

2020.02.04

**10 Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier of the Assistant Chief Minister regarding States and Government of Jersey computers running on Windows 7: (OQ.35/2020)**

Given that Windows 7 reached the end of its life on 14th January 2020, will the Assistant Chief Minister explain why some States and Government of Jersey computers are still running on this operating system?

**Deputy S.M. Wickenden (Assistant Chief Minister):**

I can inform the Deputy that Microsoft still offer extended support for Windows 7, however I am not willing to discuss the Government of Jersey I.T. (information technology) infrastructure in any way in a public forum.

**4.10.1 Deputy C.S. Alves:**

My understanding is that Microsoft does offer extended security updates and the costs rise exponentially every year, so will the Assistant Chief Minister advise how long it will take to replace all the machines that need replacing and move on to a current operating system?

**Deputy S.M. Wickenden:**

I will hold to my answer; I am not willing to discuss the Government of Jersey I.T. infrastructure in any manner in a public forum.

**4.10.2 Deputy K.F. Morel:**

We all know what the Minister, who does not know what he is doing looks like at the moment. Could the Assistant ...

**The Bailiff:**

Deputy, Deputy, that really ...

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

I apologise, Sir.

**The Bailiff:**

Thank you, Deputy, sit down. That is an unnecessary observation.

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

Thank you, I withdraw that. Would the Assistant please explain how much is being spent in order to maintain Windows 7 support from Microsoft?

**Deputy S.M. Wickenden:**

I am not willing to discuss the Government of Jersey I.T. infrastructure in any public forum and I am going to keep to that stance.

**The Bailiff:**

Can I ask, Deputy, I anticipate that is going to be your answer to any supplemental question?

[10:30]

**Deputy S.M. Wickenden:**

Yes, Sir.

**The Bailiff:**

Are you able to tell the Assembly why you are not prepared to answer any questions on this matter?

**Deputy S.M. Wickenden:**

I feel that to discuss any matter, which no private, or public, company would do, any matter to do with our infrastructure, could lead to a security risk within our infrastructure, Sir.

**The Bailiff:**

Very well.

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

Sir, if I may?

**The Bailiff:**

Yes.

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

My question is about the cost of something, it is not about the detail of how something is applied, or what it looks like.

**The Bailiff:**

The answer ...

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

I believe my question is perfectly reasonably answerable by the Assistant Chief Minister.

**The Bailiff:**

I am certainly not ruling that your question is not answerable, but it may be you will get the same answer and it is a question of when we draw a halt to this exercise and ...

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

Sir, if I may?

**The Bailiff:**

Yes.

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

We have a serious matter of someone in ministerial capacity not being held to account and given no good reason in this case.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Sir, may I raise a point of order?

**The Bailiff:**

Yes.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

I cannot find the exact Standing Order, but there is one been recently passed saying that our Ministers should try to address the question wherever possible and, notwithstanding the Assistant Minister's logic that he has chosen to adopt, could you rule on whether the answerer is in breach of that Standing Order, Sir?

**The Bailiff:**

If the Assistant Minister has given an answer to the Assembly, which says he will not answer questions more broadly, because of a concern in security, that is, to my mind, an answer to the question. It may be an unwelcome answer, it may, the Assembly might think, be an answer that should not be given, but that is a matter for the Assistant Chief Minister and, in my view, it would not fall foul of Standing Orders. The correct consequence of that would be entirely political, as far as the Assistant Chief Minister might be concerned.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Sir, could you just emphasise that? Could I ask, that there is nothing to stop any Minister, on any question, saying that they are not answering the question, because it is a security risk? Is that a valid answer, as you have said, with a potential political recourse, that there is nothing in Standing Orders to stop any Minister doing that?

**The Bailiff:**

In my judgment, where a question is relating to I.T., it is a feasible answer. I make no comment on the quality of it, but it is a feasible answer to say it cannot be answered for security reasons. That may not be something that is feasible in any kind of answer posed by, or given by, a Minister to a different kind of question, but that is my ruling on this question. Do you have anything you wish to ask, Deputy, in the knowledge of what the likely answer will be?

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Yes, Sir.

**The Bailiff:**

Yes, please do.

**4.10.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Does the Assistant Minister accept that he has responsibility for this particular area and, in particular, for the spend of this particular area and that he is accountable and should be held accountable to this House on the spending that he is undertaking?

**Deputy S.M. Wickenden:**

I am responsible for that and I am responsible for the security of it too.

**4.10.4 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Can I ask the Assistant Chief Minister whether he would be happy if Windows 7 was still working in Government systems and whether he does see this as a security risk, or just simply an inconvenience?

**Deputy S.M. Wickenden:**

I am going to answer with the same answer.

**4.10.5 Deputy M.R. Higgins:**

Will the Assistant Minister - the new Review Panel on efficiencies looking at the Government and its operation - be prepared to give full evidence to that Panel on this particular matter, because it is obviously of great concern?

**Deputy S.M. Wickenden:**

Yes, I will follow Scrutiny, but I will not talk in a public forum regarding this matter.

**The Bailiff:**

The Assistant Chief Minister's answer is that he will respond to Scrutiny, but he will not give an answer in this Assembly.

**4.10.6 Deputy R.E. Huelin of St. Peter:**

Given that running out-of-date software, even with the manufacturer's extended support, is expensive and I will not go down the security risks avenue; however, can the Minister please update us on when the Windows 7 infrastructure will be replaced and no longer be reliant on extended support from Microsoft?

**Deputy S.M. Wickenden:**

I am not willing to discuss matters of the Government of Jersey I.T. infrastructure in a public forum.

**The Bailiff:**

Do you have a final supplementary, Deputy Alves, in the circumstances?

**Deputy C.S. Alves:**

No, I do not think there is much point, Sir, thank you.