

23.03.21

**1 Deputy M.R. Scott of the Chief Minister regarding the Connect I.T. Budget (OQ.57/2023)**

Given that £57 million of the Connect I.T. (information technology) budget has been spent on consultants and staff compared to £6 million spent on licences and software for Government's new procurement I.T. system, does the Chief Minister consider that greater technical knowledge is required within the Government workforce to adequately run and procure I.T. projects, and if so, what actions are being taken to address this?

**Deputy A. Curtis of St. Clement (Assistant Chief Minister - rapporteur):**

The Deputy has allowed for me to answer this. Lessons have been learnt by this Government and a maturing approach has been taken to simplify procurement. What we are doing is we are looking to take more control of programmes into Government so that we can provide a greater steer and more value to the citizens of Jersey. This approach is to use more internal business resources and technical expertise and we have evidenced this in the way that we have run different programmes more recently, including the procurement of the electronic patient record system, which is using a greater amount of S.M.E.s (small and medium enterprises) expertise from health staff and specialist consultants. Recently, under my instruction, we have changed the procurement method of the record transformation programme. We have moved away from the procurement of a single consortia to an approach that allows us to run as a Government the procurement of smaller consultancies and staff to allow Government to choose what it needs and to build long-term capability in this field. Commercial services have run specific events to educate on-Island suppliers and partners in the way in which the Government of Jersey manages and procures its I.T. and we are running a service, which is a 4-hour briefing this Wednesday, to encourage and to educate local I.T. procurement to help grow that area.

**Deputy M.R. Scott:**

I am not sure he has answered the question, the Deputy, in terms of is greater technical knowledge required within the Government workforce to adequately run and procure I.T. systems and, if so, what action is being taken to address this?

[10:45]

**Deputy A. Curtis:**

I feel I did answer that but I will be more specific. I have a lot of confidence in the team we have in our technical expertise. Large programmes are more than just the ability to understand the technical but it is also understanding the business requirements of a programme and it is a lot of the programme management beyond the technical expertise that we need. There have been a lot of lessons from how the former Government's procurement of the Connect programme have taken place but it is as much about understanding requirements and running programmes as it is technical expertise. That said, we are ongoing on a range of work to grow how we standardise and understand technical delivery in Government. That includes part of looking at the restructure of the Modernisation and Digital Department to better reflect how to run a modern technical organisation, so in that I believe we are addressing the technical need and shaping a department fit for the future.

**Deputy M.R. Scott:**

I had a supplementary.

**The Bailiff:**

I thought that was your supplementary, Deputy.

**Deputy M.R. Scott:**

No, that was a clarification. That was a clarification of the last ...

**The Bailiff:**

Well points of clarification do not arise during question time but if you had asked me for a ruling as to whether the first answer addressed your question, which you are able to do, then the answer is I would rule that probably it did not. So, yes, I will afford you a supplementary question.

**3.1.1 Deputy M.R. Scott:**

Could I just clarify with the Deputy in terms of his answer whether he is saying that more training of existing staff is being sought rather than recruitment of staff with more technical knowledge?

**Deputy A. Curtis:**

The answer is it is a bit of both. Training and the reskilling of our internal existing staff is essential, not just so that we can retain them but so that we can deliver more with the same team and a team that is really encouraged. One area where they are looking at staff training is within the area of enterprise architecture. The Government of Jersey follows the T.O.G.A.F. (The Open Group Architecture Framework) scheme. There are not many of those but there is ongoing work to skill internal resources in enterprise architecture as well as a range of other areas.

**3.1.2 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier South:**

Is it the Assistant Minister's assessment of this project to date, given the very large amounts of money that has been spent on it, that successive Governments were ripped off?

**Deputy A. Curtis:**

I thank the Deputy for his question. I think the Government has not been a very mature procurer of technology and programmes, as I referenced in my original answer. What we do need, as we move forward and as we mature, is to select partners and providers who understand that, who, when we tell them we are a learning organisation, respect that and are a trusting partner and a trusted adviser into Government who do not play us, to use more blunt words. I trust that we will be looking in procurement as intelligent customers for providers who have ours and the people of Jersey's interests at heart and deliver and help us mature together.

**3.1.3 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:**

That sounded like a yes, I think. Can the Assistant Minister therefore explain to the Assembly what measures he will be putting in place to ensure that there is good value for money on any further spend that there is on updating the Government's I.T. infrastructure to ensure that for the money we spend on it we get results and improvements in systems and improvements in how those who use it get to experience it? Could he enlighten the Assembly as to what measures he will be putting in place to deliver on that?

**Deputy A. Curtis:**

I think there is more than I can answer in about 90 seconds here, and I am sure the Deputy will enjoy a briefing to the C.S.S.P. (Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel) this week. The first part is looking at what you procure and when you procure it. As part of the onward digital strategy for how we provide services, we need to, in essence, get our ducks in a row as to what are the services that are required to avoid duplication. So, building a system that uses address records, we should be building with consistency in mind so that citizens' data is commonly applied and that saves in further deployments of new pieces of software. But I think a large part of this is how Government procures. As I said, with the record transformation programme, the Government went out for a request for information on the basis that it would procure from a consortia. Now while that might feel like a low risk, I think the phrase is sometimes: "No one got fired for using a large consultancy." Being an intelligent customer means you can go to providers directly, you have a lower margin on the resources coming into Government, so there are a number of ways, whether it be through our procurement, through how we prioritise what we need as a digital service, how we build that as well, and that is all quite a large packet of work that is ongoing. Decisions have been made to avoid excess spend already.