

STATES OF JERSEY



DRAFT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN ADDITION FOR 2017 – 2019 (P.68/2016) – SECOND AMENDMENT

**Lodged au Greffe on 30th August 2016
by Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier**

STATES GREFFE

DRAFT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN ADDITION FOR 2017 – 2019
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PARAGRAPH (a)(i) –

After the words “in **Summary Table B**,” insert the words “except that the net revenue expenditure of the Chief Minister’s Department shall be increased in 2019 by £84,000 to fund the continued provision of 2 posts within the Statistics Unit.”.

PARAGRAPH (a)(ii) –

After the words “as set out in **Summary Table C**”, insert the words “except that the total proposed central contingency allocation for 2019 be decreased by £84,000”.

DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER

REPORT

Of all the cuts which form the MTFP, this cut of 2 posts in the Statistics Unit appears to me to be the one that might best be described as “cutting off one’s nose to spite one’s face”. The fact is that whether the economic times are good or bad, the one thing that all governments need is sound, reliable and trusted statistics. We need to know where we are before we decide what direction to head in.

This was never more clearly demonstrated than by the actions taken by the Minister for Social Security in cutting £10 million from the support network for the poorest and most vulnerable, a matter of weeks before the Statistics Unit produced its Income Distribution Survey clearly showing that those in the lowest 20% had seen their incomes reduced by one-fifth over the past 5 years.

At a time of massive change in the public sector and in the middle of an enduring recession, there are significant consequences both in the short and the long term in reducing the quality and quantity of our economic and social information.

The loss of these 2 posts is serious and potentially damaging to the process of government. The loss of the first post, which has already occurred in 2016 following the promotion of one member of staff to another department, has resulted in the immediate cessation of the Business Tendency and Retail surveys. The production of the Jersey Annual Social Survey and the annual update on the UK/Jersey cost of living comparison will also cease.

The cut of a further post has even more serious consequences. As the years since the last Census increase, so does the difficulty of producing accurate population estimates. Without this member of staff, it is unlikely that we shall be able to produce reliable estimates on the growth of the population, and certainly not any analysis of the numbers and types of inward migrants and their impact on the economy.

The absence of such basic data will have an enormous impact on planning in almost every government department: from Housing, through Health, to Education. The number of houses and flats we need, the number of hospital beds and nurses, and the number of classrooms and indeed teachers we need, all rely on accurate figures on population.

The difficulties in measuring and analysing such essential information is made worse by the absence of a population policy and a functioning and accurate population register, which places increased pressure on the Statistics Unit to cover for failures elsewhere.

The potential reduction in the ability to produce reliable data has been decried by the Institute of Directors, the Chamber of Commerce, the Statistics Users Group and many others. There is no doubt in my mind that this is a cut too far and should and must be rejected.

Financial and manpower implications

Financial and manpower implications are as described in the proposition.

Re-issue Note

This amendment is re-issued again because there was an incorrect reference in the wording of the first part of the amendment, which has now been corrected.