

8. Statement by the Chairman of the Economic Affairs Scrutiny Panel regarding the Panel's review of employment and training opportunities in Jersey for young people

8.1 Deputy G.P. Southern (Chairman, Economic Affairs Scrutiny Panel):

Following expressions of interest from the public, the Economic Affairs Scrutiny Panel has decided to undertake a review into youth employment as part of a larger planned review into employment and training opportunities in Jersey. The panel feels that this topic is a topic of pressing public concern as it not only affects the economic competitiveness of Jersey in the present and future but it also has a significant impact on the lives of local people. The panel will be holding public hearings from late June into July to interview a list of witnesses soon to be finalised. The terms of reference are as follows: in respect of labour market entry at the pre and post-16, 18 and 21 year-old levels; to evaluate the implementation of Ministerial skills initiatives in respect of the aims outlined in the Strategic Plan of 2005; to determine the availability of an appropriately qualified local workforce by selected economic sectors; to analyse current and planned government training operations to determine if these developed skills reflect the needs of the Island. The panel intends to report back to the Assembly during or before the week beginning 8th September 2008.

8.1.1 Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

For my part I welcome the review and we will be doing our best to assist the panel in their deliberations. Could the panel chairman answer 2 questions? Firstly, when will he finish his previous review and publish it in relation to Jersey Finance? Secondly, in order that under the code of conduct that exists between Scrutiny Panels there is to be some certainty and some planning in relation to Scrutiny reviews, is this the final review that his panel will be taking between now and the end of this term?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I thank the Minister for his question. The report on Jersey Finance will be out before the end of the week. This is likely to be the last review I shall be doing this side of the elections.

8.1.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Will the chairman and his panel be working in concert with other panels who have a similar, if not a concurrent interest, in youth unemployment?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

That is somewhat difficult because we cannot at present co-opt people on to a panel. We had to form a sub-panel. I discussed the possibility of forming a sub-panel with the relevant other panels and we decided in this case not to for the present. I believe we will be bringing an amendment to the Regulations which will allow us in future to co-opt people and therefore make inter-disciplinary co-operation much more and much easier.

8.1.3 The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Just a point of clarification from the chairman. I am well aware there a number of individuals suffering certain disabilities that are educated at Mont à l'Abbé School who are struggling to find further employment, and included in certain training programmes. Will these individuals be included in this review?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I thank the Member for his question. It may well be that within the short timescale that we have set ourselves to do this operation, I believe we are unlikely to take in, in particular, those with a disability at this initial stage. But we would want, at some stage, to examine the wider aspects and they would be included further on down the line.

8.1.4 Deputy I.J. Gorst:

I thank the Deputy for that answer. Would he not, however, agree that there is a growing problem in that particular sector and that is fairly critical to... it should form a fundamental part of his report?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I thank the Member for his comments, and I will take that on board and examine if we cannot possibly examine those aspects at this particular time.

8.1.5 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Two questions: given the vagueness as to the number of young people unemployed because of the voluntary signing-up system of social security, will the panel be doing some kind of survey to assess the real level of youth unemployment? Secondly, Sir, will their study embrace the role of Highlands College?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

The second question first; we will certainly embrace the role of Highlands College. In terms of the definitive numbers of who is unemployed and who is not, that is probably, again- with this particular aspect - not something that we shall go into in great depth initially.