

2017.01.30

17 Deputy J.M. Maçon of the Chief Minister regarding the publication of official notices: [1(92)]

Will the Chief Minister explain when changes will be brought forward to remove the requirement for official notices to be published in the local paper and advise the reasons for the time taken for these changes to be implemented?

[16:45]

Senator I.J. Gorst (The Chief Minister):

Could I ask Deputy Wickenden to answer this, please?

Deputy S.M. Wickenden of St. Helier (Assistant Chief Minister - rapporteur):

A draft law is due to be lodged in March this year that will propose moving the official *Gazette* online. We have been publishing official notices on the States website as well as the local paper for almost a year now. It has been important to run these 2 systems in parallel while training staff and testing the technology. This has also allowed Islanders to review and get used to the coming change. Seemingly we have also been establishing an assisted digital programme for customers who might need support to access the *Gazette* online.

4.17.1 Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I suppose I should give my congratulations to the Deputy on his new portfolio that he has received. Can I further ask the Deputy what further measures will be brought in for perhaps those individuals who are not *au fait* with accessing the website?

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

The assisted digital programme we are working on is to be using areas like Social Security for training in areas and also the assisted digital we are going to begin an 8-week programme with St. Brelade's Parish Hall, St. Clement's Parish Hall and St. Mary's Parish Hall which starts next month, with new training for the staff and technology that is being put in place to help people, so if they are not clear on what they can be doing online, they can go and get the assistance there and the training.

4.17.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Will the Assistant Minister explain how much money will be saved by removing the requirement for these notices to be published in the local newspaper?

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

The original business case for putting forward the *Gazette* online rather than through the local media had a saving of £245,000, approximately. The savings assumed on this are consistent with the last 2 to 3 years of around £245,000, but we can presume that half of those savings will be about year one and over the next 2 years it will be the full amount.

4.17.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

A supplementary. I am surprised the *J.E.P. (Jersey Evening Post)* can afford to pay some of their columnists, taking that vast hit in their finances, but I am sure they will manage nonetheless. Has the Assistant Minister considered following up on Deputy Maçon's concerns that people who do not access online, for whatever reason, might still be able to access in the form of the Parish magazines, which have a wide circulation and a wide readership, certainly among a certain demographic

perhaps who do not go online frequently? Have any approaches been made with those Parish magazines, and if not, will approaches be made to include a gazette-style page within that?

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

The Parish magazines, apart from St. Helier, I believe, run quarterly, so the information would probably be out of date by the time it got circulated. I do know that we do tweet out the information and there are other online publications that use that information and put it on their media outlets for free. The Parish Halls can help people to see the information now, but I think that the magazines, it will be up to the Constables. You may find that it would be out of date for the people by the time that they read the information.

4.17.4 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Can the Deputy tell us whether there will be a reduction in the cost of official notices now that it is going online and therefore is much more efficient? In other words, if there is a print cost, what will be the cost of doing it online?

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

Obviously we run the website as it is, so there is no additional cost to the publishing of the *Gazette* online, because it is running on our existing infrastructure. The staff who would normally put things together and put them into the *J.E.P.* will now just be doing that in an online format and they have had the training to do that. We have almost 21,000 Islanders subscribed to the MyGov website where they can get this information as it happens.

4.17.5 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

A supplementary. I do not think I have made myself terribly clear. As someone who has to occasionally put an official notice into the *J.E.P.*, if it is going online, what I am saying is the cost of the print version is a certain figure. Will the fact it is going online, which is reducing the costs, enable me and others to get a reduction in the cost of the official notice?

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

Can I just ask for clarification? You are talking about publishing on the online *J.E.P.* or are you talking about publishing on the gov.je website? Can you please clarify?

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

I will tell people it is to do with the Air Display. The Air Display has to have an official notice that goes out; it has been in the *J.E.P.* I am asking now if the official notice is going online, what will be the charge of it going online on the States website compared to the other? Will we make a saving?

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

Fantastic news: it will be free.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Can I congratulate the Assistant Minister for producing a clear answer which addressed the question? May I suggest that he undertakes some heavy ministerial training to make sure he never does that again?

The Deputy Bailiff:

I am assuming that is not a question, Deputy; that is simply an observation on your part. A final supplementary, Deputy Maçon.

4.17.6 Deputy J.M. Maçon:

The Deputy explained the law drafting time and expected the law to be lodged at the beginning of April, end of March?

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

It will be lodged in March or the next sitting.

4.17.7 Deputy J.M. Maçon:

In which case, can the Deputy explain what the expected final implementation date of all of this will be and can he confirm that Scrutiny has been factored in within that timeline as well?

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

I do not have that information in front of me, but I will find out and get it to Members.