

21.02.09

7 Senator S.W. Pallett of the Chief Minister regarding the results of the “Be Heard” employee engagement survey (OQ.26/2021)

Will the Chief Minister explain why the results of the “Be Heard” employee engagement survey, which closed on 12th September 2020, have not yet been published; and will he state when he expects the results will be published and which government department is responsible for collating and processing the survey data?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré (The Chief Minister):

The Connétable of St. Ouen, as vice-chair of S.E.B. (States Employment Board), is taking this question.

The Connétable of St. Ouen (Vice-Chair, States Employment Board - rapporteur):

I thank the Senator for his question. The “Be Heard” employee engagement survey provides a detailed and complex vat of information that has taken a while to analyse and assimilate, due in part to the size of our organisation and also there is not a common single narrative that covers all our departments. The survey is co-ordinated by the people in Corporate Services directorate through a survey company in the U.K. The S.E.B. were due to be briefed later in November. However, Members will probably be aware a number of other very urgent matters came up, which we had to deal with. Therefore, due to these time pressures, the briefing was quite delayed. These delays included matters that were debated by the States at the end of last year and also the ongoing increase in COVID cases over Christmas and the New Year. Important matters, which concern the workforce, and of course S.E.B. The S.E.B. briefing has now taken place on 27th January and we have now started to cascade briefings to Ministers, trade union employees, and we will be arranging a briefing for States Members very shortly. It is intended that all briefings will be completed by the end of this month.

6.7.1 Senator S.W. Pallett:

Can I thank the Constable for his answer? I think he would agree that our staff are our greatest asset. Hearing what they say is clearly important. The survey was clear in that it stated: “We will act on what you say.” Will the Assistant Chief Minister ensure that all comments are made available, even if it is anonymously, to States Members and the public so that we can fully understand the concerns raised by States employees and ensure they are being listened to?

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

I can give the Senator that assurance. That is entirely the purpose of doing this survey. We want to know what people think and we are keen to act on those views as we get them. Yes, the details will be published to all States Members.

6.7.2 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

We are going to listen to what our staff say. Is the S.E.B. aware that some of the employees in the States have no idea of which department they are working for? It seems to change every other week. Are we really going to hear what they are thinking? I would like to think so because we still have bullying and so on to deal with as well.

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

I thank the Senator for her question. It is difficult to respond in detail to her point, but I will take that on board. All I can tell her is that 56 per cent of our employees responded to this survey. According to the survey company that is much better engagement than they have seen with other organisations of a similar size in the U.K. So, in terms of the “Be Heard” survey, we have done everything we can to gather the views of our employees. But I do take on board the points that she has made.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

I would like to hope the S.E.B. will make a note following up on this because it does not sound very good to me.

The Bailiff:

It does have to be a question, Senator, not a comment. Deputy Ward.

6.7.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

How this will be different from the HR Lounge bullying report? Are we not back to a Groundhog Day of consultation with staff when, yet again, nothing is done about the structures that put them into the positions where staff are bullied and harassed in their workplace?

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

If I can answer the Deputy’s question by saying that we are due to receive a further update from HR Lounge, a report that we commissioned last year, to investigate and look into the question of bullying, which is separate from this survey. This survey is to elucidate a wide range of views from staff members on a broad range of topics relating to their employment. So it is a different survey with a different aim. The HR Lounge survey concentrates on bullying. This one will concentrate on how we have implemented the recommendations they made the last time they visited the Island.

6.7.4 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Given that the Constable has stated that he is keen to work on the report, the delay of 3 months seems to go against that keenness. What key headlines can he give to the Assembly now that he would like to see acted upon?

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

In response to the first part of the Deputy’s question, I have already outlined why there was a delay in publishing the results, which we do regret. But we have to prioritise matters at the S.E.B. and deal with those that we see as the most urgent. In terms of results, it is very difficult to give detailed results because you have to contextualise that with the report. But I can say that 56 per cent of employees responded to the survey, which is 3 per cent better than the last time. We have an overall engagement figure, which has improved by 3 per cent, to 53 per cent.

[11:45]

Rather than go into any detail, it is like all surveys, there are good parts and there are parts that are not so good. We will outline those in the presentation to States Members when they will have an opportunity to question the findings in detail.

6.7.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is it the case that most departments within the Government structure do not regularly conduct leaver surveys in order to discover where the incidence of bullying and other circumstance lead to staff turnover at the rates they do?

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

No, that is not the case. We have a policy of actively encouraging managers to ensure that leaver surveys are conducted for all leavers. There is indeed an online tool that facilitates that process.

6.7.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:

How successful is that campaign being to encourage people to fill in a form? I certainly hear of people not being able to do that.

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

There was an issue with teaching staff. We are trying to address that. But I am not sure how else I can answer the Deputy's question other than to say we are doing our best to encourage everyone to complete the survey. Because, clearly, if there are issues with people and they are leaving because of those issues, we want to know about it so that we can make improvements.

6.7.7 Senator S.W. Pallett:

How can we be sure that the survey results will present the good, the bad and the ugly, and not just be softened up in any way to hide the problems that Deputy Ward in some ways has just highlighted?

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

I thank the Senator for his question. Other than presenting States Members with a picture of what is going on, the reason for doing this survey is so that we at the S.E.B. can analyse the problems that exist. If we were trying to avoid issues, we could easily use COVID, as many other organisations have done, to not do this survey. What we did, we have done the survey with the intention of finding out the issues. We will be entirely transparent with those issues when the survey is presented to Members. I would encourage all Members who are interested to come to the presentation and ask questions.