

### **3.6 The Connétable of St. Brelade of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding the status of his department's draft I.T. skills strategy:**

How is the Minister addressing the need to ensure that the Jersey curriculum is suitably structured to provide pupils with the necessary skills for life in the 21st century, and with increasing emphasis being placed on the teaching of more advanced skills, both in Jersey and further afield, will he confirm the status of his department's draft I.T. skills strategy?

#### **Deputy P.J.D. Ryan of St. John (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):**

The States have already recognised that a skilled workforce will be essential for Jersey's economic prosperity in future and has allocated £3 million in the last M.T.F.P. (Medium-Term Financial Plan) for the creation of a new I.T. skills strategy for the Island. Work on this project is well advanced under my Assistant Minister, Deputy Rod Bryans, and the strategy will be launched on schedule in the Autumn. Thank you.

#### **3.6.1 The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

Sir, supplementary? Would the Minister explain the reasons for the delay in producing his draft I.T. strategy which was due, I think, in May 2013, in regards to its importance in the overall Minister for Economic Development's economic growth and diversification strategy, where it clearly states there is a need to better align education training with the needs of employers, thus reducing future reliance on migration. Can he explain the reasons for the delay?

#### **The Deputy of St. John:**

If we take the Connétable to be correct, that the original date was May, that is not my information. My information is that it is on schedule and due in the autumn this year. However, I do know that it is a complex subject, there is much work that needs to be done. Some of the work has already begun. In fact, we have Hautlieu's I.T. department, which does have specialist and highly rated I.T. staff, they are already involved in piloting a scheme where they share expertise with colleagues in primary schools and are using, for instance, Raspberry Pis to help our youngest children learn coding skills. So a lot of this work is already initiated but I do understand the Connétable's wish to have the strategy topped and tailed, done and dusted, as quickly as possible so that he can get on with reviewing what it is. I know he has a particular interest and I thank him for that interest. But I can just reassure him that it is now on what we think is the schedule for October this year.

#### **3.6.2 The Connétable of St. Mary:**

Could the Minister confirm to me if there is someone in the department who is dedicated to the development of this strategy, and someone also responsible for the I.T. provision in schools generally?

#### **The Deputy of St. John:**

Yes. Thank you to the Constable for her question. We have both a specialist I.T. person that looks after all aspects of I.T. in the education system, but that particular person is working with a more senior colleague at assistant director level within the department who is chairing the officer group, and my Assistant Minister, Deputy Bryans is overall Chair and has political responsibility.

#### **3.6.3 The Connétable of St. Mary:**

Sir, I would like another question, if I might, if there is time. Briefly, how can the Minister ensure in the current difficulties that we have, that the teachers will be receptive to the instruction of a new strategy and that also they will be resourced adequately for its implementation?

#### **The Deputy of St. John:**

First of all, as far as resources are concerned, we have sufficient funds in the M.T.F.P. already allocated, and secondly, I cannot absolutely guarantee it but I can certainly take the opportunity of assuring the Connétable that we have a whole band of very dedicated teachers, who have the best interests of the students at heart, throughout our education system. I know that to be the case so I am very confident that she does not need to worry about it.

#### **3.6.4 Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:**

I do not believe that was my colleague's question so if I can rephrase it then. Can the Minister explain what processes have been put in place in order that when this document is published in October now, that the teachers will be taught and be able to teach the ongoing curriculum, and confirm that the curriculum will be designed at that stage, so that they will be able then to teach it in the next September?

#### **The Deputy of St. John:**

I know that one of the strands of work within the new I.T. strategy involves the skill sets of teachers, that has already been recognised, and as I say, there has already been some initiatives that have taken place particularly with the secondary teachers at Hautlieu helping their colleagues. But the Deputy is right, that is an area of concern and that is an area that we will be addressing. It will be addressed within the new I.T. strategy when it comes out in October, and he and others will have ample opportunity then to inspect and question us on that particular future aspect that he is talking about.

#### **3.6.5 The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

Could the Minister confirm that he has either a senior I.T. official at Education or whether he has identified somebody to take that post? Just to add to that, will he be able to provide anything to the panel prior to the autumn to help it in its work?

#### **The Deputy of St. John:**

By the panel, I assume the Connétable means the Scrutiny Panel. It will not be possible and I do not think it would be right to try to pre-empt the strategy that is coming out, although I do know that Deputy Bryans does intend to have some informal meetings with the Scrutiny Panel to assist them in their work which might enable them to start their work earlier than waiting until October. The first part of the question was do we have a specialist person, I think, within the department. The Education Department has a specialist I.T. group that has been working for some years because it is not as if I.T. has just suddenly appeared. We have been working for many years and I believe very effectively within the department looking after things like the safeguarding of children and all sorts of other things. So it is not as if this is a new thing, we have very skilled staff already in the department. I do not believe that there is a need at this point in time but I will wait to see the results of the I.T. strategy that Deputy Bryans and his team of officers are currently working on. I think that answers the question.

[15:15]

#### **3.6.6 The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

I do not believe it does. I asked whether there was somebody specific identified in the department and I do not believe that question was answered.

#### **The Deputy of St. John:**

Yes, there are 2 or 3 people within the department.

#### **The Bailiff:**

Well, perhaps you could give their names to the Connétable after this meeting.

#### **The Deputy of St. John:**

I can do it after, but I do not think it is right to do it in public. I do not think that is what Members generally are supposed to do.