

2.8 Deputy R.J. Rondel of St. Helier of the Minister for Treasury and Resources regarding the use of purchase cards within the States of Jersey:

Would the Minister state how many purchase cards are presently in use within the States of Jersey and whether when used for entertainment purposes alcohol is allowed to be purchased? Thank you.

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf (The Minister for Treasury and Resources):

May I ask my Assistant Minister to answer this question?

Deputy E.J. Noel of St. Lawrence (Assistant Minister for Treasury and Resources - rapporteur):

At the beginning of March 2012 there were 1,498 purchase cards active with the States provider. This is a reduction of 185 on the figure of 1,683 published in June of last year, which in turn came down from 2,119 cards as published in August 2010. There are no specific corporate rules on whether alcohol is allowed to be purchased. Each department is required to have its own policy on travel, accommodation and expenses. There is however a corporate code of conduct which states that officers must not claim for unnecessary or extravagant amounts. The code contains other rules on hospitality.

2.8.1 Deputy R.J. Rondel:

I just wondered whether the Assistant Minister would be able to provide the information on each department if they have a written policy on the expenses for entertainment, travel and leisure? Thank you.

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I will obtain that information and distribute it to Members.

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

Does the Assistant Minister see it appropriate for public servants to utilise a purchase card to purchase alcohol?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

It does depend on the circumstances. If they are entertaining suppliers or other bodies then there may be a case for a moderate amount of alcohol to be purchased in the course of, for example, a meal.

2.8.3 Deputy T.A. Vallois:

Sorry, can I just follow that up? Does the Assistant Minister not see it concerning that taxpayers' money is being used to purchase alcohol?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

On occasion, it may be appropriate for senior staff to entertain customers, suppliers and other contacts with the States of Jersey. Individuals must seek prior approval from their line manager or their chief officer before incurring any expenditure. An entertaining expenses form must be completed to support each claim. In some circumstances, it is appropriate for moderate amounts of alcohol to be purchased. This happens within, for example, the Bailiff's own chambers when you are entertaining overseas guests, Sir. **[Laughter]** So, there are times when it is appropriate to provide moderate amounts of alcohol with a meal.

2.8.4 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Can the Assistant Minister tell us how much was spent by the Bailiff's Department ...? **[Laughter]** In hindsight, does the Assistant Minister not agree that it would be far better for all departments to have the same policy on alcohol being purchased with purchase cards, because we have seen a great

big issue made with the police, for instance? So, it would seem consistent if we could be consistent across the board.

Deputy E.J. Noel:

Once I have gathered the information, as I have previously promised to gather, it will be interesting to see what differences, if any, there are between the departments.

2.8.5 Deputy J.H. Young:

Would the Assistant Minister advise the Assembly whether there are any spending limits placed on these 1,000-odd cards and, if so, how much?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I do believe there are a range of limits depending on the individual holding the card and the purpose for which the card is issued.

2.8.6 Deputy J.H. Young:

Could the Assistant Minister at least tell us what the maximum limit is, please?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

Again, from my experience when I was the Assistant Minister for Health and Social Services, purchase cards were used by the Catering Department to purchase substantial quantities of food products for the hospital. So, I do not know what the limits are. The policy is that they should be appropriate for the intended use. It varies tremendously.

2.8.7 Connétable P.J. Rondel of St. John:

Would the Assistant Minister agree that he has not been very well briefed before coming to this meeting this morning? [Laughter]

Deputy E.J. Noel:

No, I have been adequately briefed. This is quite complex. We have almost 1,500 cards in use and they do have a variety of limits on them. It is a vast subject. I am happy for Members to come and spend some time with me to investigate it further.

2.8.8 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

In a jurisdiction, just a little sort of 180 miles north of us, they are in fact publishing lists of spending by departments on their purchase cards. Would this not be a good idea for the States to do considering that this is public money that is being spent?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I agree that we can publish some additional information. I do not know the final details of how the expenditure is analysed. But it is going to be very similar to people's household credit card statements. You will have the amount for a particular provider, but you will not necessarily have a detailed analysis of what is on that individual purchase. To give an example, there were 58,000 purchases during 2011, totalling some £4.9 million. To have a detailed breakdown of everything that was purchased would require an analysis of 58,000 separate invoices.

2.8.9 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Supplementary, Sir. This is being done by the U.K. with no problems. We have these expenses on a computerised ledger system. When will the Minister arrange for these figures to be published?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I have already said that I am quite happy for future information to be released and I will arrange for that to happen.

2.8.10 Senator L.J. Farnham:

I would just like to ask the Assistant Minister if he is fully satisfied that holders of such cards are held properly accountable for all expenditure incurred?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

As far as I am aware, every single transaction is vetted by people's line managers. It is not the purpose of this House to micromanage that situation. It is for those line managers to do their job.

2.8.11 Deputy R.J. Rondel:

Once again, I seemed to have opened a can of worms. I am aware, however, that Australia does produce some very fine wines. **[Laughter]** But, what I would like to just ask the Assistant Minister is he did mention that people do fill in entertainment expenses forms. Is this monitored for purposes of alcohol purchases and if it is monitored then there should be available more information on that? Thank you, Sir.

Deputy E.J. Noel:

As I have said previously, I will gather the information concerning individual department's policies. But, I can assure the Treasury and Resources Department that such expenditure is closely monitored.