

23.06.13

5 Deputy L.V. Feltham of the Chief Minister regarding the operation of Locate Jersey (OQ.118/2023)

Given the current local employment and housing markets, and further to the Chief Minister's answer to the final supplementary of Oral Question 95/2022, will she advise whether the Government has given Locate Jersey a clear view on whether it should be spending public money on attracting new businesses to the Island; and, if not, why not?

Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter (The Chief Minister):

Locate Jersey is a brand used by the Economy Department. The department aims to attract businesses which deliver the most benefit, with a focus on high productivity business and managing any reputational risk. Alongside the development of local business activity, inward investment is important in delivering sustainable growth bringing new capital skills and knowledge to the Island. An inward investment strategy is being developed to provide more strategic direction, including around promotion, alongside the ongoing work on the future economy programme. This will include considering our labour and housing constraints, costs and appropriate promotion to secure our strategic objectives.

3.5.1 Deputy L.V. Feltham:

It seems that perhaps the Chief Minister is stating that she did not follow up the action that she intended to do in her answer to my previous question. Can I get a clear answer from the Chief Minister whether she undertook the action that she promised to undertake within the answer to my original question last year?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

I have to apologise, I will have to look back and revert to that because I cannot check that right at this moment.

The Bailiff:

We come to question 6 ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

Sir, I did not know if there were supplementaries?

The Bailiff:

Only if you put your light on.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I wanted to hear what Deputy Feltham's question was first before I put my light on.

The Bailiff:

Generally speaking, and you are but one who does it as much as any Deputy, people line up their lights because they know they want to ask a question.

3.5.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

I have tried to be more restrained and only put my light on when I definitely want to ask one. But thank you for your direction. Does the Chief Minister accept that if businesses who come here with Locate Jersey are to be successful they also need workers, and we have a shortage of workers at the

moment. Would she consider setting up something equivalent to Locate Jersey for work permit holders to recruit people to the Island that we need to work here? Because of course we know that they do not just contribute economically but work permit holders also do a lot for the charitable sector and they get involved in community groups and church groups, et cetera.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

I thank the Deputy for his question. The recruitment and retention element is, of course, part of our area of relentless focus. When we look at inward investment proposals one of the first and main considerations that we have is whether or not those applications are able to fulfil their potential services or their services to the Island and to the business with the current recruitment difficulties that many businesses are experiencing at the moment. With regards to work permit, of course that falls within the remit of the Minister for Home Affairs but we also have been looking recently at a number of policies.

[10:15]

Indeed we have already introduced one to enable care workers to live in entitled accommodation in order to improve their quality of life and welcome them to the Island.

3.5.3 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Given the recruitment difficulties that the Chief Minister just mentioned, could she confirm whether or not political direction has been given to Locate Jersey about what advice they ought to give to any clients who are seeking to locate to the Island and establish a business here, about what chances of success they may or may not have in applying for licences to bring non-qualified people to the Island, to work in those businesses when they are established here?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

The views of both the Deputy Chief Minister and myself have been very clear, along with our H.A.W.A.G. (Housing and Work Advisory Group) colleagues to officials who have been supporting us in this work.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

They were not clear in that answer though; what were they?

The Bailiff:

I am sure that was directed to me, Deputy, as well as the Chief Minister. I think that the complaint, which is probably right, is that you did not directly answer the question, Chief Minister, so if you could.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Of course. Apologies, I felt that I had answered that in my first answer, which was that we are very mindful of recruitment and retention issue in the Island and therefore when taking decisions we have made it perfectly clear and we give great consideration to the ability for those applications to deliver on their proposals.

3.5.4 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

It is wonderful that they are mindful and say they are clear but it would be great if they were clear and would say what political direction has been given to Locate Jersey about the advice they should give to their clients, on what success they may or may not have when applying for licences to bring

people who do not have residential or working qualification status to the Island to work in those businesses. Have they told Locate Jersey to tell those businesses that they will probably not have much success if they are trying to bring loads of people to the Island and that they ought to be focusing on people who are locally qualified?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Representatives of Locate Jersey participate in our meetings, they listen to our direction, and those points have been made very clear that recruitment and retention is a major issue for any business considering moving to the Island at this present time.

3.5.5 Deputy L.V. Feltham:

Given the Government's current value for money programme, will the Chief Minister commit to undertaking a value-for-money review of the activities of Locate Jersey, which take into consideration the current economic climate and labour market?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Locate Jersey is part of the Economy Department, as I said at the beginning of my answer. The sense that I get from the Minister opposite me is that value for money is well-delivered under this department, but of course we are always striving for improvements and are happy to discuss that with members of that unit.

Deputy L.V. Feltham:

I do not think the Chief Minister answered my question as to whether she would commit to undertaking a value-for-money review.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

I will consult with the relevant Minister.