

STATES OF JERSEY

Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel Meeting with Education, Sport and Culture

MONDAY, 28th JUNE 2010

Panel:

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour (Chairman)

Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier (Vice-Chairman)

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade

Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour

Witnesses:

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture

Deputy A.T. Dupre of St. Clement (Assistant Minister for Education, Sport and Culture)

Deputy A.K.F. Green of St. Helier (Assistant Minister for Education, Sport and Culture)

Director for Education, Sport and Culture

In Attendance:

Ms. S. Power (Scrutiny Officer)

Mrs. E. Liddiard (Scrutiny Officer)

[14:32]

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour (Chairman):

Okay. I would like to formally open this session. I am sure you gentlemen are aware of the protocol and you have the form or the document in front of you, so you will take note of that. My name is Roy Le Hérissier, Chairman of the panel, Deputy of St. Saviour.

Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier:

Deputy Trevor Pitman, St. Helier No. 1, Vice-Chairman.

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

Deputy Montfort Tadier from St. Brelade.

Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:

Deputy Jeremy Maçon of St. Saviour.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Scrutiny officers Sam Power and Elizabeth Liddiard. And if you would ...

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Deputy James Reed, Minister for Education, Sport and Culture.

Director for Education, Sport and Culture:

Director, Education, Sport and Culture.

Assistant Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:
Anne Dupre, Deputy of St. Clement, Assistant Minister.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Thank you, and I thank the media in all its manifestations for coming and members of the public. So, what we are going to do, we are going to have a general review first of the approach the Minister and the department has taken to cuts and then we will zero in on a few specific cuts which have been mentioned or, indeed, the few non-cuts, as the case may be, why you have chosen not to cut as well as what you have chosen to cut. So, just to kick things off, how has the department set about prioritising the various areas that account for its expenditure?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, I think it is worthwhile to cover a little bit of the background. Following my election as Minister for Education, Sport and Culture, I recognised that one of our primary aims was to develop a strategic plan for the department for the next 15-20 years. Also in the Strategic Plan we recognised that there was a need to ensure that we were providing the correct services that met the needs of the Island. As such, working alongside and with my department we have undertaken a number of what I would term very major reviews to look at the services we provide with the aim of ensuring that they were fit for purpose not only in the immediate future but on the medium and longer term. Once that process ... obviously that process had already been started when a further decision was made to carry out a comprehensive spending review with the specific aim of identifying savings which are targeted to deliver in total approximately £50 million. It has been a challenge to the department and to myself to manage that process alongside the major reviews that we are undertaking, in particular and due primarily to the timescale set for the comprehensive spending review. As such, as you have already mentioned, we have identified approximately £1 million worth of savings that are identified within the business plan, but equally another sum of £1.2 million has been underlined as the target to deliver the full 2 per cent savings that has been suggested that we should make, which each and every department, I should say, is expected to make. That is the, if you like, background to our current position.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

So, Mr. Minister, when you looked at your priorities, you presumably now having been in post for 18 months or whatever, you must have obviously picked up an idea of where you felt cuts could possibly be implemented. So what areas did you feel merited further study?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, first of all, my priority is to ensure that we provide the correct services that meet the needs of the population and the Island as a whole, in particular education. As you are well aware, the major reviews that we are undertaking around the provision of education will hopefully guide us and allow the public and yourselves to be part of that decision-making process. With regard to priorities linked to the £1 million that we have already identified as saving, the initial point that I made clear to my department was that I did not want the savings to impact on frontline services and where possible the savings should reflect that view. I believe that that is the case. Also I acknowledge that any savings will have ... or any proposed cuts, if you like, can and will have an impact on certain individuals and different groups. My aim was to minimise the impact of such savings while endeavouring to deliver services in a cost-effective manner.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

When you said it would have an impact even though you were minimising, could you tell us areas where you felt it would have an impact?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, every area, I think, in truth.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Well, where it would have an impact perhaps less painful than other areas?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think that we have to recognise that people get used to a particular service or provision or initiative and sometimes it is difficult for people to look past the proposed change and see that actually there are occasions where the change can be good. I will touch on the lifeguard issue because that is bound to come up. I think I made it perfectly clear in the States that my intention is not to put anybody at risk, the last thing on my mind. I believe that it is worth looking at options to provide the right cover in alternative ways and hence the reason why that was one of the savings that were put forward. It was not designed, I hasten to add, and none of the savings have been designed to be what other people might term as shroud waving. They are real, genuine attempts to reduce the cost of providing the services without - and I would underline without - impacting on the frontline services.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

