

2.3 Senator L. Norman of the Chief Minister regarding further facilities, if any, to be provided to Ministers and related costs:

Following the provision of hotel accommodation for a recent strategy meeting of the Council of Ministers, are there any further facilities to be provided to Ministers such as fully equipped offices within their respective departments and, if so, what costs are involved, if any, and how will these be met?

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

In most cases, an office has been available for each Minister to use in his or her own department although in one or 2 cases Ministers still prefer to work from home. The additional costs have not, in any way, been significant as they have simply involved the redesignation of existing office space and have been met by departments from within their existing budgets. In addition to that, the ninth floor of Cyril Le Marquand House has been designated as the meeting room for the Council of Ministers and essential furniture was purchased for that floor, including 20 chairs, at a total cost of £22,257. In addition, it has been agreed that Ministers should be provided with a mobile phone with email and diary facilities so that they can keep up to date with their appointments and emails when they are away from the office. These cost £520 per unit together with a unit support charge of £1,000 a year to cover the costs of server hardware and software, user support and the replacement of equipment every 3 years. These costs will be met from the central IT budget. Therefore, the total cost of allowing for ministerial government and installing ministerial government and establishing ministerial government is £27,029 plus the telephone support costs.

2.3.1 Senator L. Norman:

Does the quantified insignificant cost of providing offices for Ministers include such things as rental value, light and heat, cleaning, stationery, telephone, secretarial service and the relocation of previous occupants? Bearing in mind that all Members receive an expense allowance towards their office expenses to cover our individual needs over and above those facilities provided centrally, will Ministers be expected to contribute towards these costs from their expense allowance?

Senator F.H. Walker:

I frankly think that is a ludicrous question. If the States and the Island want ministerial government - and they clearly do - then Ministers who carry a heavy responsibility have to have the minimum acceptable amenities to do that and, as I said in my answer, no Minister - despite, I know, rumours to the contrary - has had an office beautifully furnished or specifically tailored to their requirements. Largely speaking, where we have moved into offices we have moved into offices that existed with a lick of paint here and a lick of paint there, otherwise no additional facilities. The Island has got ministerial government installed on the cheap.

2.3.2 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire of St. Helier:

The Remuneration Sub-Committee set up by the States of Jersey through the PPC (Privileges and Procedures Committee) recommended that no States Member would receive differential rates of pay. I understand from the answer that was given by the Chief Minister the issues behind having Ministers accessing their important messages, et cetera, with their mobile phones. Could I ask 2 questions? The first is, will the calls from these mobile phones be paid for by the States of Jersey and will those

numbers that belong to the Ministers be circulated to Members who do not normally have the access to many Members' mobile phone numbers?

Senator F.H. Walker:

The answer is that calls for official business will be paid for by the States. It is vital that Ministers are in touch with their emails and their diary if they are to do their job efficiently and that is what the States expect of them. Secondly, so far as numbers are concerned, I can only speak personally but my mobile telephone number has been published in the telephone directory ever since I have had it and I think the same applies to virtually every Minister and I know there is no problem with circulating contact numbers.

2.3.3 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

A supplementary question to the Chief Minister: perhaps he could ensure that all Members do have access to these mobile phones if the Chief Minister and his Ministers are going to do their job. Certainly it must be an issue that all Members have access to these numbers. I know from looking in the green pages of the Members' handbook that there are difficulties in finding people's mobile phones.

Senator F.H. Walker:

I do not know if that was a question, Sir, but I think I have already said that contact numbers will be made available.

2.3.4 The Connétable of Grouville:

Could the Minister assure us that this new system will, in fact, improve communications with the Minister of Transport whose emails seems to bounce all around the Island, never coming home to rest?

Senator F.H. Walker:

The Constable is not the only one to have a sense of frustration in having emails bounce back from the Minister for Transport but that, I am assured by Deputy de Faye, is a matter that is in hand.