

3.7 Senator S.C. Ferguson of the Chief Minister regarding the availability of the Gazette for people with no access to a computer or the internet: [1(122)]

Further to the answer given on 30th January 2017, for those people - and in particular pensioners - who have no access to a computer or the internet, what specific steps will the Council of Ministers take to make *Gazette* items available once they are no longer printed in the *Jersey Evening Post*?

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

I would like to ask Deputy Wickenden to answer this question, please. Thank you.

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

I would like to thank the Senator for her question. As I mentioned on 30th January 2017, we are piloting an assisted digital programme for Islanders who might need help accessing the *Gazette* and other digital government services as they move online. It is intended that the help will be available through the Parish Halls, Social Security and the library. All public notices will be available online free of charge and every media organisation, including the *Jersey Evening Post*, and Parish newsletters will be able to re-publish that information in their printed publications.

3.7.1 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

A supplementary? Has the ministerial department checked to see what the cost of the scheme is to be carried by Social Security and the Parishes, have they checked to see how many people will be affected and have they checked to see whether the people most affected, those without computers and no access to one, like the change?

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

The law for official publications was approved in 1960 that said that the *Jersey Evening Post* would be the place where the *Jersey Gazette* would be published. This is putting it directly into a private company and that is the law. It is right that we have changed this law; it is not right that we are putting it to a private company, so it is right that we choose the right medium to do our publications. There is nothing stopping the *Jersey Evening Post* or anyone from publishing in their media for the community, as they are the community paper. We are doing the work on assisted digital, we will be talking to ... I know the Senator is very close to Age Concern and we will be talking to Age Concern and we will be talking to other areas to make sure that what we do is appropriate. There is nothing in this law to stop us from publishing in the *J.E.P.* if we so wish if that is the right medium to do it. But what we need to do in this is change the law because it is not right to have it as it is.

3.7.2 Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour:

Has the Chief Minister's Department spoken to the *J.E.P.* about this at great length regarding to reducing the advert? We do not need the huge title *Gazette* or the fancy borders, just plain text. Not everybody needs a computer, not everybody wants a computer. Some people like to read a hard copy in the *J.E.P.* of exactly what is happening in their Parishes and Island-wide. Does the Minister not agree?

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

Yes, we have spoken to the *J.E.P.*, we have consulted them on this change at length. They are aware of it happening. So, have we talked about ... we have not talked about stopping, we have talked about changing the law and what that means. So, have I had a specific conversation around doing a smaller amount of advertising? No, I have not.

3.7.3 Deputy A.D. Lewis:

On the subject of silver surfers, I am impressed by how many people of an elderly generation are accessing the internet.

[10:30]

However, during the issue with the J.T. bills, I got a lot of calls, as other Members would have done, and one of the things that they said to me was they would be very interested in getting online but it was very expensive. Can the Assistant Minister give me any assurance that there is dialogue going on with J.T. to attempt to try and get more of our elderly generation online, educated in it, and access to it at a reasonable price? Because pensioners will see prices advertised for as little as £8 a month from Sky, for example, in the U.K., so more elderly people can get online that want to but they cannot do it so easily here. What dialogue is going on with J.T. to enable elderly people who are concerned about this change and others that may come to get online at an affordable price?

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

I do not know where this kind of fits in the question. Unfortunately, I have no delegated responsibility in that area to have these conversations so I have not personally had any but I am sure that the Assistant Minister with responsibility for the telecommunications will be doing that.

3.7.4 Deputy A.D. Lewis:

A supplementary? Would the Assistant Minister not be delighted, as he is responsible for digital, to get more people online and should it not be part of his responsibility to do so?

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

Yes, I would be delighted.

3.7.5 Connétable C.H. Taylor of St. John:

Could the Assistant Minister explain exactly where the financing is coming from to put computer terminals and to have staff on standby at the Parish Halls to help those who do not have computers?

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

Yes, I believe the funds are coming from the I.T. (Information Technology) Department's budget and the e-Government budget.

3.7.6 Connétable J. Gallichan of St. Mary:

The Assistant Minister will be aware that certain legal requirements, for example, for election notices and Parish Assembly notices will continue to be placed in the Parish notice box which is a central point in each Parish. I just wondered, has the Minister given any consideration to perhaps having a *Gazette* point. I remember in olden days when people could not afford newspapers there used to be quite often in some countries pasted up a copy of the newspaper. How about putting a formalised weekly copy of *Gazette* notices in a place in each Parish, for example?

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

It is a very good idea the Connétable has. Of course, as I said earlier in my question, we need to find the right mediums to make sure that the publications go to the places where they are needed the most. Of course, I will take that into consideration and speak to the Comité des Connétables about the availability to have that happen.

3.7.7 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Would it be unduly cynical to say is this a way of moving costs, for instance, for the Parish Hall, moving the costs to the ratepayers or to other departments so that the Chief Minister's Department will register a saving?

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

The public of Jersey ask us, as the States of Jersey with their taxpayers' monies, to spend it in the most appropriate manner and do it in absolutely the right way. What we are doing with the online *Gazette* is making sure that we are spending money appropriately and rightly and targeting in the right way. I do not think that this is moving the cost across. I do not think the Comité des Connétables would allow that to happen, so any dialogue we would have would be talking about funding.