You have ring-fenced certain areas like higher education fees and obviously you are going to propose that heritage gets more money in your proposition. To what extent ... by having done this, to what extent are you making it harder for the other services in that they have to offer up more of these cuts?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

For a start, the rationale behind the savings was unlike some departments I was not and still am not prepared to see sort of a general cut across the board. I think we need to acknowledge what services are important, what the public believe are essential both to themselves and to the Island and then determine how we continue to provide those services. I am equally aware, as I am sure you all are, that although we are looking to deliver services in an efficient and effective manner, there are known spending pressures which need to be dealt with. I am pleased that you raised the point with regard to higher education funding. I was rather astonished that when I reviewed the funding provided for higher education it had actually been devalued over quite a long period of time and, indeed, in 2009 an additional £900,000 was removed from that support. It was then that I made the statement which I absolutely stand by that I am not prepared to see that support devalued further. Equally, alongside of that, we have introduced a review to look at how we provide and support people in higher education both now and in the future. There are additional challenges that have come to our attention in recent times, and that is the pressure to reduce the cost of U.K. (United Kingdom) Government support to universities and that may or may not have an impact on our costs. So, we are trying, I suppose, in summary, to balance the need to deliver services in a cost-effective manner with ensuring that those services are correct and meet the needs of the people, and that known spending pressures where we need to further invest in some of our services is provided for.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

You said a few minutes ago ... you seemed to be confirming that your view that a blanket approach to cuts across all departments is a mistake in Whitehall.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think it is a blunt tool and I think that the Comptroller and Auditor General a number of years ago in a report basically agreed with that view. I do think that a discussion ... and I believe it starts here with the Scrutiny Panels and the various departments. A discussion needs to be had on what services we believe should be provided and how they are provided and in what manner. If we can have a full and open

discussion about those matters ... and to come back to why we have undertaken the reviews that we have, it is to do just that. We need to have that dialogue. We need to have that discussion. We need to include and encourage people to be involved in that decision-making process because if we make the wrong decision, which I am extremely mindful about, in the short term, it could have some long-term negative impacts both in the medium and the longer term. So, I suppose call me cautious but I am certainly an individual that prefers to rely on solid evidence and information to make my decisions and that is the process that I have chosen to follow in this area.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I think we would support you but has that placed you at loggerheads then with the Council of Ministers?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

No, I think that there is a recognition by all the Council of Ministers that ... and again, it is a balancing act. We know that there are real issues, funding issues, financial issues, that the Island faces. We also know that the public do not out of choice or would not out of choice choose to pay increased taxes and require government to ensure that they are delivering the services effectively that they require. I think that we need to allow that discussion to happen.

[14:45]

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

But if you are fighting your corner perhaps a bit more stridently than some of your colleagues surely that is not sitting very well.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I do not believe that is ...

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Is that going to cause more cuts to be made in other departments if you manage to fight your corner very well?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I do not believe I am fighting my corner. I am saying ... I am putting a view forward to the Council of Ministers about my department and the services we provide and I am well aware that other Ministers are doing the same, including the Minister for Treasury and Resources I hasten to add.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I do not mean that in a negative connotation. I think you are right to be fighting your ... the cause of young people particularly.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I am mindful of the responsibilities that I have as Minister for the department and the ultimate decision-maker, recognising that although I am the ultimate policy decision-maker perhaps, the States will ultimately judge me.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Your analogy about blunt tool I thought was very interesting because the trouble with blunt tools is often that you end up cutting where you do not mean to. Could you think of a sharper tool that if you were the Minister for Treasury and Resources, a different approach that you would take rather than the unilateral cuts right across the board?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think that I have had many discussions with the Minister for Treasury and Resources as he has with other Ministers about the comprehensive spending review and how it is delivered. As I say, he is trying to balance the need for reducing costs in the short term with dealing with the longer term issues. He also recognises that proper discussion needs to take place, public involvement in this process, because we need to learn from our mistakes. The mistakes in the past were that in I think it is 2004-05 a similar process was followed, although it was not called a comprehensive spending review, and targets were set, departments were required to go and meet those targets, and unfortunately I think due to lack of public involvement perhaps those savings were not fully realised. Again, in the emerging issues document that the Comptroller and Auditor General wrote, it identifies perhaps the mistakes of the past, and I am hoping and I believe that we need to learn from that where we can and move forward.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Is there a risk - I imagine there would be - for any organisation taking part in a comprehensive spending review that you go in there looking for cuts and actually you find areas where you think we could really do with extra money here to make the system more efficient or more ...

