

7. Questions to Ministers Without Notice - The Chief Minister

7.1 Connétable G.F. Butcher of St. John:

My question relates to the written question I had in today, question 14 and the question was based on the enhanced pensions that many of our public sector employees have in their terms of contract. The last part of my second question has not been answered and it was to advise the total cost of these enhanced payments to the public purse. I wonder if the Chief Minister would forward that at some time to Members?

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

Yes, if I can just briefly try and find the question that the Constable refers to. Yes, I will endeavour to do that but it may take a little bit of time to collate.

7.2 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Last night the Chief Minister and Members will have received an email from a resident raising concerns in relation to compensation to victims of historical child abuse. Will the Chief Minister update Members of the procedure in place to handle claims and are the claims being processed in good order?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

The manner in which claims are being addressed is a matter of ongoing negotiations between the Council of Ministers and our legal advisers. At this stage all I can say is it is progressing satisfactorily but at a slower pace than no doubt some of the claimants would have liked.

7.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will the Minister confirm that no concrete proposals have been tabled for the employee representatives to look at the way forward for changes to their terms and conditions as yet?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

There have been, to the best of my knowledge, no concrete proposals discussed with employee representatives at this stage. I think, rather than a step forward concrete proposal it is a matter for exploration and discussion about the best way to proceed.

7.3.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is the Minister content that no negotiations are yet to take place because no proposals have been brought to the table by the States Employment Board and when will he do so and when will he reveal to Members what those proposals are to save £14 million or is he wishing to abandon £14 million of savings from terms and conditions?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I think the Deputy is trying to put words into my mouth and I was very careful to say that there would be no concrete proposal discussed. There have been discussions with employer representatives on a general basis. It is my objective, the States clear objective, that the savings to be derived from terms and conditions will indeed be so derived.

7.4 Deputy A.E. Jeune:

I would be grateful if the Chief Minister could clarify for me and Members the set up in his department. The reason I ask this is because the statement made by the Minister for Treasury and Resources on 30th June 2011 in respect of Lime Grove referred to the Acting Chief Executive Officer and the Assistant Chief Executive. How many senior staff are in this department, and I do not expect him to be able to give it fully, would he be prepared to give it to Members in writing?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur

The Assistant Chief Executive post is one that has been in there for many years and that person is currently being tasked with the particular activity of resolving the issue relating to a new police headquarters. The Acting Chief Executive is of course a temporary role pending the appointment of a new Chief Executive and is currently being filled by the Deputy Chief Executive in a holding capacity.

7.4.1 Deputy A.E. Jeune:

Sorry, just on a point of clarification, does that mean we do not have an Acting Deputy Chief Executive?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

That is correct.

7.5 The Deputy of St. Mary:

The Chief Minister on 10th November 2010 said in answer to the Deputy's questions, that is the Deputy of St. Martin, in October/November of this year: "I refer to the changes that were made to the terms of reference of the Napier inquiry and to the confirmation received from the former Chief of Police that he would fully participate in the investigation." Now that the Chief Minister has admitted that the confirmation was heavily qualified and indeed conditional on certain conditions being met, can the Chief Minister explain why he did not mention these caveats to the Assembly on this occasion and on other occasions?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I thought I answered that question earlier this morning. I take issue with the Deputy that the comments were heavily qualified or of serious concern. In my view they are matters of detail, which were satisfactorily resolved and evidenced in fact by the fact that the former Chief of Police did fully participate in the Napier Inquiry.

7.5.1 The Deputy of St. Mary:

Can I ask a supplementary? Is the Chief Minister claiming that there were no important consequences of making this omission of the truth?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I take objection to the words: "Omission of the truth." I do not believe there has been anything untruthful or a significant omission made. What was said in November and what I repeated today is that the matters in concern were, in my view, matters of detail which had been satisfactorily resolved.

7.6 Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:

Can the Chief Minister name the facilitator appointed to deal with drawing up terms of reference for a committee of inquiry into historical child abuse and advise when he or she will commence work with all interested parties?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

It is not normal practice to name or give individuals' names in this respect. I would say it is a senior executive within the Verita organisation who has been appointed and, as far as I know, has already commenced activities in dealing with the process of the child abuse inquiry following the proposals of the Deputy of St. Martin and the Senator earlier this year.

7.7 Senator J.L. Perchard:

What message will the Chief Minister give to the 270 unemployed 16 to 19 year-olds as well as the young people leaving school and Highlands and graduating this month regarding their employment prospects?

[12:15]

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I would give them the message that it is important that they seek to be as well qualified and well experienced as they possibly can. To seek higher education wherever possible, to apply where necessary for schemes such as the work placements and other employment opportunities being put forward with the help of the Education Department and the Minister for Education and also that they support my view of ensuring that we have a thriving economy which enables new jobs to be created in different areas to give a variety of opportunities.

7.8 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Could the Chief Minister tell the House whether the former Chief Executive is employed in any capacity including in a consultancy or advisory capacity or are there any plans in the future to use his services?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

The former Chief Executive is not employed in any advisory capacity and I have no indication that he would be applying to or eligible or wanted to do any work in the future, but certainly in the present time the answer is no.

