

2.6 Connétable D.J. Murphy of Grouville of the Minister for Economic Development regarding the cost of a forthcoming briefing at the Radisson Hotel:

Would the Minister inform the Assembly how much the proposed briefing on 4th March 2008 at the Radisson Hotel is estimated to cost and whether any other venues were considered?"

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf (The Minister for Economic Development):

The Radisson is providing the room at no cost. Alternative venues frequently used by the States were considered. However, all of these would involve charges for the room as well as catering. On catering costs, I can inform Members that the cost of 2 coffee breaks will be £3.50 per head and that a sandwich lunch will be provided at £5 per head. I am sure that Members would agree that that is at least as competitive as other venues. I would say that this is an important briefing. We are holding it to ensure that all Members are fully informed of the economic challenges facing Jersey. It is being held in the interests of transparency and I very much hope that this will not be, as some people have said, a debate of 5 hours by PowerPoint. It is rather for Members to have an opportunity to scrutinise Economic Development on the important challenges ahead and I encourage all Members to come along if they can.

2.6.1 The Connétable of Grouville:

I would like to commend the Minister for having negotiated such a one-off deal. I am sure that does not happen very often. However, I would encourage him to look for value for taxpayers' money when dealing with these rather minor problems. Would he agree?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

Absolutely, and being the Minister responsible for tourism ensures that perhaps we do have the opportunity of showing Members some venues such as the Radisson which are new. It is being provided at zero cost. If there are other briefings and if there are other important tourism venues which have invested substantial amounts of money then I will encourage those venues to provide it free of charge for Members in order that we can have the double opportunity of having a convivial opportunity for discussions but also for Members to see important investment in our tourist economy.

2.6.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Minister not agree that the proliferation of such briefings could be replaced by the simple expedient of sending round paper times 52?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I will be providing a written briefing for Members before but can I just remind the Deputy, who is after all responsible for scrutinising Economic Development, my Business Plan over the next 12 months consists of company law amendments, trust law amendments, proposals for a new public partnership initiative for tourism, airport and harbour new strategies, gambling reform, financial services development (India and China), raising the skills level of Jersey, Regulation of Undertakings decisions, competition policy, utility regulations, inflation strategy and so on. There will be written briefings but surely he would agree with me that the economy matters. Raising economic growth maintains and enhances the standard of living of Jersey people and it is a matter for all Members to hold us to account on what our business plans are. I would have thought the economy matters and is worthwhile having half a day's discussion and debate by Members.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I think we are drifting a little from the initial question.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

The answer to my question that paper is cheaper than briefings ...?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

The Chairman of the Economic Affairs Scrutiny Panel will well know. I doubt whether perhaps he has even read the Economic Affairs Business Plan. If he wants paper he can have it in abundance but there is nothing that is better than the opportunity for face-to-face discussions among Members and I would have thought he would have welcomed that.