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Absolutely.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can you give examples of where that may have happened?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think, I mean, we just mentioned about higher education. Let us move on to Jersey Heritage Trust. I mean, everybody knew. To be honest, yes, we have undertaken 3 separate reports, one by the Comptroller and Auditor General, one by BDO Alto, and one by a locum to show that I suppose again I have the evidence to base decisions on, but generally everybody was well aware that Jersey Heritage Trust was in financial difficulty. Everybody was well aware that we had a cultural strategy that was not properly funded and sufficient resources had not been allocated for it. As such, we have ... as you mentioned, I am bringing forward a proposition to place Jersey Heritage Trust on a firm footing. I am well aware that there could easily be within the range of services that we provide other areas which may need additional funding.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Is that not a contradiction? If every Minister does this and says: "Actually, there is an area I need more funding", Ministers who have all unilaterally agreed to the Business Plan and Strategic Plan and to the constraints imposed with that, and then to say: "There is not enough for our department", if that happened right across the board that would be a problem, would it not?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, no, because I think it is part of a dialogue that needs to take place. If we are going to be an open and transparent government we need to be honest about the issues and pressures that we face. We also need to be honest if we think we can do things better. We should not be complacent, and I think that is why targets have been set and we are all signed up to them, but ultimately, as I say, we have a responsibility to this Island and in particular to the young people and not so young perhaps that we are providing education for that we actually meet their needs. Because if we do not, then the pressures will be for more people to come to the Island to fill the vacancies and the job opportunities that are available, increased pressures on infrastructure and so on and so forth. We cannot just look and have an isolated view on a particular area in detail without actually standing back and also looking at the big picture. I think that is a responsibility for us all.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Just to go over this again, Minister, because I have not quite captured it, how did you go about prioritising the various areas? How did you come to this decision? What was the process behind it?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

It started with a number of directions, if you like, putting it nicely. [Laughter]

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Who were the directions from?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

The directions were from the Minister, absolutely, to his department officers which basically said: "Okay, this is a requirement. This is a matter that I have signed up to. However - and I will go through them again - one, I do not want to critically see any impact on frontline services. I want you to identify areas where you think we can do things better, recognising the timeframe involved. Thirdly, we are not going to second guess any of the current reviews and the outcomes of those reviews that we are undertaking because otherwise that would compromise not only a particular review but the whole review process." I am absolutely determined, and I will keep reinforcing this point, that I want the involvement of this panel, I want the involvement of the public, I want the involvement of our workforce, as we determine how we provide primary education, secondary education, higher education funding, vocational training, both now and in the future.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

We are trying, as you know, Mr. Minister, to get to the bottom of what ... [Laughter] which is slightly lengthy, the bottom of how you are dealing with the process. Did you, for example, say these are the big discretionary spenders in the department? In other words, the more people ... the more we open a service up, the more people use it and the more we cannot control the money. Some people say nursery education is like that, in a sense higher education is like that, although you can study the demographics of both. We do not have means testing ... well, we do obviously for higher education, although we may have means testing but we are still dealing with never-ending demand. So did you look at those services and say: "How on earth can we put more of a lid on demand?" Did you look at areas where you thought perhaps the management was not as good as you might think in the sense that this service seems to be over-managed? Did you look at raw data from school enrolments and say: "Oh, it is going down in these areas, school enrolments, so we need to capture some savings"? How did you ... what criteria did you apply?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

This sounds like a broken record, Chairman, but you talk about demographics and I know your frustration, I hasten to add, about the number of reviews that we are undertaking and the fact that they are not complete. I do understand that. But one of the areas that is tied up absolutely in the future needs of the services we provide is the number of people, demographics, and that is a review that is being undertaken that will guide us. We have carried out a review into the management structure, absolutely. We want it. Government needs to demonstrate whether or not the management of the services that we provide is fit for purpose as much as the frontline staff that are delivering it. At the moment, there is a view, right or wrong, that we are inefficient, our management structures are too heavy, and that there is a lot of wastage involved.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Do you agree with those views?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I agree there is always a place for improvement, but one thing I will say and, you know, it could be argued: “You would say that because you are Minister for Education, Sport and Culture”, but what I have found and I believe the review on the management structure of our department has shown is that actually we have an efficient management system in place. Depending on the demands placed on them ... and together with the Minister for Treasury and Resources I have placed huge demands - huge - on my department linked to the reviews that are being undertaken at the moment and the need to carry out business as usual. Recognising that, I believe that we do have a good structure. We have a devolved system of management anyway with a lot of the services we provide through the schools.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisssier:

