

3.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier of the Minister for External Relations regarding the recruitment of a Brexit ‘public relations officer’: [1(129)]

Will the Minister advise whether the recent recruitment of a Brexit public relations officer was overseen in any way by an external body; whether it was subject to a competitive interview; how many candidates applied; and how many were interviewed for the job?

Senator P.M. Bailhache (The Minister for External Relations):

The ministry followed an open and competitive process for the recruitment of the communications manager for External Relations. The post was advertised in the local newspaper and on gov.je. The ministry received 8 applications for the post and 3 were shortlisted and invited for interview. The recruitment was not overseen by an external body because this is not a requirement for the post of this level under the Government’s recruitment rules. If an internal employee had applied one of the panel members would have been independent from the ministry. On this occasion it was not necessary as all applicants were external. The Government H.R. (Human Resources) Department were involved in the recruitment and fully participated in both the shortlisting interview and selection process.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

I would like to thank the Minister for his answer because a number of people have expressed concerns to me about it, and now we have the full facts. So I thank him for it.

3.2.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

Would the Minister state to the Assembly whether the other 2 shortlisted candidates were also former establishment candidates in previous elections?

Senator P.M. Bailhache:

That is not a question which I think is appropriate to put to the Minister.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I was about to intervene, Deputy. It seems to me that is inappropriate. It is perfectly acceptable to ask about the process of appointment but not about the identity or nature of the other candidates, it seems to me.

Deputy M. Tadier:

May I ask a supplementary in that case?

The Deputy Bailiff:

A supplementary of the question, yes. I will allow you to ask it. A proper supplementary.

3.2.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Would the Minister agree with me and accept my congratulations that this is a good example of following Government aspirations for job creation?

Senator P.M. Bailhache:

I am not sure I would necessarily accede to that point of view. This post was created to deal with the pressures caused by the decision of the United Kingdom Government to leave the European Union and I am quite satisfied that the post is necessary and that the official appointed to fill it is an entirely competent individual.

3.2.3 Deputy J.A. Martin:

I am pleased to hear the process was completely open and I am fine with that. My question to the Minister is where does this external public relations officer for External Relations stand with the Communications Unit because I thought the Council of Ministers ... well, I know the Council of Ministers have the whole Communications Unit at their beck and call and to facilitate this sort of thing I would have thought so? Can he explain to me the difference between this appointment and people who work in the Communications Office?

Senator P.M. Bailhache:

I think a number of individuals deal with public relations for different ministries and departments throughout the Government of Jersey. The Communications Department certainly deals with central issues for the Council of Ministers and occasionally for other departments too. This individual or this post has been created in order to deal with a specific challenge, which is to say the challenge of Brexit and explaining to the public the decisions which Government is taking in relation to this momentous event, both for the United Kingdom and for the European Union, and indeed the world at large.

3.2.4 Deputy J.A. Martin:

Can the Minister confirm that this public relations officer does not work under or in the Communications Unit, just so I can be clear?

Senator P.M. Bailhache:

No, this official works for the Minister of External Relations but he will have a responsibility for engaging with a number of other departments in the Government of Jersey in connection with the Brexit process.

3.2.5 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Just following on from Deputy Martin's line of questioning. If the post was specifically to deal with the Brexit issue, is it a fixed-term contract or on a permanent contract? If not, why not?

Senator P.M. Bailhache:

It is a fixed term contract.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Sorry that was your final supplementary, Deputy.