



Scrutiny Office

Senator I.J. Gorst  
Chief Minister  
Cyril Le Marquand House,  
The Parade,  
St Helier  
JE4 8UL

22 January 2018

Dear Chief Minister,

**Student Finance Proposals Review**

I write to you in my capacity as acting Chairman of the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel in order to make a formal complaint in respect of a recent issue encountered whilst undertaking our review of the Student Finance Proposals.

By way of background, the Panel requested information relating to the options that were considered to address the student finance issue from the Treasury and Resources Department on 11th December 2018. Upon receipt of this information on 12th December, the Panel forwarded it to its Advisor, who was contracted to provide analysis of the preferred option in relation to the other options considered. Upon request of the Advisor, our Scrutiny Officer approached the Treasury Department on 20th December 2017 to ascertain whether any further information existed regarding the options that were considered. At this time, Officers from the Department confirmed no further information existed. Our Advisor subsequently proceeded to complete his report with, what he was certain, was all the information available.

In the spirit of co-operation, the Panel forwarded the completed Advisor report to both the Treasury Department and Education Department to check for factual accuracy in advance of its publication. Comments were received from both Departments highlighting concerns about the Advisor's report and the figures contained within. The Panel subsequently received a document titled '*Options for the future of student finance*' which was presented to the Council of Ministers from the Treasury and Resources Department to evidence these concerns. The document had not at any stage been sent to the Panel, despite requests for all information relating to the options being submitted on more than one occasion. We sent this to the Panel's Advisor and have been informed that he must now rewrite a great deal of his report based on information which, had it been received when initially requested, fundamentally changes the tone of his report.

Both the Advisor and Panel would like to express total dissatisfaction that the information was not provided when initially requested. As the Advisor will now have to undertake further work on his report, the Panel will in turn incur an additional and unnecessary cost. I shall be informing the Chairmen's Committee of this situation and intend to make a statement in the Assembly, as it is frankly unacceptable that any Panel is not provided with all the information



it requires to complete its work, which, I am sure you will agree, is an important part of the parliamentary process. I would also make reference to paragraph 13 of the Minister's code of conduct and in turn paragraphs 9.6, 9.7 and 9.8 of the Code of Conduct for Scrutiny Panels and the Public Accounts Committee to highlight the seriousness of this issue.

I would appreciate an official acknowledgment of this letter and also an update on any actions that you will be taking in light of this issue. The Panel will publish all correspondence on the Scrutiny Website in due course.

Yours Sincerely,

Deputy J.M. Maçon  
Acting - Chairman, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

## Chief Minister of Jersey

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8<sup>th</sup> February 2018

Dear Deputy Macon

### **Student Finance Proposals Review**

Thank you for your letter of 22nd January 2018.

I would like to repeat the unreserved apology I offered in the States Assembly.

I was not aware until we received your letter that information had not been provided, and nor were other Ministers. Nevertheless, Ministers have a duty to account for the actions of our Departments.

With this in mind, my officers have now spoken with Departments, and reminded them of their obligations to provide relevant information, even if not explicitly asked for. In addition, as part of enhancing the capabilities of the Chief Minister's Office, we intend to audit current practices for supporting Panels, helping us to develop new cross-departmental processes to ensure that requests from Panels are tracked and monitored, and responded to in a timely manner, wherever possible, and to the expected standard. This will be complemented by expanded training. Simply, government needs to improve the service it provides to Panels.

I would also add that the work being led by the Chairman's Committee, working with government, on developing a new engagement code between Panels and the Executive is also important, whether concluded in this Assembly or early in the next.

Ultimately, supporting decent higher education opportunities for Jersey's students is a priority for myself and the Council of Ministers, and I hope that this matter will not detract from us delivering this for Islanders. Indeed, government itself can be a learning organisation.

Once again, I apologise for any difficulties you have encountered as part of your review.

Yours sincerely



**Senator Ian Gorst**  
**Chief Minister of Jersey**

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