

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
BY DEPUTY I. GARDINER OF ST. HELIER
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 12th APRIL 2021
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 19th APRIL 2021**

Question

Will the Minister provide the following information regarding Government expenditure on the OpenCell Covid-19 laboratory from 18th August 2020 to the present –

- (a) the cost of bringing OpenCell to Jersey;
- (b) the set-up costs;
- (c) any ongoing financial commitments (e.g. monthly rental and fees per test); and
- (d) any other payments that have been made since the time of set-up to the present?

Answer

Test processing provided by Open Cell is invoiced on an ‘as used’ basis. Our contract specifies a minimum of 150 tests per day. Therefore, the majority of costs are included in the ‘per test cost’.

- (a) Government did not fund any costs to bring Open Cell to Jersey.
- (b) Set-up costs funded by Government were limited to:
 - a. business licence required for Open Cell to operate here
 - b. legal costs pertaining to the ground lease
 - c. enabling works at the Aero Club site
 - d. ‘penetration testing’, which evaluates cyber security of the IT systems.
- (c) The ongoing financial commitment comprises the ground rent for the Aero Club and rental of 1 portacabin.
- (d) Other than a contribution towards initial accommodation costs, no other payments have been made since the time of set-up.

The questions raised are all subject to the existing contract and potential conditions of future awards of contract; as such, they are commercially sensitive. The total amount, for the year, is c£121k, or £131 per day – less than 1% of the mid-range projection of spend on test processing.

It should be noted that the cost per test for OpenCell is less than the cost per test processed in the UK, and processing covid swabs on-island also avoids significant transport costs.

In addition, on-island processing has increased our resilience – both in terms of avoiding off-island transport disruption and in reducing test turnaround times from c48 hours to an average of 12 hours. This creates significant benefits to individuals who are able to be released from isolation more quickly, and to the island as positive cases are identified much more quickly, leading to speedy contact tracing, isolation and testing of direct contacts.