

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CHIEF MINISTER
BY DEPUTY S.Y. MÉZEC OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 24th FEBRUARY 2015**

Question

Given the commitment by both the Conservative-led government and opposition Labour Party to see a public register of beneficial ownership of companies in the United Kingdom, what measures, if any, has the Jersey government taken to investigate the feasibility of creating such a register in the Island and, if measures have been taken, how long does he envisage that it will take to create such a register and what would the approximate cost be?

Answer

Over the years the Jersey government has sought to comply with all the international standards on AML, financial regulation and tax transparency and information exchange, and has been recognised internationally for its achievements in this respect. One key aspect of the international tax initiatives in which Jersey is an active participant has been assisting law enforcement and tax authorities in the fight against tax evasion.

What those authorities require is adequate, accurate and current information on the beneficial ownership of companies made available to them in a timely fashion. This is the clear message to emerge for the G20 High Level Principles on Beneficial Ownership Transparency issued at the Brisbane Summit in November last year and it is also embodied in the draft EU 4th AML Directive and the FATF recommendations on AML/CFT.

The UK government and the opposition consider that a public register of central beneficial ownership is the best way for the UK to meet its international obligations. However this view is not shared by nearly all of the G20 and EU Member States.

The UK government has accepted that what is right for them is not necessarily right for others. It has been acknowledged that our approach of a central register plus the regulation of Trust and Company Service Providers (TCSPs) more than equates with the G20 and EU proposals in meeting the need of law enforcement and tax authorities for adequate, accurate and timely information on beneficial ownership, and that it is at least an equivalent alternative to the UK's planned public central register.

Our present approach can and does provide law enforcement and tax authorities with adequate, accurate and current information on beneficial ownership.

As we have considerable experience of maintaining a central register of beneficial ownership, the content of which is subject to verification by the company registry, we have offered assistance to the United Kingdom and other jurisdictions which have yet to establish such a register.