

2.2 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of the Chief Minister regarding access to the Corporate Management Board minutes:

In response to an oral question on 6th November 2007 the Chief Minister refused to release the Corporate Management Board minutes suggesting it was not the role of politicians to become involved in the detail of how States policies and decisions are implemented. Would the Minister reconsider his decision to deny access in order to ensure that Back-Benchers are able to satisfy themselves as to public service efficiency?

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

As the Deputy has pointed out in his question, I have already explained in an answer to a previous question why the minutes of the Corporate Management Board will not be released and I see no reason to change that decision.

2.2.1 Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Martin:

Would the Chief Minister confirm that even he himself is sometimes not given the minutes of the Corporate Management Board? It is my understanding that the Chief Executive Officer makes the decision as to whom and what minutes are taken and who receives them. Is this correct?

Senator F.H. Walker:

Yes, it is correct. As I explained in answer to a question by the Deputy in November, this is a management board. It is not a political entity. It takes no political decisions. It makes no policy decisions and the power of management is delegated to officers in the appropriate way.

2.2.2 Senator S. Syvret:

The Chief Minister is reiterating his view that it is not the role of politicians to become involved in the detail of how States policies and decisions are implemented. It is not a view I would necessarily agree with, but would he, by the same token, accept then that it is not the role of the Corporate Management Board or the senior officers who sit on it to become engaged in political manoeuvring?

Senator F.H. Walker:

That is, of course, a rhetorical question and who decides or defines what is or is not political manoeuvring? But generally speaking the answer to the question has to be yes.

2.2.3 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier:

Does the Chief Minister accept that his position on this particular issue does not sit well with his commitment to open government?

Senator F.H. Walker:

No, I do not. Open government is all about taking policy decisions and conveying those decisions to the public and that is exactly what this Assembly does. I believe that the defined difference between political activity and management activity is exactly as it should be.

2.2.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does he not accept that delivery of policy is also a matter of public concern and should be in the public domain?

Senator F.H. Walker:

Yes, but I also accept that Ministers are responsible for the delivery of services and ultimately it is Ministers who are held to account and that is the position this House has agreed to. That is the correct position and that is a position I believe should continue.

2.2.5 Deputy J.A. Martin:

Would the Chief Minister please not accept that a Corporate Management Board does and must discuss policy information such as Imagine Jersey 2035 and New Directions? All the coming together of all these things are policy information and States Members as a whole should know what is going on at these meetings and I really think he should reconsider and we have... or, at the least, the Minister knows exactly what is going on at these meetings and sees the minutes.

Senator F.H. Walker:

I am sorry. I do not agree with the Deputy.

2.2.6 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

Again on 6th November the Chief Minister did say that States Members need to be involved at a higher level of policy-setting and then monitoring and vetting. How does he expect us to be able to achieve that if only the Council of Ministers is able to see the minutes but not us? Surely it is up to us to decide whether or not the minutes deserve our attention and not to be told by the Chief Minister whether or not we can see them. Does he not agree with that?

Senator F.H. Walker:

I think I should make it clear, although I think I did so on the last occasion this question was raised, the Council of Ministers do not see the minutes of the Corporate Management Board on an official or regular basis, nor do we see any need to do so. There is a difference between the political responsibility of Members and the managerial responsibility of our officers, and I maintain the answer I have given consistently to this question, Sir.