



**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**RECORTYS OIKOIL
Y CHOONCEIL SLATTYSSAGH**

P R O C E E D I N G S

D A A L T Y N

(HANSARD)

Douglas, Tuesday, 10th February 2004

Present:**The President of Tynwald (The Hon. N Q Cringle)**

The Lord Bishop of Sodor and Man (The Rt. Rev. Graeme Knowles), The Attorney General (Mr W J H Corlett QC),
 Hon. C M Christian, Hon. P M Crowe, Mr D F K Delaney,
 Mr D J Gelling CBE, Mr J R Kniveton, Mr E G Lowey, Mr L I Singer and Mr G H Waft,
 with Mrs M Cullen, Clerk of the Council.

Business transacted*Page***Question for Oral Answer**

1. NHS dental service, Ramsey – Quality 133

Orders of the Day

- Fireworks Bill – Report of Conference with Keys deferred 135
 Request to sit in private committee..... 135
 Coming legislative programme for Council 135
-

Legislative Council

The Council met at 10.30 a.m.

PRAYERS

The Lord Bishop

[MR PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

Question for Oral Answer

HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY

NHS dental service, Ramsey Quality

1. The Hon. Member (Mr Singer) to ask the Minister for Health and Social Security:

Are you satisfied that the NHS Dental Service in Ramsey is offering a good service to the people of the North of the Island?

The President: Hon. Members, we have but a short Order Paper in front of us and we start with the one Oral Question. I call on the Hon. Member, Mr Singer.

Mr Singer: Thank you, Mr President, I beg leave to ask the Question standing in my name.

The President: I call on the Minister for Health and Social Security, Mrs Christian, to reply.

The Minister for Health and Social Security (Mrs Christian): Thank you, Mr President.

I am satisfied that the NHS dental service in Ramsey is offering a good service to the people of the north of the Island, though I am aware that there are people who are still waiting to join an NHS list. Members will be aware that the Ramsey Dental Practice took the decision to cease to provide NHS dental services to the majority of their adult patients, moving, instead, to a largely private service.

In order to ensure that patients living in Ramsey and the north of the Island continued to have the ability to access a locally based NHS dental service, the new Ramsey salaried service was introduced in May 2003. That service is located in Ramsey Cottage Hospital and has recently been increased to two practitioners. It provides a regular service for registered patients, as well as accommodating any patient, whether registered or not, who may require emergency treatment.

The President: Mr Singer.

Mr Singer: Thank you.

In the Minister's answer, the Minister said that she believed that a good service is being offered. Other than in the case of an emergency, does the Minister's information

indicate how long a person has to wait before they can see the NHS dentist in Ramsey for anything other than an emergency?

The President: Minister.

The Minister: Mr President, I do not have a waiting time because that varies according to where you are on the list. The situation is that people who wanted to join the NHS, wanted to get an NHS practitioner and could not get an NHS services through the Ramsey General Dental Practice and wanted to use the salaried service, put their names on a list. They have been allocated to the two dentists in Ramsey, but those dentists clearly cannot see a thousand people at once and they are calling them in in batches from that list, to give them a routine check. That will then establish them on the list for further ongoing treatment.

So, the length of time will depend where you were on the original request list to go to the NHS salaried service in Ramsey.

The President: Mr Singer.

Mr Singer: Is the Minister aware that I rang the dental service three weeks ago today and asked about an appointment and they said to me that there were 1,350 people waiting and the waiting time is up to 12 months, unless a person is in severe pain – and that applies to children as well? That is why I ask the Minister: does she still think that the service that is being offered is satisfactory for the people of the north of the Island?

The Minister: Mr President, I do think I answered that question. I did state in my original answer that I believe the service they are giving to people is a good service, though I am conscious that there are people who are waiting to get into the service.

The President: Mr Waft.

Mr Waft: As a consequence of some of the dental surgeries withdrawing from the DHSS, have there been any savings made as a result of that, or has it all gone on the new people that have to be employed?

The Minister: There are no savings made, Mr President. The moneys which were paid formerly to general dental practitioners have reverted to the Department and the Department are paying salaried dental practitioners to try and replace that loss of service.

In addition to that, Members will recall that they have been advised previously that we increased the payment to the general dental practitioners on a per capita basis so that their remuneration increased by up to £12,500 per annum, provided that they had 1,500 patients on their NHS list. So, our costs, actually, in respect of those services, went up by a £¼ million.