What about the big discretionary areas of expenditure? Then I will move to my 2 colleagues.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Discretionary as in ...?

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisssier:

Well, where you cannot really control the demand. If a parent qualifies for higher education support they get it. If a parent qualifies for nursery support they get it. How would you handle ...

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I would suggest that is not discretionary because we have a statutory responsibility to support people in education, including access to higher education.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisssier:

Well, demand led.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

It is acknowledged, as it is with the income support scheme, that there are going to be variations in demand which need to be met. It would be ridiculous to believe that you could somehow ring-fence the number and say: “Over and above that you are out, but these ones are in.” You have to have the flexibility of that sort of ... flexibility within the system to allow you to adapt and adjust to the demand. This year I can tell you that we have noticed more people coming to our department requiring additional assistance because they have found themselves either out of work or with a reduced income and these issues will always be faced by our department. We are required, quite properly required not only as a department, as a government, to meet those needs if they are real.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Having done the school suspensions review, I would be interested if you could speak to us a bit about the restructuring of the special education needs service and the way emotional and behavioural support is delivered to primary school children.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Absolutely. First of all, if I have not thanked you before, I felt that your suspensions review and report was a very fair and balanced document.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

You liked it better than a couple of headmasters then. **[Laughter]**

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I accept that certain people might have a different view. With regard to special needs, I think we are all

well aware ... special educational needs, shall I say. We are all well aware of the particular challenges that that brings. They are challenges which do not diminish over time; in fact, if anything, I think that they are increasing for various reasons that we do not need to go into today. Our aim is working with our partners to ensure that we provide and meet the needs of those that require special education and that additional support over and above what we would normally provide within our education system. As such, we have been reviewing the way we provide those services. We have also been encouraged by the fact that one of our partners in particular, Health and Social Services, is now able to step up to the mark and provide the support that perhaps had been either lacking or part covered by our department. Equally, there is a new initiative that has been ... well, it is not a new initiative, it is a new plan that is being developed with the children's policy group that I am part of which will help shape the support provided to all children and young people, including those with special needs.

[15:00]

Also, we have funds - additional funds which the States has provided, quite rightly, for running the Williamson plan and that major review that was undertaken - to underpin the support that is required for these people. So, in light of that, basically to cut a long story short, what we have done is we have looked at where we can deliver and provide support in a different way and perhaps reduce - and we come back to sort of management type costs, administration costs - management costs without impacting on those frontline services in the knowledge that we now have partners with equal commitment and funds to be able to support those individuals.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Who are these partners?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, predominantly it is Health and Social Services, and Home Affairs is the other partner.

Deputy M. Tadier:

The question ... I think it is probably the appropriate time to ask it. We had the Minister for Home Affairs in earlier and obviously he is discouraged, as I imagine any department would be, from making savings which are going to impact on another department. You cannot simply just, you know, credit the money around. Is that ... how is it going to impact, that last ...?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

It is not because this is all about ... and we are paying attention to some of your recommendations, and it is looking at maybe including some of these young people more in the mainstream school and providing the support on the campus rather than in isolated situations. It revolves all around that sort of reorganisation and rearrangement of the current support. We have had ... and my Chief Officer is more than happy to come in at any time **[Laughter]**. We have had discussions with all of those involved and we believe that although there is a saving that will fall out of this, it will not detract from the support that we can provide, ongoing support.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can we talk concrete figures, though? It says here that there will be a saving of £165,000. That is what is being proposed from the restructuring of the special needs. What does that entail materially?

