

STATES OF JERSEY



DRAFT ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2010 (P.117/2009): ELEVENTH AMENDMENT (P.117/2009 Amd.(11)) – COMMENTS

**Presented to the States on 21st September 2009
by the Council of Ministers**

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

The Council of Ministers opposes this amendment.

Some Members may not be fully aware of the range of activities undertaken by the Communications Unit, some of which are set out later in this note.

The role of the Communications Unit is central to the States' objective of connecting more closely with the public and much of its work is to support departments in achieving this objective.

The Unit has no input into decision-making. Its aim is to explain policy decisions to the public and the media, simply and clearly. It also plays a vital part in the consultation process of "white and green papers".

Prior to establishing the Communications Unit in May 2006, the States spent more than £250,000 per annum on consultancy and Committee/Department specific arrangements to support communications activities. In addition to this, consultancy services were employed to support major initiatives.

Our full-time team of five communications professionals has both the capacity and expertise to provide a wide range of services to all Departments, not just the Executive, providing practical help and advice on public consultation, internal and external communications.

In terms of support for the States Assembly, Scrutiny has, in the past, employed the services of local PR agencies to help with its engagement and media work. Its officers are generally responsible for managing public engagement, consultations and opinion surveys.

Disbanding the Team would not result in any savings, as consultancy firms would have to be used to deliver expert support. These costs would have to be met by departments from within their cost limits and would therefore require further savings to be made by departments. In addition, redundancy costs would be incurred.

It is more efficient and cost effective to have a central, in-house team of experts than to expect similar results from other States' officers whose jobs and staff are entirely different or to use more expensive, external resources who do not know the organisation. The majority of public and large private sector organisations have their own in-house communications teams for this reason, including the governments in both Guernsey and the Isle of Man.

With regard to efficiency savings, the Team has found its share of the pro-rata savings. It is continuously looking at ways to deliver services more efficiently and effectively.

Financial implications

The amendment proposes a saving of £203,000 from disbanding the Communications Unit. In reality, if the Unit was to be disbanded departments would incur additional costs employing their own staff and external consultants.

There would also be redundancy costs which would offset the savings in 2010.

Background

Role of the Communications Unit

- engaging with, consulting and informing the public, of the major policies of the Council of Ministers and why these policies are being implemented;
- advising departments how to provide clear, user-friendly information about States services. A set of [editorial guidelines](#) are available for staff to follow (which received the Crystal Mark of approval from the Plain English Campaign) and Comms staff can proof-read and check written information to ensure it uses language islanders can understand;
- advising on the writing of green papers, white papers and other consultation documents and advising departments on methods of consultation to use in the development of major policies. As Jersey's government tries to engage islanders in the decision-making process, this aspect of the unit's work is growing in volume and importance;
- helping those involved in major policy issues to plan how to communicate their policies, putting public understanding first;
- delivering training for staff on media awareness, consultation methods and general communications; running meetings and training sessions for a network of department representatives whose work includes communication and public consultation;
- overseeing the re-design and development of the States of Jersey website and intranet;
- facilitating internal communications within and between departments – the staff survey, *Have our Say*, made it clear staff want more information. Effective change, including change introduced as part of efficiency savings, requires clear communication;
- producing and editing newsletters (in-house) such as the staff newsletter, *Changing States*, , and other publications for departments as required e.g. – ICR, Meet the Buyer, BaSS, Swine Flu, GST Notes (for businesses); Population policy;
- leading public awareness campaigns, liaising with design agencies, negotiating discounts, advising on commissioning booklets/posters/leaflets/adverts for departments and ensuring public awareness campaigns and consultations meet professional standards – e.g. Early Years, [Strategic Plan](#), RHA, [Advance to Work](#);
- producing leaflets and posters (in-house) for public awareness campaigns e.g. [Swine Flu](#), [Reciprocal Health Agreement Charges](#); arranging translations into Polish and Portuguese;
- designing and producing e-surveys (in-house) for departments who want to research public opinion as part of their consultations – e.g. speed limits – 800

responses; environmental taxes – 170 responses; review of software for FACE a HSS software – (internal); Integrated Care Records reader survey (internal); training needs analysis for HSS (internal); seeking views from people on the consultation register;

- liaising with local and U.K. media, organising press conferences and media briefings, writing articles on request, answering *ad hoc* queries;
- monitoring news coverage in local and national media, correcting factual errors.