So there has been no saving. What we want to do is provide a service; it has not brought about any savings, Mr President.

The President: Hon. Member, Mr Delaney.

Mr Delaney: Bearing in mind the answers that have

been given and the numbers quoted and the need, certainly for some sort of service for people within 12 months - there have to be people who are not suffering pain, who require dental surgery or services within 12 months - has the Minister any plans at all in Government policy, for the excellent documents which are coming out, to actually give the people of the north some extra dental cover, so they can get the benefit of the National Health Service, which they are not enjoying at the moment?

The President: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Mr President, we have been striving to do this for some time. We continue to actively seek to attract additional practitioners to the salaried service, or, indeed, to attract general dental practitioners to their own practices and the Hon. Member will be aware that there is a difficulty in recruiting dentists from the United Kingdom; they have the same sort of shortages that we have. We have been working with the practitioners in the Isle of Man to try and come up with a formula that will entice them back into the NHS service. (*Interjection by Mr Delaney*) We are embarking on a pilot scheme in April this year. Three practitioners are interested in working on that pilot and we continue all the time to advertise for new dentists.

We have recruited a new dentist in the past week, but that is for the community service. However, that will take some strain off the overall service, and we have made an offer to another dentist, who has yet to indicate whether or not they are accepting the offer.

Mr Delaney: Can I ask a further supplementary, then?

The President: Mr Delaney.

Mr Delaney: Would the Minister, because of the serious consequences on the people of the north and the Isle of Man in general, on this problem that you are having and they are having, give an undertaking to come back and inform us of what is now going to happen if these offers that are being given and may be accepted? If they are accepted, will you inform us of that, so we can look forward to at least fending off some of the complaints which are coming by mail to us all?

The Minister: Mr President, I am quite happy to advise you when we have made further appointments. I have to point out that, sometimes, we are simply making appointments to keep pace.

Mr Delaney: That worries me.

The Minister: We had, tragically, a death of a practitioner in the south of the Island, who was fully NHS, and that has put additional pressure on the south.

So it is a general problem all round. We are continuing to strive to recruit people to the salaried service and to negotiate with the general practitioners to see what arrangements we can make that would encourage them to increase their NHS provision.

The President: Mr Waft.

Mr Waft: So, just to clarify that, negotiations are taking

place with the dental surgeons who have already left the service and said so.

The Minister: Yes, they have been going on for some time. We do find it somewhat difficult in terms of those negotiations. They are a disparate group and it is not always easy to get consensus as to the direction in which they want to go, but we do have three practitioners who are in discussion with the Department about the terms for the pilot.

The President: Mr Singer, finally, I think.

Mr Singer: Maybe!

Would the Minister not accept, from what she has said and the figures, that actually the people of Ramsey and the north are dissatisfied with the level of service that can be offered? In fact, they consider it useless, unless your teeth are about to drop out or your children's teeth are about to become rotten, because they cannot be seen.

As much as the Minister has striven to bring extra NHS dentists to the north, does she not now believe that the cost of setting up the NHS dental surgery in the north, the removal of the hospital beds to create space for the surgery, the high cost of employing session dentists, who cannot provide this acceptable level of service to the community, those expenses, combined with the cost of the Douglas NHS dental service, with all its limitations, would have been better utilised in coming to an agreement with the dental profession on an acceptable scale of payment, which they asked for over five years ago?

The President: Minister.

The Minister: Mr President, that over-simplifies the matter (**Mrs Crowe:** Absolutely.) and it does, indeed, undermine what the dentists said to us.

The dentists, five years ago, certainly, came forward with a bid for money. We did not offer them what they asked for, because we wanted evidence to back up their claim. That was not forthcoming.

The dentists then retrenched and restated their position, saying it was not money that they were interested in, it was reducing their lists and having more time with patients. That requires that you recruit more dentists. We are endeavouring to do that, Mr President, so the Hon. Member's approach is not in line with what the dentists themselves were seeking and is not in line with what they continue to seek, or, if it is, they are not being transparent about the fact that they simply want more money.

Even if that were the case, Mr President, the amount of money we have spent on the salaried service is not going to equal or indeed make much inroad into the service that we are now presenting, because, if we take the money out of that service, and put it back into the private service, it is not going to cover any more patients than are currently being covered.

The President: Mr Singer.