Director for Education, Sport and Culture:

There are a couple of things. The first thing is around the central support provided at the department. There are opportunities to restructure the balance of the education support team and that is basically around educational psychologists, the number of educational psychologists that we have and the role

that they play. The other one which we believe will also lead to a better experience for the young people is around St. James School and St. James School, as you are aware, is a small school which is located on its own for 20 pupils. It is a very good experience for the children, but the danger in those situations is that the children become isolated from the mainstream. In fact, the teachers become isolated from the mainstream as well. So, we are looking to use some of the surplus places that have been created by closing a form in other schools to co-locate St. James on the grounds of a mainstream school. That means you have the best of both worlds because when the children need the specialist unit in accordance with the recommendations that you have made in your suspensions report, it is there for them but there is also ... they do not become isolated and they will have the opportunity to move back into mainstream, maybe not for 100 per cent of the time but for whatever percentage of time is appropriate according to the individual child's needs. That would reduce the management overhead because quite clearly the structure would then change such that the unit would come under the management structure of the primary school so you would not need 2 separate structures. The detail of that has to be worked out but ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

But explicitly what is there that was there before that cost £165,000 that will not be there afterwards? Which positions will be cut?

Director for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, a management position in terms of the school would be reduced.

Deputy M. Tadier:

At which school?

Director for Education, Sport and Culture:

In terms of St. James School would be reduced, and the other saving is not replacing an educational psychologist who is due to retire.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I would suggest, I mean, I did speak to the Chairman briefly earlier, that obviously first of all, as has been said many times before, these are saving proposals that still require decisions of the States and as such there are some pieces of information that perhaps would be considered to be sensitive. I would ask that rather than deal with those issues on posts and things in this forum we hold that back to the private hearing later. It is just because it would be wrong to speak about something that may or may not be able to be delivered.

Deputy M. Tadier:

That is fine. I would just comment generally while there are some tangible cuts, you know, like school milk or lifeguards that are easy to envisage, there are quite a few comments there where it talks of restructuring and redefining and it is not ... I mean, it is basically accountant's talk or something ...

Director for Education, Sport and Culture:

It is very difficult to manage change in a way that keeps all the people who are affected engaged in appropriate communication. So I think when you put things into the public domain you have to make sure that you have had an opportunity to talk to the groups, the staff, on some occasions the unions, and it is really just to facilitate the communication process. Effectively, it is about restructuring.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Have you actually ... the Minister did allude to this, but have staff been approached and asked for their ideas?

Director for Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes. I think one of the points ... you mentioned a few things that you thought perhaps the department should be thinking about and prioritising, and the first thing I would say is that change in education is not something that happens overnight.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I would not think anything happens overnight. [Laughter]

Director for Education, Sport and Culture:

It is something ... if you are going to introduce major reform, major reform takes time and appropriate consultation with all the stakeholders, the public, parents and children, teachers, et cetera. So, there is a lot to go through. What we have tried to do is to set aside up to the 2 per cent for next year and to look at the rest of the savings as a longer term journey because you would have to do some serious thinking about the structure of education if you were going to deliver against those. So, that has been the process to date. Now, in doing that, we have had a number of workshops, yes. So we have met with, for example, all the primary heads, we have met with all the secondary heads, we have met with the instrumental music service. In effect, the department has set aside 20 per cent of senior management time to look at the comprehensive spending review and we have organised a number of workshops and we are working our way through it. Quite clearly, if people have not yet been consulted they will, I guess, wonder why but it is only a question of getting to it. It would be inappropriate obviously to do things the wrong way around. We have to start talking with primary heads and secondary heads if it is about the structure of the school system, and then obviously we will want to talk to teachers to see how they will be affected and to get their ideas for potential changes there as well. Then again the parents ...

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Just to finish that comment off, I have personally given undertakings to teachers' unions and the public generally that they will be fully involved in this decision-making process.

Director for Education, Sport and Culture:

Can I also give you a good example of how we have tried to get to the right people first, because as you will be aware we have been trying to work on the structure, looking at the structure of secondary education, and we started that off by asking all year 12 students on the Island about the choices that they made and about whether they got access to the choices that they want to follow, before we did anything.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Is this on ... are you talking about A level, for A level choice?

