

STATES OF JERSEY



WORKING PARTY TO REVIEW APPROPRIATENESS OF DEPARTMENTAL STRUCTURE

**Lodged au Greffe on 20th March 2008
by Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of St. Clement.**

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

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

- (a) to agree that a working party should be established to investigate the appropriateness of the internal structure of each Department of the States to ascertain whether it is fit for purpose and to report back to the States with its findings within 6 months; and
- (b) to request the Privileges and Procedures Committee, in consultation with the Council of Ministers, to bring forward for approval by the States the proposed membership of the working party, which should comprise States members who are Ministers or Assistant Ministers and members who are not.

DEPUTY G.C.L. BAUDAINS OF ST. CLEMENT

REPORT

For as long as I can remember people have questioned the efficiency of our public services. As these services are funded by taxation, it is right that such services should provide the best value for money possible.

In an effort to achieve the greatest efficiency, the States have employed various procedures: an analysis by OXERA, the Fundamental Spending Review, benchmarking and so forth, but I believe a basic question remains unanswered – if our public services were in the private sector, would they be the same? Would they be more efficient? Would the structure remain the same?

Over a period of time, various people have criticised the services we provide, on the grounds that they, with private sector expertise, would achieve economies by different working practices.

I have lost count of the occasions professionals have expressed to me not only their amazement, but, as taxpayers, their concern, at the way a particular function is being carried out. And, as a politician, I have uncovered waste and inefficiency in several areas only to be frustrated by my inability to effect real change.

Over recent months I have come to the conclusion that the real block to understanding whether or not our civil service delivers value for money could also be a cause of the inefficiency itself (assuming the latter exists).

That common denominator is Departmental structure. In my view, these structures have not kept up with modern private sector practice. This not only indicates a possible shortcoming, but also inhibits meaningful analysis.

I recall asking the Minister for Planning and Environment whether it was possible to have an audit trail of Planning Applications in order not only to assist applicants awareness of the progress of their application, but also to enable the Minister to identify possible logjams within his department. He replied it was not, as he would need more staff for such a scheme. Here we have a situation of mutual exclusivity – where more resources are needed in order to achieve greater efficiency.

I have therefore concluded that an analysis of Departmental structure by a working party consisting of politicians familiar with departmental practices – assisted by professionals expert in the particular structure being analysed as necessary – would give us the information needed to establish the appropriateness of our present structures.

In today's culture of blame, where civil servants are increasingly coming under attack, I believe an analysis of Departments may well demonstrate it is the structure in which they work that is at fault, rather than failures by employees. As such, not only might productivity be increased, but staff morale as well.

Financial and manpower implications

I am hopeful that there will be no additional financial, manpower or resource implications arising from this proposition. It is anticipated that professional experts who assist the working party will do so on a *pro bono* basis and that members of the working party will be able to undertake the work without officer support, although they will undoubtedly look to the officers of the department being examined to provide factual and other background information. If the working party decides at a later date that some officer support is required I would anticipate that could be provided through the secondment of existing officers as this work could represent a useful training opportunity. It is possible that, in the longer term, there will be savings should inappropriate structures be identified.