

27th September 2019

Government Plan consultation Submission

SOJDC

Although it is very much a part of the governmental activities and most large amounts of expenditure, it would appear from what I have learnt that SOJDC's revenues and expenditures as well as its capital transactions are incurred by an unelected third party board of directors who report them, not to the Assembly for approval but to the Treasury Minister. Whilst one can perhaps understand that this might be an efficient way of operating and placing great trust in the professionalism of the Board of SOJDC, there seems to be no reason as to why the Treasury Minister should not present (as a separate item but in the same level of detail as for the as 'normal' Departments) its Plan and estimates for the years of the Government Plan to the Assembly. This is because the Financial Accounts which SOJDC is obliged to publish are historical (presenting income and expenditure from the preceding year) and not budgets or estimates. The reasons for this are that the Island's Cash flow and borrowing ability can, as we have seen in the past, be implemented by SOJDC without any budgetary warning. Furthermore, it should also be budgeting dividends which should be included in the Island accounts. Whilst there is no reason to doubt the integrity of the third party board, it must be in its own interests as a wholly owned government organisation to provide this budget information and especially as it would not need to incur further work in order to do so and by so doing would improve transparency and inspire trust. It would also enable potential claims that it was acting unilaterally on behalf of interests outside the Assembly to be refuted since the Assembly would have approved their Plan. Also, should SOJDC's Plan and estimates reflect that its total value is to significantly exceed or miss expectations, the relevant asset 'Investment in Subsidiary' in the consolidated budget accounts would need to be adjusted up or down accordingly.

Population

Until the Panel developing a population policy delivers and has Assembly agreement to its proposal, the the finalisation of the whole Government Plan will be impossible. This Panel should sit full time until it has finished its work. At present it seems to be working on the normal, very leisurely basis that is customary. It should be informed that it is holding up the whole island planning process which is a serious matter (i.e. although one might feel sympathy for it, it should be reminded that for instance, in non governmental businesses, it would be quite normal in a crisis such as this for working to continue throughout the Christmas period - compensated for of course later in the year).

Consultation process

Connétable Michael Jackson was very helpful in explaining the Government's Planning process. He did this at my request but I am sure that 99% of the public have no idea as to how this works or indeed what they might be being consulted about in plain succinct language. In order to involve the public, a way must be found which presents the latter with data to which they can relate and thus be able to comment on. This would seem to me to be a project for the huge communications department that the islanders are paying highly for and who should be looking at matters such as this. The Dfl manages to place half page announcements of upcoming roadworks in the JEP: surely the Panel could highlight the upcoming bare bones of this much more important matter and its potential application to Islanders in a similar manner? Connétable Jackson commented however that his Panel did not fall within the bounds of the communications department. Perhaps this is something that might be looked into.

Michael du Pré
Chairman, Save Our Shoreline,