Director for Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I just want to take it back a bit. You made a point about the cuts were not shroud waving and we accept that. With things like language assistants, school milk, lifeguards, I mean, most of us will probably say very little chance of getting through the States anyway. Where does that put you?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, yes, I mean, school milk fortunately [Laughter] although it is titled school is actually ... it is the Minister for Economic Development that is putting forward that particular saving proposal. I think that, as I said before, no matter what area you identify possible savings, there are going to be individuals that will question it. With regards the language assistants, I felt, rightly or wrongly, that I prefer to protect

the permanent language teachers and providers and look at alternatives and work with them, should I say, to see whether alternatives to the current provision could be found at a reduced cost. That is an ongoing piece of work. I have had discussions with the Honorary French Consul over this matter to see whether or not Alliance Française or the French Government might be interested in supporting the development of the French language perhaps more than they are doing at the moment. I think that is still an option that we are exploring. Ultimately and equally alongside of it, I am wanting to protect the provision and our frontline services. Now, whether we like it or not, there will be choices to make and in this particular case I recognise that some States Members and other individuals feel that targeting language assistants is perhaps not what they would prefer. I think it is right that we have the debate. It is right that we are aware and made aware of all the issues and the concerns around it, and ultimately if people do not feel confident that we can provide and educate our young people with regards the teaching of the French language in the appropriate manner and that it is essential that we should have language assistants, so be it. So be it.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

What is your view on that?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

My view is that I do believe that given we can deal with some of the concerns that have been raised by our permanent language teachers over this particular matter, that we are able to avoid the need for continuing with our temporary assistants.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay.

Director for Education, Sport and Culture:

Can I just clarify for you that the proposal is not to cut language assistants per se but to reduce the number of language assistants. Language assistants are not required everywhere all the time so it is about making the best use of a reduced resource. The other thing, of course, it has to be looked at in the context of new technology. There is absolutely nothing to stop schools now communicating with schools in France, with teachers in France, using video-conferencing, the internet and stuff. So there are opportunities there to explore new ways of doing this that may well enhance the provision. The language assistants where examination classes have been concerned or are to be concerned is still in place, so that is not being reduced.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Thank you for clarifying that.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I just want to ask what proportion of that sum, the £298,000, relates to language assistants. Is it the entire sum?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

No, no.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I do not know if you have those figures at hand.

Director for Education, Sport and Culture:

No, that £298,000 is a range of things in relation to the ... you know, support for schools and colleges. I am not sure that I have that with me at the moment but we can come back to you with that figure.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Would it be possible to have the breakdown of that figure, how it is ...?

Director for Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Is Jersey French still taught in schools, by the way, as an option?

Director for Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

That has not been looked at being cut?

Director for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, Jersey French is taught in schools by virtue of a decision of the States, so I would have thought - we would need to take advice on this - that any modification to that programme would need to be agreed by the States. In a sense, the department passports a grant from the States. Although it is within the Education, Sport and Culture budget it is effectively ring-fenced in there.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Could you find out the figure for us?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Currently it is about £137,000.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Really? For a moribund language?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, you could view it as that. Actually, we have just recently signed a new and improved ... I say recently, I think it was last year, a new improved agreement with the Don Balleine Trust to provide a qualification in Jersey French.

[15:15]

If we are wanting to maintain and develop and recognise our identity, Jersey French is part of that. Yes, it is a small part, but equally I think that if you speak to the many young primary children that take part in out of school, out of hours lessons in Jersey French and those that are now studying it to equivalent G.C.S.E. (General Certificate of Secondary Education) level, they firmly believe that it should be and form part of the educational offering.

Assistant Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Can I just say that at the Eisteddfod last year there were so many children from primary school that they had a very full day of all the children performing in their Jersey French and it was absolutely wonderful to see so many little kids actually thoroughly enjoying it.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I am not saying that Jersey French is ... my question is if it is a nice to have rather than essential when it

could pay for 5 or 6 lifeguards during the summer and put people in tangible employment.

Assistant Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

It is culture, is it not? It is our culture and heritage.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I thank the Deputy. I was quite ... Mr. Minister, it would be quite nice if we could hear from the Assistant Minister for Culture and Heritage who has very politely sat there. I wonder if we could draw her in. I was hoping we would when the dreaded word St. James was mentioned but we never crossed over to the other St. James. I wonder if you could tell us because it is going to be very difficult to sell to the States the Minister's proposition that there is an extra 2,000 needed to make Heritage sustainable. What is meant by sustainable? That the current structure continues, albeit with a reducing tourist and visitor number, or that we shrink the number of facilities to match the shrinkage in numbers. What is being sustained?

