

STATES OF JERSEY



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

PARAGRAPH (a)(i) –

After the words “in **Summary Table B**,” insert the words “except that the net revenue expenditure of the Education Department shall be increased for 2018 and 2019 by £240,000 and £480,000 respectively by not pre-empting through a States’ decision the proposed review of terms and conditions for teachers”.

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 2018 be decreased by £240,000 and by £480,000 in 2019”.

DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER

REPORT

The Minister for Education has proposed a “review of terms and conditions for newly qualified teachers” (NQT) which he believes will produce “efficiency” savings of the order of £500,000 by 2019.

In response to written question 9549 asked by me, he gave the following justification –

“The Draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Addition for 2017–19 identifies £240,000 of savings in 2018 and £480,000 in 2019 from a review of terms and conditions for newly qualified teachers.

There is an over-supply of primary school teachers in Jersey, and a shortage in some subjects at secondary level, and a reduction in the starting salaries of NQT would give the Education Department the flexibility to offer incentives in harder to recruit areas.

Any proposal is, however, not finalised as variations to the terms and conditions of States employees are subject to formal negotiation processes with our unions. As such, proposals will be fully discussed with the appropriate negotiating bodies (NASUWT and NUT), thus fulfilling the continued commitment to collective bargaining. Such proposals will form part of a wider Teachers’ Workforce Modernisation project (TWFM) that will evaluate all elements of the employment package in the context of local and UK benchmarks as well as comparisons within the States of Jersey.

This project is due to commence soon and will be conducted in partnership with our unions.

A comparison with salaries paid to teachers in maintained schools in England does show a significant differential with Jersey; however, a host of other factors will be considered during the Teachers’ Workforce Modernisation project including the other associated terms and conditions of teachers, local benchmarks and the need to provide equal pay for work of equal value across the public sector.”

In answer to question 9543 to Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier, he added –

“Adjusting the Jersey NQT starting wage so that there is a greater differential between pay levels would also create a greater financial incentive for teachers to take on positions with greater responsibility.

The Education Minister is not directly involved with the pay and conditions of school staff. This responsibility rests with the States’ Employment Board. However, any changes to the terms of employment would be the subject of full and appropriate consultation with the teaching unions, with which the Department enjoys constructive, positive relationships.”

To suggest such a drastic cut to NQT salaries, of the order of an £8,000 reduction in annual salary, at a time when there has been a large fall in the numbers of applicants to teaching degrees in the UK which is predicted to continue, many would say is extremely rash.

To set out the results of the “review” in advance of any negotiations is to pre-empt the decision-making process. Salary levels throughout the teaching force are the result of many years of complex negotiations and trade-offs in the process known as free collective bargaining. To set out an end point of half a million pounds of savings suggests that any bargaining that takes place will be far from “free”.

Over the years there has been a deliberate intention to weight pay awards to new entrants and those in the early part of their careers in order to compensate for the high housing costs for younger entrants on coming to Jersey.

To suggest that the figures in the MTFP are not “finalised” is misleading. Whilst it may only be an aspiration before the MTFP is adopted by the States, once it is accepted, it becomes an integral part of the Plan. In minutes of the meeting at which the proposed education budget savings were presented to teacher representatives, the Director of Education gave an indication of the status of these “proposals” and the way in which they might be treated in negotiation, as follows –

“Questions were raised about the status of the savings. JD confirmed these are proposals at this time and will remain so until the MTFP debate in September. JD also reiterated that as the cash limit has been set if certain proposals are not delivered then the department will be required to find savings elsewhere, all alternatively will have to reduce the growth that has now been made available.”

“JD confirmed that the final draft of the plan included a proposal to reduce the starting salary for newly qualified teachers so that it was more in line with London. This saving would give the department budget flexibility and enable them to offer incentives for teachers in shortage areas. Concern was expressed and MM stated that this was, in effect, rewriting the pay scales so consultation and negotiation would have to take place. This was acknowledged.”

It seems clear to me that if the States were to accept the figure of £480,000 savings to be made from NQT salary scales, then this would pre-empt any possibility of proper open negotiations. It would instead become a stick with which to beat the negotiators. After several years of pay freezes and pay restraint, it is difficult to see how teachers would willingly accept pay reductions. The States’ Employment Board should be entering negotiations freely and not with the constraint of a States’ decision already made.

Financial and manpower implications

There are no direct financial or manpower implications for the States arising from the adoption of this amendment.

Re-issue Note

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