

3.13 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of the Minister for Treasury and Resources regarding J.T.'s consultation on its new billing system:

Would the Minister, as shareholder representative, explain why J.T. (Jersey Telecom) are, after months of billing issues, only now going out to consultation, and then only on one day for invited guests, and would he state further whether he considers that an appropriate way to introduce a new billing system?

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

J.T. already has a wealth of information from its customers generated variously from customer meetings, written comments and complaints and circular responses, so it is entirely, if I may say, wrong to describe what J.T. is now doing as only now going out to consultation. As I have answered on a number of occasions, I believe that consultation has been ongoing in relation to the building system and will continue. Regarding the customer feedback sessions, it is fair to say that J.T. has done everything it can, I believe, to ensure that everyone on the Island was invited. I can provide details of what J.T. have done if the Deputy would like me to do. J.T. and, if I may say, I, would also like to compliment Deputy Maçon for his help in obtaining, for example, constructive comments from a number of his constituencies which I believe have been resolved. So there has not been a single concern raised by anybody that they would like to have attended one of the meetings that have been organised from J.T. but are unable to do so. Had J.T. received such a response, separate and specific arrangements would have been made to meet customers. As for the second part of the question, this has been an extremely difficult and challenging time for J.T., as I have said on a number of occasions, and I am sure that lessons should and can be learnt. But the strategy of replacing an inflexible, not fit for purpose, inefficient and unsupported system continues to be the right thing that J.T. have done, and doing nothing was simply not an option.

3.13.1 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

I wonder if the Minister would advise me how wide the consultation invitation was because I only learnt about it because it was forwarded to me by my Constable, and it is only for one day, and if you cannot make that day, well, you cannot go. Would the Minister not agree that this whole billing issue has been badly handled and that it is basically for Jersey Telecom's convenience rather than the customers? Why, for example, if this consultation has been ongoing do they continue to ignore the customers' requests for accounts that are understandable?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

There is a whole directory almost of comments there. Let us be clear. This billing system, or rather the accounting system and the whole financial system, which I have used question time on a number of occasions to explain, was complex and the data transmission issues were problematic and these issues are difficult sometimes to deal with. J.T. has listened, and the fact that they are going out and doing a fairly high profile campaign now to say to their customers: "What do you think of the bills? What can we do to further improve? What further information can we provide them?" should be welcome. I know that sometimes the Deputy ... I am not sure whether he is on the States' email system or not, but I understand that all States Members have been invited to this briefing. Yes, it is on a day but in the answer that I gave, nobody has indicated that they cannot attend if they wish to, and I have said in my answer that if people cannot attend on that day then further opportunities will be made to listen to customers. J.T. has done a difficult job in resolving these difficulties and is listening, and I would encourage the Deputy, rather than using States question time, to

engage with J.T., tell them what he thinks about what should be in the bills and they may get it, if a number of other customers want this information.

3.13.2 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

In relation to the last statement by the Minister, I have already engaged with Deputy Le Hérisier, I attended the J.T. and we did not make any progress at all. Does the Minister not agree it is unacceptable to have a billing system where customers have little idea of what they are paying for and would he also agree that charging broadband by volume when the customer has no means of knowing how much he or she has used, is likewise unacceptable?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I am very happy to be the shareholder representative in dealing with the substantive issues that shareholders need to deal with but I am afraid granular detail of what is on a billing system, which is not the issue of the Minister, I have clearly explained there were issues. I have asked J.T. to resolve them. They are resolving them, they are inviting customers to come along. If he does not believe the broadband allocation or the detailed billing information, which previously might not have been created from this old system now can, if he goes and addresses these issues, frankly, this Assembly is not the time or the appropriate place to deal with J.T. billing issues. Talk to J.T., I say to the Deputy, and they will listen. They are listening to their customers.

Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

The trouble is we set up too many quangos.