Assistant Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Part of their S.L.A. (Service Level Agreement) is the fact they have got various places that they have got to look after like the museum, the castle and things like that. That is part of their remit. Things like forts and towers and things that they have taken on now are not part of what has to be done, so it has been their decision to take these things on.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

With Jersey Heritage Trust, if we are on that subject, 2 things need to be made very clear. A lot of time and effort has been made by the department to look at Jersey Heritage Trust. Indeed, Jersey Heritage Trust have, as part of the new arrangements, restructured and reviewed their costs. They have identified and are required to deliver a saving of £350,000, which is about 10 per cent of their budget which has impacted on the individual and also access to certain heritage sites.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

But you are returning £200,000 of those savings.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

It was acknowledged, as I say, and this is all in the public domain. It was identified that Jersey Heritage Trust were facing a deficit of about £550,000 and that something needed to be done. We felt again that they needed to deal with the management and the financial situation and we were there to help and guide them to do that, acknowledging that if we wanted to avoid permanent closures, that we could be required to provide additional funding. In reality, as I say, Jersey Heritage Trust have been able to identify and will deliver £350,000 worth of the £550,000 deficit.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

But if you get your £200,000, where will that go to?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

To maintain the current restructured Jersey Heritage Trust and we have reduced the opening hours of certain of our heritage sites. They will maintain an education programme. They will be required to work with other organisations to deliver and support our heritage and let us not forget that Jersey Heritage Trust have been tasked with managing our heritage sites. Ultimately, it is our responsibility as an Island to take charge of, and be responsible for, the actual physical properties. Again, for various reasons, this is a matter that has not been dealt with up to now. The proposal that we are bringing to the States is designed, as my Assistant Minister said, not only to ensure that Jersey Heritage Trust will have a much stronger service level agreement in place so that we can hold them to account as much as they

can hold us to account because we have responsibility in it, we are a partner in it, but equally that sufficient funds are allocated to ensure that our sites can be refreshed and maintained so that they can attract and continue to attract both locals and visitors alike who will enjoy and benefit from the sites that we have on our Island.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, thank you for that, Minister. It is a bit like having the debate early. I wonder if we could go back to the Assistant Minister.

Assistant Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Just one thing I was going to say, in 2005, Jersey Heritage flagged up the fact that they were going to be short of funds and unfortunately it was sort of put on leave there.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

It has taken this long to deal with it.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

The other part of your mandate, of course, is culture and the 2 are often conflated, culture and heritage, and that is where I was going to get in on the St. James Centre as opposed to the St. James Special Needs school. What view have you taken on that because there has been a constant complaint that the cultural strategy was brought in but there was never any financing brought in before the strategy? So in the face of these cuts, and culture is not mentioned, but, of course, in a way it is hard to take away what you have not given other than the block grants to people like the Opera House. So how are you going to deal with the cuts programme in culture or does it impact on culture directly?

Assistant Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

It is not going to hit them directly because their grants are not huge. I think if you cut their grants, they are going to go out of business so we will have to try and maintain the actual grants that we are giving to them at the moment. With St. James is obviously a bit up in the air as to what is going to happen there because we are doing the review on performance base. Perhaps St. James could be redeveloped or something like that. At the moment, we are not ... this is still ... of course this is held by Property Holdings, Property Holdings are very much in charge.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

What is your view? Do you think St. James is a fully integrated part of the cultural estate or we could be using it a bit more?

Assistant Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think we could use it a bit more but it is not perfect for a performing venue. The acoustics are not brilliant in there.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

The scaffolding ...

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I wish I could remember the comment that Senator Perchard made about the scaffolding. Just to pick up on St. James and perhaps other property matters. We are undertaking a major review of property in conjunction with our Property Holdings and you will be pleased to know with regard to school milk, in this case there are no sacred cows and that all our property will be looked at. I want to make sure that we maximise the facilities that we have. I think there are some brilliant examples and we do things in some areas very, very well and I cite St. Andrew's school as a brilliant example of what a property can

be used for. Not only does it support the young people and provide education for the young people in that area but equally it supports the community. I think it is utilised 7 days a week in some shape or form which is only right because it is a public property and it should be available and accessible by the community. Our challenge, as we go through and review the property that we administer, is that we maximise those chances and, indeed, with St. Martin's school, it is a capital project that has been discussed and the redevelopment of that school has been spoken about for many, many years. I have had discussions with the Constable of St. Martin and other members of his administration to see whether or not, with the opportunities for the redevelopment of that school and by redesigning, we can incorporate and gain community benefit from that school that perhaps otherwise one would not have. So coming back to performance spaces, absolutely right we should be looking at our performance spaces to ensure that they meet the needs of our community. I am well aware that the Arts Trust and the Arts Centre have been considering what their needs will be in the short, the medium and longer term. I think that there could be some opportunities to explore which includes perhaps creating a central performance space rather than the isolated units that we have. I hasten to add I am not including in this discussion the Opera House. The Opera House is separate and is recognised to be absolutely separate and important.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, Deputy Maçon first.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

No, because I want to move on to another subject.

