

# STATES OF JERSEY



## **ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2009 (P.113/2008): TENTH AMENDMENT (P.113/2008 Amd.(10)) – COMMENTS**

---

**Presented to the States on 16th September 2008  
by the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture**

---

**STATES GREFFE**

## COMMENTS

Deputy Reed is proposing in part (a) of his amendment to the Annual Business Plan that *'the appropriate funding (be) identified and provided for in order to provide an integrated and equitable early years education for all three to four year-olds'*. The Council of Ministers' recommended course of action in this connection is set out in its amendment to the Annual Business Plan: 'Annual Business Plan 2009 (P.113/2008): fourth amendment', lodged "au Greffe" on 2nd September 2008, i.e. the same day as the amendment proposed by Deputy Reed. The Council is proposing that the revenue expenditure of the Education, Sport and Culture Department be increased by specified amounts over the period 2009–2013 in order to *"extend opportunities for children who attain the age of 4 years between 1st September and 31st August in the year before commencing statutory education"*.

Both Deputy Reed and the Council of Ministers would appear to share the view that nursery education for all three to four year-olds is a desirable objective, and that this should be supported by public funding. The principal difference between the 2 parties rests with the proposed method of funding: the Council of Ministers is proposing that additional funding should be provided to enable nursery education to be provided to all three to four year-olds, whereas Deputy Reed is recommending that the necessary funds for 2010 onwards should be found from within existing forecast budgets.

Whilst I would share the Deputy's view that every effort should be made to contain expenditure within existing limits, I should point out that this is a new, additional element of expenditure that it not currently catered for within the budget for Education, Sport and Culture. The Council of Ministers has implemented a strict prioritisation process on any additional funding requirements, and it is not considered that there is sufficient flexibility within the ESC budget to meet the additional costs of the early years education. The costs of implementation are set out in the Council's amendment, and they average approximately £1.6 million a year during the period 2010–2013.

In support of his amendment, Deputy Reed states in his report that detailed costings need to be undertaken in order to allow for funding to be identified. This work has in fact been undertaken, and detailed information on the proposed funding arrangements and costings is contained in the report accompanying the Council's amendment.

Part (b) of Deputy Reed's amendment concerns the funding of early years education during the period September – December 2009, and it is proposed in his amendment that the necessary funds should be found from the spending reductions suggested in the Comptroller and Auditor General's report entitled 'Emerging Issues'. In his accompanying report, Deputy Reed highlights those suggested options which have been identified by the Comptroller and Auditor General as being potential 'short-term' savings, i.e. reductions that could be implemented in 2009. Examples of these potential short-term savings include a reduction of £250,000 from the budget for the Youth Service and a reduction of the same amount from the budget for Highlands College.

The suggested options in the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General relating to Education, Sport and Culture are currently being given careful consideration, and responses to all these options will be prepared and made publicly available. At this stage, however, I believe it would be premature for States members to take a decision on the merits or otherwise of individual options. It is possible that some or all of the proposed reductions will be achievable, but consideration also needs to be given as to whether these reductions are desirable and/or acceptable. The Comptroller and Auditor General comments on this point in paragraph 21 of his report, where he states that –

*'The fact that these opportunities for reductions in expenditure have been identified does not imply either that I recommend the implementation of all of them or that in practice they would prove straightforward to implement or acceptable to the Island's population'.*

In my response to the Comptroller and Auditor General's suggested options I will be addressing these wider issues, and I would ask that States members allow time for these responses to be prepared and published. A full and measured debate can then take place on the Comptroller and Auditor's General's suggested options, taking into account all relevant factors and information. In the meantime, I would urge members to support the amendment of the Council of Ministers, which will allow for funding to be set aside for early years education, both during the period September – December 2009 and from 2010 onwards.