7.9 Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

Bearing in mind the Minister's reply to my written question number 20, does he have any views as to whether there is possibly going to be an end to the monetary unit of the euro and does he have any ideas on the concerns that have been voiced by the Bank of England about the possible reoccurrence of a financial downturn due to the U.K.'s amount of funds that they have put in to keep the euro afloat in Ireland?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

The concerns about the economic situation primarily in Greece, which the Deputy referred to in her written question, are ones which concern, not just the U.K. economy, but States throughout Europe. In Brussels last week that was the major topic of conversation among the people that I spoke to and it is in everyone's interests, not just the U.K.'s, to ensure that any financial downturn is avoided or minimised. The effects of the situation in Ireland is just one aspect of that, the overall situation is one which affects every country in Europe in different degrees, for example, in Greece it is some of the banks in France and Germany which are heavily exposed, but this is a contagious problem which everyone is doing their best to make sure it is minimised.

7.10 Deputy T.A. Vallois of St. Saviour:

Could the Chief Minister advise if his department are still responsible for the Social Policy Framework and if so when will a new policy be established and reported to the States on the back of the Strategic Plan of 2009-2014?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

Yes, my department is still responsible for the Social Policy Framework. I am disappointed that matters have not progressed as quickly as possible, but rather in the same way as the Minister for Housing has said earlier, matters in the States have taken up so much time in recent weeks that it has been difficult to fit meetings in.

7.11 Deputy G.P. Southern:

In his response to my written question 32, the Minister says: "Pay budgets remain unchanged." In the Annual Business Plan for 2012: "Remain unchanged from 2011." Does that mean there are no pay rises for public sector workers written in to the Annual Business Plan 2012?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

What I have said in my written answer, I stand by.

7.11.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

For the sake of clarity, will the Minister interpret that statement for us? Will there be any money written into the 2012 Business Plan for any pay rise, cost of living pay rise?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

At the moment the objective is to achieve savings of £40 million over the years 2012 and 2013. Whether that takes the form of pay budgets remaining unchanged or changes in terms and conditions remain up for discussion. What is clear is the amount of money available is fixed.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

So that means no.

The Bailiff:

Are there any other questions of the Chief Minister?

7.12 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Yes, certainly. It is a rare occurrence that you get more than one go at the Chief Minister and I would not want to turn it down in any shape or form.

The Bailiff:

I will tell you to hurry up.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Yes, I am sure it is ticking. Where is that follow up I wanted? The Minister for Treasury and Resources says a full study has been done of comparative overall tax rates for various situations between us and our competitors. Will the Chief Minister request the Minister for Treasury and Resources to release that data as soon as possible?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I am not aware that that was confidential. I am sure I would be more than happy for the Minister for Treasury and Resources to release comparative overall tax data, which I am sure will show that Jersey is one of the lowest paying jurisdictions in the world and necessarily so if we are going to compete and secure business opportunities in order to provide, for example, the employment opportunities that Senator Perchard referred to earlier.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Supplementary?

The Bailiff:

No, no, I think you have had a fair crack, Deputy Southern.

7.13 Deputy A.E. Jeune:

Just continuing from my earlier question, can the Chief Minister confirm then that his department is making savings on staffing costs? Thank you.

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

Absolutely.

7.14 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Could the Chief Minister tell us what the budget is for his Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs and what sort of figure he anticipates he will spending between now and the end of the year when he retires from politics and where he will be going in the meantime?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

The overall budget for the Chief Minister's Department was set last year and likened to different areas. That budget remains unchanged. How it is applied will be a matter for continued discussion for the rest of the year in terms of our priorities.

7.14.1 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

The Chief Minister was asked specifically what the budget was for the Foreign Affairs side of his budget. He must know that.

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

Not off hand, I can find out, but in fact it is published in the space the financial budget for last year and I refer the Deputy to that document.

7.15 The Deputy of St. John:

In referring to us that document, could the Minister remind us what the budget for his department is for 2011 and what trips he has planned between now and his retirement at the end of the year?

The Bailiff:

The budget must be a matter in the public domain already.

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

Yes, thank you. In terms of visits for the remainder of the year, at this stage I have none, other than possibly routine visits to France or Brussels, which are necessary if we are going to maintain and develop these sort of business links that we need to do to further the interests of the Island. I have no other major trips planned for this year, but there will no doubt be trips, for example, to the U.K. on various occasions to be shared between myself and my Assistant Minister.

7.15.1 The Deputy of St. John:

Supplementary? Given that the figures are in the public domain, I ask if the Minister could remind us because we do not all walk around with the necessary documents in our pockets.

The Bailiff:

Standing Orders refers to not asking questions about information in the public domain.

The Deputy of St. John:

I was asking if he could remind us and it is the Chief Minister's question time.

The Bailiff:

It is out of order, that question. I am sorry.

The Deputy of St. John:

I will give over to the Chair.

The Bailiff:

This is very good of you, Deputy. [Laughter] That brings matters to an end.