

8. Statement by the Minister for Economic Development regarding the appointment of a Joint Chief Executive for the Jersey Competition and Regulatory Authority and the Guernsey Office of Utility Regulation

8.1 Senator A.J.H. Maclean (The Minister for Economic Development):

For some time I have been working with my Guernsey counterpart, Deputy Carla McNulty Bauer, to encourage closer working between the 2 Islands, as we both strive to contain costs and increase efficiencies. I am very pleased to announce an early, and very positive, outcome of this dialogue in the decision of the J.C.R.A Board (Jersey Competition Regulatory Authority) to appoint John Curran, the Director General of the Guernsey Office of the Utility Regulation, the O.U.R., as the Chief Executive of the J.C.R.A. to succeed Mr. Chuck Webb, when he leaves the post on 16th October this year. This appointment, which will see Mr. Curran fulfil both roles, is the first important step in meeting the call from businesses and regulated companies, in both Islands, for closer working between the O.U.R. and the J.C.R.A. In the current environment, where innovative solutions must be delivered and tough decisions made, I am confident that Mr. Curran's appointment will deliver significant efficiencies and cost savings that, among other advantages, allow the J.C.R.A. to operate within a reduced cost base in 2011 and beyond. Mr. Curran will join the J.C.R.A. on 1st October and succeed Chuck Webb as Executive Director on 16th October. He will divide his time between Jersey and Guernsey with the costs being equally shared between the J.C.R.A. and the Guernsey Government. He will continue to be based in Guernsey but will travel to Jersey, as necessary, to undertake his duties. This appointment is a testament to the ability of Jersey and Guernsey to work together in a timely fashion to deliver a genuinely innovative solution and, in so doing, save costs and increase efficiency. I look forward to further developments of this nature as all States departments strive to meet their long term cost saving targets.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Do any Members have questions of the Minister?

8.1.1 The Deputy of St. Martin:

I think most Members will welcome the news even more if we have got some idea of what sort of savings there are going to be in the future. Is the Minister in a position to give us some sort of idea of the cost savings to States?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

First of all we will save, of course, on the recruitment process. The estimated costs of that were quite significant, estimated about £60,000. We will also be saving roughly £60,000 a year, which will be a direct share of the costs for that particular role.

8.1.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Minister is, indeed, to be congratulated for this innovative solution. Also, I would ask whether he expected to see the headlong rush to privatise and introduce competition everywhere, especially on post offices, moderated somewhat, for this seems to me, that Guernsey does not go full out for competition in the same way that Jersey has in recent times?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Well, the new appointee has a long track record. In fact, he has, in previous incarnations prior to his role with the O.U.R. in Guernsey, been a regulatory adviser with Telstra, the Australian telecoms company, so he has direct experience of the telecoms industry. I am sure that he will bring his own views and style to the role and I am sure we will all welcome those particular unique characteristics and other areas of expertise that the gentleman has.

8.1.3 Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Could the Minister please explain the process whereby, should the need arise, the mechanism in which we can dismiss this individual? How binding is the contract?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Well, if it was a disciplinary matter there are processes in place. I would find that most unusual. I should point out, perhaps, and the Deputy raises a good point in that respect, this, obviously, is a new solution sharing this particular resource between the 2 Islands. It is, therefore, entered into on a trial basis which will run for 3 years. We certainly hope it will be successful and, indeed, that it could well, in due course, lead to even greater integration with regard to the J.C.R.A. and the O.U.R. in Guernsey.