

### **3.8 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of the Chief Minister regarding the availability of the services of the Communications Unit:**

Would the Chief Minister inform members whether the services of the Communications Unit are available to all States Departments?

#### **Senator F.H. Walker (The Chief Minister):**

The Communications Unit has been tasked with developing and leading a communications strategy for the States of Jersey. This strategy covers a wide range of activities, including the organisation of public consultations, the management of the new States website, and internal communications with the public sector workforce. In addition, and in order to help the States achieve its objective of reconnecting with the public, the Communications Unit does provide a service to all States departments. However, all this can only be achieved within the available resources. Whilst the Unit is in a position to provide general advice to all States departments, additional requests for specific assistance have to be prioritised and assessed according to the Unit's workload.

#### **3.8.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

Would the Chief Minister inform the House as to who carries out this prioritisation?

#### **Senator F.H. Walker:**

It is the Manager of the Communications Unit in consultation with the Chief Executive.

#### **3.8.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

Would the Chief Minister not acknowledge that it seems rather strange that the Communications Unit, despite many assertions to the contrary when it was established, seems to be spending most of its time working for the Executive? Would he not think he would be politically advised to ensure that it gives much more support to Scrutiny and that the work is divided much more along that particular line?

#### **Senator F.H. Walker:**

That was never the intention. I am sure the Deputy himself would wish to think about the statement he has just made, given that he was President of the Privileges and Procedures Committee when the Communications Unit undertook a huge amount of work on behalf of that Committee, work which it also continues to do on behalf of the current PPC.

#### **3.8.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

I am totally confused. Is the Chief Minister therefore saying that the Communications Unit is able to offer services to both sides of government in terms of the Executive and Scrutiny; it is doing so at the moment in terms of PPC; and therefore it would be very simple to do so in terms of Scrutiny; and he supports that it should offer services to Scrutiny and not be the exclusive preserve of the Executive?

#### **Senator F.H. Walker:**

If the House wishes to considerably increase the budget and the manning of the Communications Unit, then it can provide the sort of full service to the entire House, including Scrutiny, that the Deputy seems to be suggesting. That was never the proposal in the first place. If he wishes to change it, I suggest he puts that proposal to me, and it will be prioritised along with all the other requests for funding and manpower requirement.

**3.8.4 Deputy J.A. Martin:**

Yes, I think the Minister may have answered, but in a totally different way round. When I attended the Council of Ministers with the Chairmen's Committee - this is minuted - the Chief Minister did say that Scrutiny would be allowed to use the Communications Unit if they provided all services from their own meagre budget. Is that not correct, Sir?

**Senator F.H. Walker:**

I do not ever recall referring to Scrutiny's budget as meagre, nor do I believe it is. Sir, the fact is the Communications Unit will work for any part of the States' machine, given the time and the resources to do so. Now, if Scrutiny requires the extended use of the Communications Unit, then it will require additional resource, and I think I have already made that clear in my response to Deputy Le Hérisier.

**3.8.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Is the Minister saying that the media department is responsible to all aspects of government, and has he not also said that Scrutiny is part of government?

**Senator F.H. Walker:**

I believe I have already answered that question, probably twice.