States of Jersey
States Assembly

États de Jersey
Assemblée des États

Public Accounts Committee

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Public Sector Reform Programme

“Those who were expecting to see a significant reduction in the overall cost of the public sector may be surprised to learn that the programme was not designed for that purpose,” says Deputy Andrew Lewis, Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.

Commenting on the Public Accounts Committee Report on Public Sector Reform, the Chairman explains that different stakeholders can reasonably have reached rather different conclusions as to what the programme has been designed to deliver and by when. Nine high level outcomes that the programme is supposed to achieve by December 2018 are only now being openly shared with the public following publication of the PAC's report.

“In our view there has been an unhelpful and ultimately unnecessary lack of transparency that needs to be addressed”, says Deputy Lewis. *“Change management programmes are successful when all key stakeholders journey through the programme together and know how far they still have to go to reach the finish line.”*

The PAC has found several issues with the programme accounts, including potential under-reporting of programme budgets and expenditure. Some material spending on office modernisation and programme management work is not being counted as programme expenditure because departmental base budgets are being used to fund it. Of greater concern, however, are the governance issues the PAC has found with phase 1 of the programme.

"Phase 1 was a series of projects with a combined budget of almost £5 million that should have been completed by December 2014," says Deputy Lewis. *"There was no proper evaluation of phase 1 and no reporting back up the line to the Council of Ministers after the deadline passed."*

The PAC considers that the corporate governance and accountability issues it has identified are consistent with the findings recorded by the Comptroller and Auditor General in her report on financial management across the States (R.38/2014). PAC therefore expects to launch a follow-up review of financial management in the coming fortnight.

Looking forward, Deputy Lewis identifies some grounds for optimism. Some elements of the programme are delivering fundamental and exciting reforms in some departments. He believes that greater momentum can be achieved if those successes are built upon quickly. To do that, the broader delivery of Public Sector Reform should be refocussed to deliver redesigned public services that the Island is demanding across a suitably rationalised property portfolio housing employees in the right roles using the right information technology.

Summing up, Deputy Lewis says, *"My committee is encouraged to see evidence that change has begun; however, the speed of that change has, in the eyes of many stakeholders, been painfully slow. If the pace picks up, and if reform projects concentrate people, places and IT to deliver the services Islanders need then the programme can still deliver a lasting legacy for the benefit of all Islanders in the long term."*

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For further comment, please call Deputy Andrew Lewis on Tel 07797 711042