

2.15 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of the Chief Minister regarding the source from which staff under suspension were paid:

Would the Chief Minister identify the source from which staff under suspension are paid, identify the sum spent this current year, and advise what changes, if any, he is proposing to expedite the processes which determine the length of suspension?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur (The Chief Minister):

The salaries of suspended staff are paid from the staff salary vote of the budget of the suspending department. There are currently 3 employees suspended from duty. In the case of 2 they are suspended pending police investigations. In respect of the third there is an interim court injunction which prevents immediate progress with the disciplinary process. The sum spent this current year until 31st October in respect of salaries of suspended employees is £286,337. In addition to these costs £38,942 in employer pensions contributions was also incurred. Further consequential costs of suspensions are not readily available and will be forwarded to States Members as soon as possible. Every effort is made to ensure that staff suspension is not continued any longer than absolutely necessary and I am pleased to say that we are now down to 3 such cases. One of the main causes for delayed suspensions is the existence of a police criminal investigation and/or court proceedings where we are advised that we should not commence the disciplinary process for fear of prejudicing proceedings. I have written to the now previous Attorney General asking him to review that advice and I am sure his successor will be responding in due course. The States Employment Board has appointed a Suspension Review Panel consisting of public employees. It sat in October and November this year to review suspensions and to satisfy itself that the process was properly followed and all that should be done is being done to progress matters. A further review panel constituted under the terms of P.98 of 2009 will sit in December 2009 and monthly thereafter.

2.15.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I thank the Chief Minister for his comprehensive answer and the more that is to follow. Would he not, therefore, accept that his answer to my written question was incorrect when he said he was not, on the grounds of the matter being personal and confidential, able to release the source of the funding and would he further answer what is the absolute amount of money for suspension throughout States departments and that is indented in staff budgets?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

If I have misled the Deputy in a previous answer I am not aware of it, but if he would like to remind me of that properly I shall certainly if need be apologise, but I certainly did not intend to intentionally mislead him and certainly I have no reason to hide the fact that these sums are paid by the individual departments. What was the second part of the question?

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

How much money is put into staff budgets in order to deal with the potential issue of suspensions?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

Nothing is put in the staff budgets. That means that Chief Officers and Accounting Officers have to manage within their budgets and deal with the additional costs arising from within their own resources. This is a challenge for the management.

2.15.2 The Deputy of Grouville:

The Chief Minister mentioned the costs, not the actual amounts but the costs in salary terms. But there are huge amounts of indirect costs, being the employment of the acting employees for the given period as well as their (j) category status, their homes, in some cases the education of their children. Could he prepare a statement to give some indication of all the costs involved in these suspensions?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I did say in my answer that in order to give an answer straight away I had to make it brief but I said that further consequential costs of suspensions were not readily available but will be forwarded to States Members as soon as possible. So, I will do that as soon as possible but I was anxious that the question should be answered as far as possible today and I believe that Deputy Le Hérissier was happy that that approach was taken.

The Deputy Bailiff:

That brings an end to that part of oral questions. We now come to questions ...

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

I wonder if I could possibly make a correction to a statement made in a question earlier this morning. Deputy Martin said that I was mistaken when the Jersey Homes Trust accounts would need to be published. With respect to the Deputy, under my amendment to the Business Plan the accounts of all organisations receiving subsidies and grants from the States will have to be published by the Ministers in the form of a report to the States. This will include the Jersey Homes Trust accounts.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Thank you for that clarification.