

STATEMENT ON A MATTER BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ECONOMIC AFFAIRS SCRUTINY PANEL

1. Statement by the Chairman of the Economic Affairs Scrutiny Panel regarding a review into employment and training opportunities in Jersey

1.1 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier (Chairman of the Economic Affairs Scrutiny Panel):

As Members will be aware, the Economic Affairs Scrutiny Panel has been conducting a review into employment and training opportunities in Jersey. It had intended to present a report on youth employment to the States in the last week of September 2008. This was always an ambitious project and due to time constraints and staffing limitations the panel has found that it is unable to do the subject justice, and accordingly intends to suspend this review without completing a final report. The panel would like to thank contributors to the review and assures them that their input will not be wasted as all work on the subject will be held in the Scrutiny Office, together with a report on the progress of the panel to date, for consideration by the incoming new panel early in 2009. The panel feels that given the importance of this matter, this course is preferable to rushing an incomplete report into publication.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Does any Member wish to ask a question? Deputy Le Hérissier.

1.1.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour:

Given the importance of the issue and the possibly very sad occurrence that the current chairman may not be available to be the new chairman [**Laughter**] is there any chance, Sir, that an interim report could be published, because I am very concerned about some of the group that is involved with this particular study, so I have been trying to argue for some time around, for example, literacy, numeracy; there are real issues. Is there any chance, Sir, an interim report can be ...?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I believe, no. No, there is not any chance. There is no chance that an interim report can be produced. The reality is that the officer in charge of this particular Scrutiny review completed his 3 months' probation and decided that Scrutiny and civil service was not for him and returned to the business world. The officer who may have been able to pick it up and was involved partially has been promoted and is going to leave the department on 3rd October. If the Member is aware of the deep involvement of officers with reports, and must surely be aware that no other person can suddenly be drafted into a report that is halfway through, certainly I do not believe that it is valid to publish half a report at this stage. The issue of what happens to Scrutiny is an ongoing one obviously. This will happen probably every 3 years where an outgoing panel will be replaced by an incoming panel and it would be up to them to decide what topics they are interested in. From time to time it would be useful if there was a topic that was part-researched that they might pick up and thereby get some continuity. In fact, this is a very wide-ranging topic and could fall within the remit of many of the Scrutiny Panels and in fact should the Deputy himself be in place come January, perhaps he might persuade his own panel, whichever one he is sitting on should he be here, to take up this particular topic.

1.1.2 Deputy I.J. Gorst of St. Clement:

Yes, this was an extremely worthwhile and necessary review and it is disappointing that it is not going to be completed. I wonder if the chairman as a member of the Chairmen's Committee might raise these issues with the Chairmen's Committee to see if there is a way around in the future to ensure that this does not happen again, Sir, or perhaps there can be some provision made to ensure that new Assembly Scrutiny Panels do pick up half-finished reviews.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I would certainly bring up the issue at the Chairmen's Committee although Chairmen's Committee is aware of this potential for transfer at the end of a 3-year stint. Would the Member remind me of his final point?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

I was merely wondering if the Chairmen's Committee could put in place some procedure whereby new Scrutiny Panels did pick up as a priority half-completed reviews.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I do not believe that it is possible to dictate the work of a subsequent panel. One can leave some information and suggest what has happened and how it might be developed, but one cannot instruct a subsequent panel to pick it up and this will happen from time to time. Part of the problem, of course, was that in pursuing this particular review we had been promised answers to questions from the Economic Development Department [**Members: Oh!**] by the end of August and to date - and we had asked for them at the beginning of August - we still have not received those clarifications. So, it is not entirely the panel's fault.

1.1.3 Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

Would the panel chairman confirm that a great deal of work has been done by officials within Economic Development, that hearings have been carried out, and a great deal of information containing many hours of work have been carried out in order for him to do his review?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Absolutely. Scrutiny is a painstaking and time-consuming and demanding task and certainly a good deal of information has been given, however, the clarification to follow up questions have not been responded to.