer

There is currently no indication that traffic speeds in the vicinity of the entrance to the Princess Elizabeth Hospital from Le Vauquiedor cause a problem for traffic seeking to exit from the Hospital site and there are pedestrian controlled traffic signals in place to assist people walking to and from the Hospital site. The Department is due to review speed limits in the vicinity of Island schools and on roads where pedestrian or cycle safety could be enhanced. Whilst this would not, specifically, include Le Vauquiedor. Notwithstanding this, consideration could be given to extending the current 25mph speed limit to the west of the Hospital entrance if traffic speeds are subsequently considered to be an issue.

Question 5(A)

Bearing in mind that the Environment department have recently refused permission for hotels in the island, to be converted into much needed Care Homes, I would like to ask the following two questions please.

How does the department envisage the island providing shelter and support, for the increasing numbers of islanders who need full time care, if hotels aren't allowed to be converted into Care Homes?

Answer

The Department understands that, generally speaking, care and support in one's own home is, where possible and practical, preferential to institutional care and that where new facilities are required to provide institutional care, purpose built new facilities are preferable to those provided by way of conversion or adaptation of existing buildings. The land use

planning system enables through the States approved Development Plans for such community needs once determined to be met on appropriate sites.

Question 5(B)

How closely do the department work with other States departments when considering applications to convert hotels into Care Homes, and can you tell me please which departments they are?

Answer

The Environment Department is obliged to consult with the Commerce and Employment Department in respect of planning applications for change of use of hotels and would normally give significant weight to the views of that Department within the decision-making process. There is a presumption under approved States planning policy against the change of use of hotels to other purposes unless the specific criteria set out in the policy are satisfied. In addition, planning applications for new care homes are normally subject of consultation with the Health and Social Services Department and their views are also taken into account when determining such an application.

Question 6

Are you able to tell me please how much money has been saved to date, by reducing staff costs within the Environment department?"

Answer

In June 2004 on the formation of the Environment Department, from various parts of the old Committee system, there were 95 staff employed. At today's pay rates the 2004 salary budget would be equivalent to £3,657,508 (excluding pension and social insurance contributions which would obviously make the pay budget higher).

In June 2014 there were 84 staff employed. This has been achieved through rationalisation and reorganisation whenever natural turnover has allowed but also includes the reduction in staff following the implementation of SAP. The total annual basic pay is now £3,236,816. A reduction of £420,692 in real terms since the formation of the Department.

Responding to these questions has cost the department circa £200.

Date of Receipt of the Question: 20th August 2014

Date of Reply: 2nd September 2014