

4.6 Deputy T.A. Vallois of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding printing costs for schools:

Could the Minister advise whether schools now have to pay large costs for printing and whether they were advised of this potential increase before the agreement of the managed print contract by central procurement?

The Deputy of St. John (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

The Education, Sport and Culture Department are completing the final phase of the rollout of the new managed print service to States schools. The final machines will go into schools at half term. Because of this, it is too early to gauge the actual impact of the new service on the system overall and we would probably need a full year before we can do that. The original premise of the new service was based on achieving savings of 15 per cent. E.S.C. were advised that the new service would result in savings and our budgets were reduced accordingly. Schools were consulted as part of the process and their printing requirements were assessed. In some cases, the basis of calculating printing costs has changed. For instance, some schools did not previously include capital costs in their forward budgeting. This has meant that the cost of printing has technically increased, the printing itself, in some cases, but it is a reflection of the more consistent formula funding taking into account capital rather than an increase in costs.

4.6.1 Deputy T.A. Vallois:

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture stated that it will probably be about a full year before they can assess whether it is doing the job that it was intended to do. Is there any particular school that he could use as a benchmark to identify from the period at which the machine went in to this period now as to whether it is achieving the intended consequences?

[10:15]

The Deputy of St. John:

This is very much an operational matter and it is under the control of the headteachers in each school who have delegated responsibility for controlling their budgets in general, so it is very operational. I cannot give the Deputy the answer that there may be one school we could use as a benchmark. I think it is much more important to take the education system as a whole. Some schools might have a greater print need than others and some might manage it more efficiently than others so it is difficult to know.

4.6.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

For the benefit of Members before I ask my question, you must understand that the question was ...

The Bailiff:

Who must understand? The Minister?

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Sorry, the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture and Members should understand that the contract itself was determined centrally by procurement and all schools were compelled to take the machines as part of the agreement and as a result of this, an estimated saving was built into the school budgets. Some money was taken away in advance. The schools are now finding that the cost of printing is considerably higher than it was before and as the Minister has already told us ... because the schools are now responsible for the budgets, the schools are the ones who are going to suffer and because of any print overrun will pay more. Will the Minister not accept that this way of contracting is not beneficial? If you are going to give the budgets to the schools, surely they should be determining who they get the machines from and at what cost.

The Deputy of St. John:

The first point is that the schools were consulted as part of the process and their printing requirements were assessed. Second of all, it is this States Assembly that agreed that central procurement savings should be made wherever possible and therefore the Deputy really is suggesting that that was a wrong decision that the States of Jersey made.

4.6.3 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Will the Minister admit that many schools did not want to take the machines and they were compelled to take the machines that were being put forward? Now, you talk about central procurement.

The Bailiff:

That is a question, Deputy, yes, thank you.

The Deputy of St. John:

I think that they were complying with the decision of the States of Jersey.

4.6.4 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

The Minister has said that he has not been keeping an eye on this because it is operational and not policy but surely the central procurement policy is affecting the way his schools are running. Therefore should he not be taking an interest in this?

The Deputy of St. John:

It is not proven yet, as I have already stated, that the schools are being affected but the department's operational managers and directors will be keeping a very close eye on it, together with the headteachers of the various schools.

4.6.5 Deputy T.A. Vallois:

Can I ask the Minister whether the Education, Sport and Culture Department have a school pricing framework in place as the U.K. (United Kingdom) do and whether he has received any complaints from schools with regards to the printing?

The Deputy of St. John:

I do not understand what the Deputy means by school pricing policy. I am sorry.

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

That has pretty much answered that question but could he explain whether there have been any complaints from schools to the department about printing?

The Deputy of St. John:

There are always discussions between school heads and our directors and budgetary team on all sorts of matters and this would naturally form part of one of those so, yes, discussions are always being held but not only on this. There are other things as well.