

3.9 The Connétable of St. John of the Chairman of the Privileges and Procedures Committee regarding States members' I.T. expenses:

Could the Chairman confirm whether the new provisions relating to I.T. (Information Technology) expenses for States Members will result in £31,000 of tax payers' money being spent annually on I.T. equipment for Members?

Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour (Chairman, Privileges and Procedures Committee):

No, I cannot confirm what the questioner asks. An observation I would make is that this allocation was never - never - solely made for the provision of I.T. equipment i.e. hardware. Also, for clarity, this is not new money. As was communicated to States Members in my letter dated 3rd January 2014 States Members have had this budget allocated to them for over 10 years. Thank you.

3.9.1 The Connétable of St. John:

Can it be right that at this time in the political cycle to be using £31,000 of States funding, given that the House will be replaced come October this year and should that money not be set aside until the end of the year when any new ways of dealing with I.T. be put in to the new House?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Can it be right at this time? Yes, considering that this particular budget has a number of components within it which includes States Members internet provision which, if Members refer to the answer to the written question, it explains quite clearly in detail why that happened due to J.T. (Jersey Telecom) changing its billing system in the way in which States Members are reimbursed for internet provision. Also, with regards to the other component, again, States Members are already receiving that. Again, the written answer explains why it was decided to change the mechanism to how this particular budget was accessed by States Members. So I would like to make clear that this is not new money, this is no additional cost to the taxpayer and that States Members have been receiving this allocation for over 10 years, just via a slightly different mechanism.

3.9.2 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

I wonder if the Chairman would agree with me in that the office expenses which States Members incur, whether it be in their own office and I.T., putting software, hardware or whatever, should come out of Members' expense allowance.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

The committee were mindful of this and were bearing in mind things such as the Freedom of Information Law. They were minded to adopt this change as it is more transparent, as the Deputy is quite clear in saying, that this should come out of what is classed as States Members' expenses and not hidden as a hidden subsidy within the I.S. (Information Services) Department budget. Therefore, that is why the Chief Minister was willing to transfer that budget over to the States Assembly budget. I could not agree more with what the Deputy said.

3.9.3 The Connétable of St. John:

Will the Chairman go back and reconsider with his committee, or his panel, delaying this until after the election?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

The committee has considered this. The committee will not be reconsidering it at this time. What the committee has decided, however, is that this matter should be more thoroughly considered by the States Remuneration Board at that time and that is what the committee sought to do. Thank you.

The Connétable of St. John:

So the answer is no?

The Bailiff:

I think the answer was no. Yes.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I began to say the answer was no. Thank you.