

2016.03.08

### **3.1 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade of the Minister for Instructure regarding the number of Parks and Gardens staff and cleaners at risk of redundancy as a result of outsourcing proposals:**

Would the Minister advise how many Parks and Gardens staff and cleaners are at risk of redundancy as a result of the outsourcing proposals?

#### **Deputy E.J. Noel of St. Lawrence (The Minister for Infrastructure):**

If I may, I would just like to express on behalf of Members and welcome Year 5 from Grands Vaux and from Beaulieu School and hopefully at some point in the future they may be future parliamentarians sitting in this Assembly. But I will move on now to answering Deputy Tadier's question. Firstly, for clarification, employees in the service areas, parks and gardens and cleaning services have not been put at risk of redundancy. Internal service reviews are ongoing therefore at this stage we cannot provide accurate information about the numbers of affected employees. However, our employee numbers are reducing on a weekly basis due to applications being accepted as part of the voluntary redundancy programme, employees being redeployed to other areas of the States, and employees leaving to retire or to take up roles in the private sector.

[9:45]

Once the service reviews are completed officers will then be commencing a full employee consultation programme, meeting with staff, sharing the contents of the service reviews with affected employees, and listening to their views and suggestions on how we may mitigate redundancies. In addition to the employee consultation programme, officers are meeting monthly with both Unite and Prospect Unions and senior management meetings are taking place on a weekly basis with Unite to discuss issues of concern. On completion of the consultation programme the department will agree a way forward and will then have accurate and up-to-date figures on the affected employees but until that time we simply do not know.

#### **3.1.1 Deputy M. Tadier:**

May I add my welcome to the students in the gallery, and on behalf of Reform Jersey I hope that in future we might see some of you as party members in this Assembly. I would like to ask the Minister whether he can be more specific about the figures. We started off with 140 with their jobs being threatened. Can he be more specific about how many have already taken voluntary redundancy and what he expects needs to be done in order to meet his targets?

#### **Deputy E.J. Noel:**

In 2015 we had some 25 successful applications for individuals to be part of the voluntary redundancy scheme of last year. The breakdown of that was 21 from the manual workers side and 4 from the Civil Service side of our department. We have a similar number in progress currently but we have also had a number of individuals that have left States employment primarily to retire or to move on to jobs outside of the States. Therefore although the original worst case scenario was some 150 individuals that has been substantially reduced to less than a third of that. The continual trend is for that number to be reduced and in an ideal situation I would want no employees to have to suffer compulsory redundancy and we are working to that aim, but as Members will appreciate it is challenging and we may not reach that goal.

#### **3.1.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier:**

The Minister, with the figures he just gave about voluntary redundancy and so on, but he also mentioned that some people have transferred to other parts or other departments, can he also give us the figures for those people please?

**Deputy E.J. Noel:**

We have had, to my knowledge, at least 3 individuals that have transferred within my own department from areas that are more at risk, so to speak, to substantial reconfiguration to those that are less so. We are working with our colleagues at Health and Social Services, and indeed outside of the States we are working with Andium, Ports of Jersey and with the Parish of St. Helier.

**3.1.3 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier:**

As I pointed out in the States question time 2 weeks ago, the Minister is following a course of action, which was the precise opposite of what he said during his election for the office of Minister for Transport and Technical Services, so could I ask him if he could inform the Assembly when exactly was the moment that he decided to abandon this election pledge?

**Deputy E.J. Noel:**

It was not so much an abandonment of an election pledge but facing up to reality that this Assembly back in October last year agreed an M.T.F.P. (Medium Term Financial Plan) programme over the next 4 years by which way my department needs to make some £4.6 million worth of savings year-on-year over that period. We simply cannot do that without reducing our headcount.

**3.1.4 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:**

Does the Minister see any connection at all between the recent results from the change.je poll which showed that virtually all of the Ministers have very significant dissatisfaction ratings among the public, as well as the overall direction that the Government is taking the Island down, having 82 per cent dissatisfaction? Does he see a connection between those figures and his answer previously, which shows the political promises from this Government are worth absolutely nothing?

**Deputy E.J. Noel:**

Although that change.je questionnaire was of some interest, they have acknowledged that it was not necessarily ... it was a self-selecting questionnaire and therefore you have to look at the data in that light. But, yes, the Government does have to step-up and does have to engage more with the public. When you have difficult messages and difficult decisions to make that they are not popular. That is the situation we find ourselves in.

**3.1.5 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier:**

The Minister denies that any staff will be put at risk, why then in his summary of the impact of service reviews does he say, on page 12, a document I have in my possession: "That cleaning and Parks and Gardens service reviews will have significant impact on the total number of staff employed. In Parks and Gardens 54 employees will be put [his words] at risk. In cleaning services 93 employees will be put [his term] at risk."