Mr Singer: Would the Minister then, finally, like to, perhaps, dictate to me what I can say to a mother who will ring me up and say she has got a child of five or six who she wants to have a check-up, because she is bothered about the state of the teeth? Prevention is better than cure and she has

been told that that child cannot be seen for 12 months at the NHS dental surgery in the north of the Island and she cannot afford private treatment.

The Minister: Mr President, there is a school dental service (**Mrs Crowe:** Absolutely.) that all children can go to. I would suggest that she approaches the community service and has her child seen there.

Mr Singer: Sorry, Mr President; have you publicised this, or would you like to publicise this to patients who have children, to make sure that they know they can do that, and publish the number that they can ring to make sure those children are seen?

The Minister: I will let the Hon. Member have that information and I can publish it, certainly.

The President: Okay, Hon. Members, I think that has given the dental question a good airing this morning.

Fireworks Bill

Report of Conference with the Keys deferred

The President: Now, Hon. Members, I have to tell you that, at somewhere around quarter to five last evening, I learned that there was a request in to have the Fireworks Bill withdrawn, and I had to make a decision as to whether or not we would meet this morning or should we have telephoned round.

I was aware that a Question was there for answer. I apologise to Hon. Members if they have come in specifically for the meeting, but, by 5 o'clock last night, I decided that we were all lined up to come in for this morning's sitting, anyway.

So, with the Fireworks Bill having been withdrawn this morning, because my understanding is that there has been a consequential amendment found within that particular piece of legislation, which is also affecting the work which the Keys will do in relation to the Bill as well.

Request to sit in private

The President: Mr Delaney, yes?

Mr Delaney: I would like to request that we sit in private. There are a couple of things I would like to ask in private, Mr President.

The President: I am content for that to happen, if Hon. Members wish so to sit.

Coming legislative programme for Council

Mr Lowey: If I may, Mr President, again –

The President: Yes, Mr Lowey.

Mr Lowey: – with your permission, sir, ask: is there any likelihood of the Keys having any legislation? I think there is a general concern outside that, somehow, the Council does not meet because of our choice not to meet.

I think it ought to be publicly stated that we can only deal now with measures that come from the House of Keys, that we can deal with legislation and if the Keys have not got legislation for us to deal with, then it is a bit rich to be told, from time to time, that our workload is not as heavy as it should be. It does seem ironic, indeed, that we are in a position where we attempt to assist Government in getting the legislation through.

But my point in asking the question, having looked at their Agenda, it seems to me that, if they stick strictly to their Agenda, will there be any legislation for us to deal with next week?

The President: Yes, I take the point that the Hon. Member makes and I understand his wording, that it does tend to be a bit ironic, but, as Members of Council know, we quite deliberately did sit at Christmas-time and we took two Bills through very quickly indeed, in order to allow Government legislation not to be in any way held up. So, I think we have to accept, too, the way in which it will flow to us and I can but apologise to Members that you have come in this morning for a Bill which, although it is on our Order Paper, was late yesterday afternoon withdrawn. Mr Gelling.

Mr Gelling: Could I just, on a point of clarification, Mr President, ask, should the Report to us not have been given before the Bill actually was on the floor of the Keys to be amended? What is the point in reporting to the Legislative Council if their amendments are going to – ?

The President: I think it works both ways in relation to that one, and I think we could have possibly have dealt with it, but there we are.

Mr Waft.

Mr Lowey: Could I ask – ?

Mr Waft: Just to point out that there is a Criminal Justice (Arrestable Offences) Bill having its third reading this morning in the Keys, so probably we will get that very shortly.

Mr Lowey: Could I, Mr President, just ask one question? In practical terms of good housekeeping for parliamentary business, I know Mr Speaker is in charge of the programmes for the other place. Do we, through you, sir, have meetings with the presiding officer of the House of Keys to see if we can get a better flow of information and if those meetings do not take place, could I suggest that it might be helpful all round?

The President: I take the point that the Hon. Member is making. I certainly do talk to Mr Speaker, but I will make the point formally to him and see, in fact, if we cannot get the consequent flow of legislation coming through on a more regular basis.

Mrs Christian.

Mrs Christian: Yes, Mr President, another approach

might be made, perhaps, to the Chief Minister, to see whether there is any Government legislation which could start its route in here. There is a programme set out and if anything were ready and the Keys were not ready to progress it, they may wish to consider starting it here.

The President: In that case, Hon. Members, and with those comments, I think we will draw to a conclusion our business for this morning and Council will now sit in private. Thank you.

The Council sat in private.