

2.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour of the Minister for Economic Development regarding the time taken to process applications by small businesses for financial assistance:

What targets, if any, have been set by the Minister for the time taken to process applications by small businesses for financial assistance? Is he satisfied with the speed of the process and, if not, what change, if any, is he proposing?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean (The Minister for Economic Development):

The Economic Development Department has a wide range of financial assistance packages designed to support the start-up and growth of local companies across all sectors of the economy. The support packages include, but are not limited to, the Rural Initiative Scheme, the Jersey Innovation Initiative, the Jersey Export Development Scheme and funding available through the Tourism Development Fund. All the initiatives are compliant with the Code of Directions and each one has a different but appropriate application and approval timescale. I am certainly satisfied that the time taken to process applications is appropriate to ensure the correct levels of due diligence, checking eligibility and to protect the public interest.

2.3.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I wonder if the Minister could tell the House, does the Minister operate to specific timeframes, albeit with the occasional derailment here and there? But are there specific timeframes applied to applications so applications do not just wander on and on and on?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

There are not specific timeframes but clearly as a business-orientated function we ensure that customer service is followed up very closely. It is important that applications are processed in a timely manner and there are checks and balances in place to ensure that that happened. Clearly, some applicants may well be frustrated if they are not successful in their applications and may feel that the timescale is something that has frustrated the process.

2.3.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Would the Minister confirm whether or not when an application is opened there are a set of actions outlined, some of which are sequential and some of which can be carried out concurrently. Would he identify whether such a procedure is in place in order to expedite the processing of applications? Because I have come away with a feeling that there are absolutely no time limits. It is all done in a very nice fashion but no sense of urgency. Can he reassure me otherwise?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

There is certainly a sense of urgency to ensure that any application that is made for grant funding is expedited in the quickest possible time, but bearing in mind the responsibility that we are dispensing public funds when grants are dispensed to business start-ups and others and, as such, we have to follow financial directions. There is an appropriate process in place. If the Deputy has a particular case that he is concerned about I am more than happy to discuss that with him and follow that through. There is a complaints process and we will always ensure that businesses are given a speedy and as effective support and follow up as is possible.