

2024.11.12

3.12 Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement of the Chair of the States Employment Board regarding the rationale for moving the December pay date for States employees: (OQ.213/2024)

Will the Chair detail the rationale for moving the December pay date for States employees from mid-December to the end of the month and advise how this change aligns to the Government's commitment to supporting Islanders amid cost-of-living challenges during a period traditionally associated with increased expenses?

Deputy M.R. Ferey of St. Saviour (Vice Chair, States Employment Board - *rapporteur*):

I thank the Deputy for the question. It is important to emphasise that the request initially came from unions and employees, who were informed at the start of this year of the changes. We have sent update reminders throughout the year to ensure employees are fully aware. Public servants were first advised of the change on 1st February 2024. Prior to this, the unions and employment relations were in discussions to facilitate the change request. Further communications have been sent as reminders. We have placed reminders on pay slips to all public servants. We have provided manager updates to remind staff of this change, and we have arranged for November pay slips to confirm that if anyone is in financial hardship as a result of this change to please contact reward@gov.je before 6th December and we will be able to pay early, probably around 18th December. This will be communicated in a subsequent manager update to all staff to remind them that if they want to get paid early, they can do that on time.

3.12.1 Deputy K.M. Wilson:

I thank the Deputy for his response. We still have not heard the reason for why the unions requested it and I wondered if the Deputy could elaborate on that, please?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

Yes, when it comes to budgeting, employees like to be paid regular pay at regular time intervals. While I think historically people were paid early for Christmas, the flip side of that, or the downside, is it becomes 7 weeks until the next pay date. So, anyone who is on a tight budget finds it harder to budget when there is such a stretch into January to wait for the next pay date. Of course, there is a pre-Christmas spend but there is also a post-Christmas spend; January sales and the like.

3.12.2 Connétable K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour:

In times past, most people had a little put by for the Christmas period but, sadly, now people are living pay cheque to pay cheque. Does the Minister not feel that it should be paid earlier as normal so that people can buy their family's presents and give their families the Christmas lunch they all deserve?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

I thank my Connétable for that question. As I stated earlier, anyone who wants or needs to be paid earlier, and is a public servant, can apply for that separately. So, if any employee genuinely feels that it is going to affect their Christmas, then there is a mechanism to allow that. Of course, as States Members, we are part of that same process, so I would extend that invitation to any one of our number who feels that they want to get paid early to contact the chief people officer who can put that in place for them.

3.12.3 Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South:

I thank the Assistant Chair of the S.E.B. (States Employment Board) for working with the unions to bring this forward. Somebody who campaigned for this with my previous employment, being paid this late would have been very satisfactory for me. The one concern I do have, and I hope the Member can confirm, is that all processes have been checked to ensure that people are still paid on time due to the

continuous bank holidays we get through December, and obviously these can sometimes put a slight delay on payments. I just want to ensure that everybody gets paid on time.

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

Yes, the actual pay date will be 31st December, which is a working day, so it will land in people's accounts as usual.

[11:15]

3.12.4 Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf of St. Saviour:

I do not envy the position of the Deputy Chair, but does he understand the message that is being sent out? It is OK you can get paid early but you have to tell us you have financial problems. Does he not recognise and do those that he serves with on the States Employment Board and the officials recognise that there is a cost-of-living crisis? As a previous questioner has said, people are living pay cheque to pay cheque, and that there is likely a hidden number of people in this Island, civil servants, *et cetera*, who are going to simply be struggling over a period of festivity that otherwise will simply ... does he not have any compassion and feeling for the impact that this is having and just relying on a technocratic issue of revealing confidential information?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

I thank the Deputy for that question. I completely understand people who are struggling financially. In my previous role I dealt with people who are struggling financially on a daily basis, and that is why we have put in place a mechanism to allow anyone, whether they are struggling financially or not, to be paid early if they so wish. I just refer back to my previous answer where very often in my experience people struggle financially more in January than they do in December and having to wait 7 weeks for the next pay date, for most people, causes more hardship than actually being paid early.

3.12.5 Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

The Vice-Chair has said some new information, which he can reconfirm again very briefly, is that previously it was if you had financial issues you could ask to be paid early. That meant the confidentiality was broken. He said, and can he restate and confirm for the avoidance of any doubt, simply an email from any member of staff that says that they would like to be paid earlier will suffice for an early payment. Is that the case?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

That is correct.

3.12.6 Deputy K.M. Wilson:

I would ask if the Minister would consider just evaluating the effect of this, given the change, and if he could some give us some indication as to whether or not that would be something that the States Employment Board would be interested to evaluate.

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

Yes. I thank the Deputy for that question. It is indeed. Whenever there is a change made there are always going to be winners and losers and there is always going to be people that benefit from it and people that prefer the way it was. So, I will commit to undertaking a review in January of how that process has worked.