

4.1 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding consultation over planned major changes to the maintenance and engineering responsibilities of some Health and Social Services employees:

To the Minister for Health and Social Services then: would the Minister explain why there has been no consultation over planned major changes to the maintenance and engineering responsibilities of a significant sector of Health and Social Services employees with their representatives prior to the announcement of these changes?

Connétable J.M. Refault of St. Peter (Assistant Minister for Health and Social Services - rapporteur):

The decision to transfer a number of Health and Social Services buildings to Jersey Property Holdings was made back in 2005 and the process of transfer - that arrangement - has been under way since 2006. I can confirm that meetings with the staff in the presence of their union representative began last week about a change which will not take place until January 2015. The union shop stewards were themselves advised of the announcement in a meeting the day before the staff were advised. This is not a major change; there are no job losses, no changes to working hours, nor to the employment status of any employee. The appropriate dialogue will continue with both staff and union to ensure a smooth changeover. The Health and Social Services engineering teams are fully committed to undertaking the extremely important work of maintaining the front line service medical equipment. By transferring some mandatory work and activities to Jersey Property Holdings existing Health and Social Services teams will be released to undertake essential equipment maintenance functions ensuring the best possible service is provided to Islanders at both the General and Overdale Hospitals.

4.1.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is there a plan already in place and has this been shown to the representatives of those workers or not?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

All the workers were fully apprised of the intention.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I asked about the representatives of those workers.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

The representatives were given the same information - the full information - as well as staff.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Did the full information ...

The Bailiff:

I am sorry, Deputy, you have asked your 2. I think I saw some supplementary questions and I will come back to it.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

By all means.

4.1.2 Deputy J.H. Young:

Could the Assistant Minister tell us does this transfer include specialist work such as, for example, medical gases on which the clinical services depend, is it proposed to transfer those into Property Holdings?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

No, definitely not. The essential medical services in the General and Overdale Hospitals will continue to be maintained by the maintenance staff at the General and Overdale Hospitals. Part of this move is predicated by another piece of work which is separate to this, which is the closure of Queen's House, which requires us to move the approximately 12 staff that are there up to Overdale to join up with the rest of the maintenance team thereby consolidating our maintenance effort in one place.

4.1.3 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Has the full budget attached to the workforce been transferred and why has it taken so long?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

The answer is yes, and why; it has been a matter of trying to find the budget to transfer to Property Holdings for the works that they will now do on the properties that are non-core to the Health and Social Services.

4.1.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The information given to the representatives of the workforce, did it consist of one and a half sides of a fax looking remarkably like this?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Without seeing the details; that was the information that was given to them on paper but they were also addressed by their management staff on top of that and able to ask questions on the details.

4.1.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

On the assumption that the plan is not finalised and written in stone when will the first consultation or negotiation meeting take place over this transfer with the representatives of the workers concerned?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

As there are no changes to any staff conditions or workplace practices there have been no changes at all to the levels of the grades of the workers concerned, there is not a requirement to negotiate with the unions on any changes to the contractual obligations. This is merely a consolidation of the 2 workforces, some of which are out at St. Saviour with the ones that are currently at Overdale Hospital and J.P.H. (Jersey Property Holdings) taking on responsibility for the outlying properties.

4.1.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:

If I may, the final supplementary? Thank you. Given that the modernisation programme is supposed to operate with the co-operation of all the workforce and the Minister stating that this is not a matter for negotiation is one thing and certainly does not smack of co-operation anywhere, but in the absence of negotiation will he consult with the unions concerned fully before anything is implemented?

[15:45]

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Certainly, those are our commitments to continuing negotiations with the staff concerned and the union representatives.