

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER**

**ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY, 24th OCTOBER 2006**

**Question**

Would the Minister inform members what consultation, if any, took place between him and the Department's Accounting Officer in deciding to award additional funding of £50,000 and £45,000 to the Battle of Flowers Association this year? Would he inform members what advice he received and whether he over-ruled the Department's Accounting Officer in this matter?

**Answer**

Deputy Southern will be aware that following a request from me, the Comptroller and Auditor General conducted a detailed review of the 2006 Battle of Flowers organisation and funding. The helpful report covers all aspects of the process that delivered funding to the event. The report's findings identify certain opportunities for improvement in the decision making and recording process. The report makes clear recommendations which the Ministerial team, the Chief Officer and the Department are implementing in full.

As far as the background to the advice given and received is concerned: it should be firstly pointed out that the previous ED committee had decided to cut the events programme for 2006 following FSR cuts. I decided to reverse this approach by providing more support to certain key events. These were/are to be funded from savings elsewhere and possible use of the TDF. For the avoidance of any doubt I had extensive and regular input and advice from my Chief Officer and the members of his team responsible for the department's input into the event. During the course of these discussions the strengths and weaknesses of Battle of Flowers were explored in detail.

This departmental advice led to my suggestion to the Battle of Flowers chairman, in an exchange of letters, that the additional funds should be handled by a specially appointed sub-committee with external input from outside the Association. Unfortunately, this suggestion was not taken up. In hindsight, I probably should have been more insistent and made the funding conditional on the forming of this sub-committee. Having said that, all of the areas that the additional funding was to be directed to – with the exception of the 'celebrity' - did yield the result that was intended: namely, a significantly improved carnival atmosphere, better fireworks and a higher quality arena.

As far as the matched funding decision is concerned – the Association advised late on in the process that, whilst considerable efforts had been made to get corporate sponsorship – they had been unsuccessful. Not agreeing to the additional money would have compromised the improvements the aforementioned improvements. A number of potential sponsors have now been identified and realising corporate sponsorship will be an important component for any funding discussions in 2007. It should also be noted that – whilst the commitment for the additional funding has been committed – the additional monies have not yet been paid.

Over the past few months the department and I have been working on a revised strategy designed to arrest the decline in the contribution to the economy made by the tourism sector. As a consequence throughout the past few months Economic Development has placed greater emphasis on the event-led components of the Jersey offering.

This is a departmental strategy and is fully endorsed and supported by the entire Ministerial and departmental team. Increased support for the Battle of Flowers was and is an integral component of the strategy and is supported by all."