**Deputy E.J. Noel:**

I just need to correct Deputy Southern there. I have not said that no employees will be put at risk at any point. Almost certainly we will - although we are trying to mitigate it as much as possible - there will be some compulsory redundancies. The document that Deputy Southern is referring to is a document that was produced on 2nd December last year. It was a document that was shared with the unions on a confidential basis and that was to outline the position of where we were in this

process and to give the unions an indication of what the worst case scenario would be. Luckily we will not see that worst case scenario; as I have said, the numbers are less than a third of those that were in that document.

### **3.1.6 Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour:**

Is the Minister aware that many U.K. (United Kingdom) county councils, predominantly Conservatives, are now abandoning the principle of outsourcing as being far too expensive, are in fact insourcing? The county council in Cumbria - this was in the weekend national newspapers - claim that if it was not for insourcing they would not have been able to cope with the recent devastating floods that were inflicted on the north of England. Will the Minister take this on board?

### **Deputy E.J. Noel:**

Deputy Kevin Lewis makes some good observations there. We are going to be maintaining our workforce for emergency reaction projects such as when we have major storms and flooding. The document that that article was based on is subject to a question I have got later on from Deputy Southern, so I will be able to answer that then. But as I have said previously in this Assembly, when you do a soft test analysis on one building in the States remit, which is Cyril Le Marquand House, that costs us some £160,000 a year to clean. We have soft-tested that with the private sector on a like-for-like basis and it came in at some £90,000 to clean on an annual basis. If that difference was substantially less than £70,000 we could probably live with it. But at that sort of difference then I am afraid we do need to look at our costs and see how we can provide the same level of service for less.

### **3.1.7 Senator Z.A. Cameron:**

Many of the public sector workers that have accepted or being made redundant appear to be working on the front line. These jobs will then need to be outsourced to the private sector. In the meantime the appointment of overseers and bureaucrats to procure those services continue to increase, adding to the paperwork and pressure felt by those who are going to have to deliver the services. How does the Minister expect this type of public sector reform to improve the productivity of those delivering services and also deliver savings to the taxpayer?

### **Deputy E.J. Noel:**

The Senator again makes some valid observations there but from our experience, just looking at the V.R.s (voluntary redundancies) that have come through in 2015, it is not all front line staff that are moving on from States employment. As I said, there are 21 manual workers and 4 were civil servants, so this change is happening across the piece, it is not just aimed at manual workers. We are very much looking at redesigning the whole of our services to reduce the public sector without damaging front line services.

### **3.1.8 Connétable C.H. Taylor of St. John:**

Could the Minister confirm that he has a business plan and is it on the web page?

### **Deputy E.J. Noel:**

Yes, this is a question I had 2 weeks ago from Deputy Wickenden. The department does have a business plan and no, it is not on the webpage. But it will be by June.

### **3.1.9 The Connétable of St. John:**

If the business plan is not available until June it should have been available last October or November as to what you would going to be doing this year. My concern is the fact it has not been

published means that we have no barometer in which to test what you are doing. I seriously question does the Minister have his own barometers to know what targets he is trying to meet and what he is trying to achieve?

**Deputy E.J. Noel:**

Very much so and that target was set by this Assembly. That target is to save £4.6 million on a year-on-year basis by 2019 and we are working through that. The reason why we have not published our business plan is because it is changing and we are having to change it as a result of the service reviews that we are doing.

**3.1.10 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Does the Minister accept that while he might have a mandate from this Assembly for the overall budget spend in the next few years and for the remainder of this States he does not have any backing from this Assembly for the specific and, I think, swingeing cuts that he is putting through in his department infrastructure? Moreover and more importantly, he does not have the mandate from the public because he never told the public and his fellow Ministers never told the public at election time that he was going to propose any of this, let alone any of the hardworking staff on the front line in his department. Does the Minister accept those 2 points and if so, will he go back to the drawing board and find other better ways to either make savings or perhaps even rethink fundamentally the tax and spending model of this Government, which is fundamentally unsustainable?

**Deputy E.J. Noel:**

We are making substantial savings over the next 4 years to reinvest: to reinvest in Health, to reinvest in Education and to reinvest into the growth of our economy and to reinvest in St. Helier. We have been tasked to make these savings. May I remind Members that in its previous guises, my department, be it T.T.S. (Transport and Technical Services) or Public Services, or Resources Recovery Board has, when asked, always stepped-up to the mark and made its savings. Up until now we have been able to do that from non-staff areas. We have cut all the surplus fat from the organisation to an extent where the only savings that we can make on a year-on-year basis are from our headcount.