

Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Statement from the Chairman on the Student Finance Proposals Review

As Chairman of the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel I have written on behalf and with the endorsement of the Panel to the Chief Minister 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 issue of student finance from the Treasury and Resources Department on 11th December 2017. 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. This was subsequently sent to the Panel's Advisor and the Panel has 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 taxpayer will in turn incur an **additional and unnecessary cost**.

It is frankly **unacceptable** that any Panel is not provided with all the information it requires, and Scrutiny cannot perform its function on behalf of States Members and the Public of the Island in such circumstances.

The Panel has not made this complaint lightly and views the seriousness of the matter so severe that it needs to be brought to the attention of the Assembly and therefore the Public.

The Panel will of course continue to produce its evidence-based report and attempt to work with the Departments, however, we hope Members will understand the difficulty the Panel encounter when it's treated with such contempt.