

2020.06.02

3 Deputy R.J. Ward of the Chair of the States Employment Board regarding specific facilities time arrangements with the Unions (OQ.136/2020):

Given recent reports of a drive to improve relations between the States Employment Board and trade unions, will the chair state what changes, if any, have been made to the specific facilities time arrangements for the 3 teaching unions since May 2018 and what the arrangements now are?

The Connétable of St. Ouen (Vice-Chair, States Employment Board - *rapporteur*):

The States Employment Board has agreed that one of its priorities for 2020 was the formalisation of mechanisms of engagement with our trade union colleagues. S.E.B. directed officers to meet directly with trade unions, which they did on 18th February. The meeting involved all 16 trade union representatives and S.E.B. officers, including the group director of People and Corporate Services. Part of the outturn of this meeting was that they should continue and also the question of facilities time, which I know the Deputy is particularly interested in, was also discussed but given the onset of the pandemic this matter was not finally concluded. It was worth mentioning that during the COVID response unfortunately our meeting framework has not taken place but we have had regular engagements with our trade union colleagues on a daily basis to discuss and bring upcoming changes and to advise them of any communication or changes in COVID advice. They have also had a weekly opportunity to question the group director. During this very difficult time, unfortunately the question of facility time has been put to one side other than we have obviously allowed for trade union colleagues who want to join these meetings to do so. I cannot thank our colleagues of the trade unions enough who have been unbelievably helpful, and particularly the teaching unions, who have engaged with us continually about provision of schooling for some children during the COVID crisis and are now working with us on the safe return for some years to schools over the coming weeks. We had hoped concluding a new agreement including facility time would have been placed by the end of summer however understandably the focus has been on COVID-19. We are in the process of negotiating a timetable but obviously that is subject to the relaxation of the restrictions that are in place but we would very much like to have this matter, including facility time, agreed by September.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Before I ask my supplementary, may I just say that the question I asked was from May 2018. Although I take on board the comments since the COVID-19 emergency I do not feel I should have to use my supplementary to re-ask my first question, if I may say, about the arrangements from May 2018. It is very difficult when you get a limited number of questions here and it would be great if the first one was answered first, if I may say.

The Deputy Bailiff:

It is very important, Connétable, that you respond to the question. The Deputy makes the point that his question does ask for material from May 2018 onwards, so, Deputy Ward, I accept your point. Do you want to indicate what part of the question you regard as being unanswered and you can then ask a supplementary in the usual way?

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Yes, it is arrangements for the 3 teaching unions since May 2018 and the arrangements now. It is clear there are no arrangements now but I just wonder with regards from 2018. I was very specific in my question.

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

I think the Deputy is alluding to the arrangement of the teaching unions. The arrangements since May 2018 to the date of this meeting, which was 18th February, have remained as they are. But I am aware there is a discussion between the 2 teaching unions as to the allocation of facilities time between those unions and that subject is the subject of negotiation that is taking place.

3.3.1 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Given that there was a specific facilities arrangement until May 2018 can the Assistant Minister answer what happened to that arrangement since that time because it seems to have been lost.

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

I thank the Deputy for his question. It is my understanding that that arrangement continues to be in place as we are now. Each union has an allocation of facilities time, which is related to the size of their membership and that continues at the moment, although, as the Deputy I am sure is aware, that is the subject of negotiation at the moment.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Do I get a final supplementary? I thought that was my supplementary supplementary.

The Deputy Bailiff:

No one has asked a question so I do not think you do get a final supplementary.

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

Can I just say, before you close down that question, I am very happy to sit down with the Deputy on a one-to-one basis, appropriately socially distanced of course - one has to remember to put that in these days - and cover off the concerns that he has, which he clearly has, and I would not like to feel that he walked away from today's meeting without those questions being addressed. If he would like to get together with myself and my officer I am very happy to go over in great detail what is happening and what arrangements we are proposing to put in place and what is there already.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Thank you, that would be very constructive.