Deputy M. Tadier:

It is on the same subject, just very quickly. Mr. Minister, disregarding the S.S.I. (Site of Special Interest) on St. James church, would you be in favour of just knocking it down, building a purpose-built facility for the Arts which would probably save money in the long run?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I have already had general discussions with the Minister for Planning about St. James because I think he is as concerned as everybody else that we cannot carry on by just ignoring or not dealing with the particular property. I would hope that any proposals that might come out of the review and the discussions about performance spaces he would, firstly, be mindful about and secondly, he will, within his remit, consider what may be appropriate for that site.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Asking about the things that have not been put forward, because obviously you have a list now of what you have decided to move forward on. Have you held certain things back, the anthem, for example, in order to mingle 3 or 5 per cent cuts?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I apologise for the delay in bringing the anthem to the States because I am well aware, Deputy Maçon, of your real interest.

Deputy M. Tadier:

We have got to make sure we are signing from the same hymn sheet. **[Laughter]**

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Just for finish off on the anthem, I am carrying out, I believe, the instructions that I was given or inherited when I took on the role of Minister for Education, Sport and Culture. I do not necessarily believe it needs a States decision to acknowledge it as the anthem. I think that as with the case of *Beautiful Jersey*, *My Normandy* and other local songs, that anthems grow almost organically as they get

known, as they are used in the different forms and settings and so I just believe that rather than look at the anthem as something that is in conflict or would be in conflict or designed to replace existing well-known Island songs, I think we would look at it as an opportunity to add perhaps to the ...

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

The question is not about the desirability or otherwise. It is about what cuts did you not consider, e.g., the anthem. So are there other cuts as well?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

What do you mean?

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

That you did not consider, in other words, you said ...

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

We are considering that after the 2 per cent there will be a 3 per cent and then a 5 per cent so, given the options here, were there other options which were not put forward in order to hold them back for these other cuts?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I just explained earlier on that we are undertaking a number of major reviews and as such I am not, was not and still not prepared to second guess the outcomes of those reviews. If you look at the services we provide, 2 things have got to be recognised. One is our major cost is staff. Equally, we are required to provide education for the Island. Collectively, that amounts of 80 per cent plus of our budget. So if you are asking me is it going to be easy or even possible to deliver a 4 to 10 per cent of savings at this time, I would say I cannot tell you. And I ...

[15:30]

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yet you committed yourself to £1,127,000 from the reviews.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes, because I believed, and time will tell if I was correct in my assumptions, that those savings could be delivered and great care was taken albeit that some people might not recognise that.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Is this an academic exercise? We know you have done this in good faith like other Ministers.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Not at all.

Deputy M. Tadier:

But the litmus test is not whether ... it is for the Assembly, is it not, to decide and it may well be that all of the proposals are not acceptable to the Assembly or the public.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

No, I would hope in the same way that I am trying to explain, and will continue to explain, that the savings that we are proposing are able to be delivered and they are real savings. That is another word I would like to underline. I believe there are real savings that will we can reduce our budget by. If people do not believe that I have gone through the proper process, if I have come to the wrong conclusions with

regard to some of these, I am more than happy to be challenged on them. But I do believe that although I have not been able to identify the full 2 per cent, the savings that I have put forward can be delivered without having any major impact on our frontline services or that will affect the ongoing provision of services.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Okay, time is running out and we have got another session after a short break. I will just ask the members, any final questions? Are there any final comments? Okay, I would like to thank you, Mr. Minister and the Director and the Assistant Minister for attending. I will tell the public we are going to have a confidential session because there is a report that has been drawn up on E.S.C. (Education, Sport and Culture) management and because it is written in such a way that people are easily identified, the panel felt it was better to look at it as a confidential document at this stage. Okay, so I thank you all very much for attending and we will call an end to the session.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Thank you.

[15:32]