

Public Accounts Committee

Via Email

9th February 2024

Dear Public Accounts Committee

Re: PAC follow up requests

Thank you for your letter of 23rd January. I have sought to respond to each of your questions below.

Recommendations Tracker

I can confirm that it is my direction to departments to regularly review recommendations in the C&AG and PAC tracker that are applicable to them.

I note that in their Operational Business Plans for 2022, each department committed to progressing to close 80% of recommendations that were outstanding at the beginning of 2022. Corporately, 61% of C&AG and PAC recommendations were closed against that target. The total number of closures in 2022 was 278.

This was described as a 'stretch target' to focus departments on improvement, embed the tracker system and clear many of the recommendations that had been issued earlier than 2020. I understand this rationale was shared with the PAC in previous reports.

In 2023, the corporate target for closing recommendations that were outstanding at the beginning of 2023 was 50%. Corporately, 73% of C&AG and PAC recommendations were closed against that target. The total number of closures in 2023 was 194.

A quarterly process is in place that sees all departments requested to review their recommendations and to update the Tracker accordingly with any progress updates.

I will also be formally asking Chief Officers to implement a system of reviewing and reporting on progress on recommendations with their senior leadership teams, and in doing so, provide written assurance to me that recommendations are satisfactorily closed, where appropriate. A performance measure will be included in the objectives of Chief Officers.

Letters of Instruction

I have asked the Head of Financial Governance that the Letters of Instruction relating to Jersey Reds be published without delay.

I am not able to give you an undertaking as far as amendments to the Public Finances Manual (PFM) are concerned. Under the Public Finances Law, the PFM, and amendments to it, are published by the Minister for Treasury and Resources. I will ask Treasury officers to bring your requests to the attention of that Minister for consideration.

Reports to the Chief Minister

The papers produced constitute private advice from the Chief Executive Officer to the former Chief Minister and their contents do not reflect the policy of the former Council of Ministers. However, as noted in my previous letter dated 19th December 2023, the papers informed the speech that the Chief Minister gave at the Chamber of Commerce event on 11th January 2023, a transcript of which is available publicly.

If the Committee wishes to seek assurance that I have satisfactorily met my published objectives, perhaps I might respectfully ask the Committee to make a request to the Chief Minister to provide such assurance.

Programme Underspends

The proposal to provide free period products was announced as part of the Chief Minister's 100-day plan in July 2022 and the focus was on providing 'free period products to those who need them'. The £500k anticipated spend for the project in 2023 was an estimate based on the costs of setting up and running the pilot.

Actual set up costs and the ongoing costs of providing the product were lower than these initial estimates. Uptake has grown during 2023 following a marketing awareness initiative. No budget was allocated to Customer and Local Services for the pilot in 2023, and any expenditure would be covered via claims on reserves. Therefore, there was no underspend against any allocated budget.

The financial position for 2023 is being finalised and will be subject to audit before publication in the Annual Report and Accounts (ARA) in April. The ARA includes detailed disclosures of outturns as part of the Statement of Outturn against Approval. I can provide additional information after the ARA has been finalised.

Continuation of work during sensitive political period

I can confirm that I have provided no direction to colleagues that any projects should be stopped, and I am not aware of any specific situations where Ministers asked for initiatives to be paused. We did, however, pause the recruitment process where practicable for senior appointments for two weeks.

I hope this information addresses the questions put forward by the Committee.

Yours sincerely



Andrew McLaughlin
Interim Chief Executive and Head of the Public Service

D +44 (0)1534 440129

E andrew.mclaughlin@gov.je