4.10 Deputy L.V. Feltham of St. Helier Central of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding funding to improve Cheapside. (OQ.97/2026)

Given the commitment within the Proposed Common Strategic Policy 2026-2030 to regenerate St. Helier, will the Minister advise whether the Proposed Budget 2027-2030 provides sufficient funding to improve Cheapside as a gateway into town, and whether he will commit to developing a scheme with residents, businesses and the Parish to undertake such work, including a timetable for delivery?

Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade (The Minister for Infrastructure):

The current programme of public realm investment is focused on delivering the St. Helier public realm and movement strategy, working in partnership with the Parish. This involves public realm projects in the centre of town, active travel, and neighbourhood improvement schemes. At Cheapside, pedestrian and traffic management improvements are being planned at the junction of Westmount Road and St. Aubin Road as part of the new hospital project. Future improvements will need to be included and prioritised within the regeneration plan for St. Helier. Funding and delivery would need to form part of the Investing in Jersey programme and the next 3-year budget cycle. But if short-term measures such as improved lighting, greenery and seating would be beneficial, I would be happy to look at this further.

4.10.1 Deputy L.V. Feltham:

I think that short-term measures would be welcomed by the local community. Will the Minister agree to a site meeting with district Deputies, the Parish residents and businesses before the end of this year to establish the scope of such a scheme?

Deputy J. Renouf:

Yes, I would be very happy to do that. I think the caveat I will put on this is that whatever work we do in that area needs to be part of the integrated programme that we will be bringing forward. I do want to direct attention and energy into that work and see whatever work we do at Cheapside in that context. But in terms of whatever improvements we might be able to make with limited budget, if you like, outside that main programme, yes, I would be happy to meet Deputies and the Constable, and to have a look, certainly.
[10:45]

4.10.2 Deputy S.J. Gleave of St. Helier South:

While we are putting in bids for St. Helier, can I put in a bid for Havre des Pas, Don Road and Colomberie as well? But joking aside, does the Minister agree that regenerating St. Helier needs a joined-up approach and working closely with the Connétable of St. Helier and the Parish alongside local businesses and residents? Importantly, where communities are willing to come together, contribute funding and deliver improvements themselves, will he commit to Government being an enabler rather than obstacle, helping these initiatives happen rather than holding them up through bureaucracy and delays?

Deputy J. Renouf:

When I spoke to officers about answering this question, I predicted that there might be a bid for either Havre des Pas or St. Saviour or from every direction coming into town, which is why I specifically said I wanted to direct attention towards the overall programme, but I take the Deputy's bigger point that she is making. Yes, there is a long-term ... it has been around for a few years, I think 2021 in the St. Helier public realm and movement strategy; there have also been commitments in the Bridging Island Plan to regenerate St. Helier. The work that we need to do is reasonably well understood at the big scale. Of course that process should be a collaborative process. Certainly I have said on many occasions I intend to work very closely with the Constable on that, as the civic head of the Parish, but I am certainly also very keen to involve whichever Deputies want to be involved. Of course Government should be an enabler; the only caveat on that of course is the resources that we have available.

4.10.3 Deputy S.J. Gleave:

I am really pleased to hear the Minister say that he sees Government as being an enabler. Will he commit to working with the Connétable and the Deputies to ensure that community-led regeneration projects have a clear route through Government? I am currently working closely with the Havre des Pas residents and businesses, and we have got a number of potential community-led initiatives and it would be good to have his support with those.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Yes, I can, in principle, agree to that. I would also point the Deputy in the direction of the neighbourhood improvement schemes which are already part of the co-working between the Parish and my department, where we attempt to do match funding and so on. There are routes forward, as I say, still limited by the overall funding envelope that we have available.

4.10.4 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

Does the Minister agree that one of the things that could be done to improve Cheapside as a gateway to town, given the quite heavy traffic that will go through there every day - and just as an aside I would be interested to have the stats from the Minister at some point about how many cars go through Cheapside every day in and out of town - could simply be to improve air quality. It would not just benefit Cheapside - it certainly would benefit those residents and the businesses there - but the whole of the Island if we can move towards a clean air policy where we do see decarbonisation prioritised for moving away from petrol and diesel. Is that something that the Minister regrets that this Government is moving away from, and would he seek to support measures if an amendment were to come forward in that regard?

Deputy J. Renouf:

Provide sufficient funding to improve Cheapside as a gateway into town; I guess we are just within the realms.

The Bailiff:

Well, only just, you are quite a long way from the question.

Deputy J. Renouf:

The questioner will not be remotely surprised to know that I remain committed to the principles of decarbonisation. I do not think it is true to say that the Government has moved away from that. We have stated clearly that we need to review the plans that are in place because the aims and ambitions that were set out in the short term are no longer achievable, so it makes sense to recalibrate. If you are on a diet and you do not achieve your short-term objectives you do not give up, you recalibrate and go again. The question of decarbonisation and its link to air quality is obvious. We have a policy to encourage decarbonisation of transport; it is the major sector producing carbon emissions but also air pollution that goes with it. I do not see any reason why we would want to change that. We want to encourage active travel and buses where we can. So all of that holds and the decarbonisation strategy stands, in my view, not just as an attempt to save the planet, if you like, it is a strategy to improve the quality of life and indeed the cost of living because people who are driving cars which are not fossil-fuel powered are not subject to the vagaries of being held to ransom by various foreign wars. Maybe strayed a little far from the question but that is my answer.

4.10.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

It was somewhat tenuous, I hold my hands up, but nonetheless it does show that when it comes to improvements in this particular area of town, which does face some of the heaviest traffic and which is also populated by residents and businesses ... I am sure the Minister will agree that it is important that we think right across the board, not simply about putting in zebra crossings or traffic calming measures, but anything that can improve the lives of people, especially in the busiest parts of the Island - and it could be the same for Red Houses of course - should be welcomed. Does the Minister agree not everything needs to immediately cost money?

Deputy J. Renouf:

I think we are honing back in on the question. Yes, what I have already said in answer to the questions I have had so far, that both in terms of the overall plan for town and in terms of what you might call smaller scale measures that might be able to make immediate improvements, I am very happy to consider both.

4.10.6 Deputy L.V. Feltham:

I am pleased to hear some of the Minister's answers. Given that the Government does have a long-term ambition for the Cheapside and Kensington Place area in terms of the new hospital facilities ... I am mindful that the Government has purchased a number of buildings next to the Gloucester Street site around Kensington Place. Would the Minister look at perhaps some short-term usages for those buildings to ensure that area does not become a derelict waste ground while we are waiting for the second stage of the hospital programme?

Deputy J. Renouf:

Of course I will be happy to have a conversation with my colleague, the Minister for Health and Social Services, to discuss that. I would say though that is largely outside my area of Ministerial responsibility and, therefore, I would temper expectations around that. The priority is to work out what Health require of that site. I do acknowledge the point the Deputy is making, and I will be happy to have a conversation with the Minister, and I am sure the Deputy is capable of doing the same. But the priority on that site has to be the future requirements of the Health estate.