

STATES OF JERSEY



BUDGET 2005: THIRD AMENDMENTS (P.212/2004) – COMMENTS

**Presented to the States on 7th December 2004
by the Policy and Resources Committee**

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

The Committee opposes the amendment on the grounds that it undermines the States decision to adopt the Strategic Plan, which increased the demand for communication support across the States. The Committee is already required to deliver reductions in services and very significant efficiency savings not only in support of its own budget, but also in support of other Committees through the provision of unified Information Technology and Human Resources services which are expected to deliver major efficiency savings for the States as a whole.

Role of communications in the States of Jersey

In his report the Connétable of St. Helier agrees that there are: 'probably good arguments that can be made for employing consultants to provide effective communication'.

The Strategic Plan places significantly increased demands on the Committee to improve and increase communications. There are 3 specific actions, agreed by the States Assembly during the Strategic Plan debate, which are designed to improve communication between the States and the public and to enable a greater awareness of public perception.

Strategic Aim 8.3.1

Improve overall communication/consultation with the public through a range of media and events

Strategic Aim 8.3.2

Listen to public feeling and be willing to explain the rationale behind difficult decisions

Strategic Aim 8.3.3

Develop a more consultative approach to governance and encourage public participation in policy-making

There are a number of other requirements in the Strategic Plan which are set out in Annex 1. Overall the States Assembly has decided that there is a very significant requirement for communications support across the States.

Role of the Communications Unit

There appears to be some misunderstanding about the purpose of the Communications Unit. It is not a team of staff employed by the Committee. It is made up of 2 people who are supplying their services to the States solely for the purpose of supporting the implementation of the States strategic plan. These 2 people are working under fixed-term service contracts to agreed performance standards. A third person provides support as and when required on the basis of a pre-determined hourly rate.

In June 2003 the Committee considered the need to improve communications with the public and decided that they needed additional support.

After a competitive tendering exercise a consultancy contract was awarded. The decision was shared with Presidents and all members of the States were informed.

Since then, very significant improvements have been achieved, including a number of major consultation exercises, among which are Imagine Jersey, the Fiscal Strategy, the Waste Strategy, the economic growth plan and others. The service has not only been to Policy and Resources, but at least 5 other Committees.

Other major work has been in support of internal communications, the creation of a unified States website, the creation of a more unified image for the States of Jersey and generally improving co-ordination. The demands for support have grown to the extent that one person cannot meet all of the requests for support, particularly in the light of the increased demands of the Strategic Plan.

The Committee reviewed its budget in order to determine how the additional demands of the States could be met. The Committee determined that by terminating a contract with a London-based consultancy a saving would be made, as well as making sufficient resources available to meet the demands of the Strategic Plan – including requests for support from other Committees. The positive and accurate reporting on Jersey in a recent Financial Times supplement on the Channel Islands reflects the success that is made possible when resources are available to provide the information required by such international media organisations.

The Committee will be reviewing the requirements for a Communications Unit in support of the Council of Ministers before July 2005.

The proposed amendment to the 2005 Budget

In his report the Connétable of St. Helier says the primary justifications for the proposed reduction in funding are that –

- this item of expenditure was not included in the fundamental Spending Review process; and
- there is no reference to it either in the budget book or its annex.

Each of these criticisms is easily answered –

1. ***‘There is no reference to it either in the budget book or its annex.’***

This is not correct: there is direct reference in both volumes. The Policy and Resources section in the budget book at page 7 identifies that the Committee is taking direct responsibility for specific priorities such as Community Development, International Personality, Government Reform and Organisation Development. None of these could be delivered without very effective communications support. Each of them is set out in more detail in the Strategic Plan which identifies clearly and directly how the Committee will lead on communications. The States agreed the Strategic Plan in June and a selection of the aims are set out in the Annex to this Report.

The annex to the budget starts out with the Policy and Resources Committee analysis. It could not be clearer or more specific. At page 4 the very first item at the top of the page states that the Performance Measure is “Introduction of a co-ordinated communications strategy”.

2. ***‘It was not included in the Fundamental Spending Review process.’***

The majority of items in the States budget are not specifically included in the FSR process. The specified items were in 3 categories –

- bids for increased spending in order to deliver new or additional services or functions;
- service reductions, where a specific policy decision would be required to reduce a service in order to cut spending;
- efficiencies where targets were set for corporate and service spending reductions by delivering the same level of service or function more efficiently.

The judgement has been made that the increased levels of activity demanded by the Strategic Plan can be met from within the Committee’s existing budget by re-arranging the means of delivery. Thus a pre-existing contract has been terminated and replaced by a considerably more cost-effective contract arrangement which will not only meet the Strategic Plan requirements, but produce a significant saving towards the Committee’s efficiency target of £121,500.

The Committee is also required to deliver the maximum level of efficiency savings by re-organising the corporate ICT and HR services across the states. This will benefit other Committees by reducing their efficiency savings.

If the Committee's budget is cut by a further £100,000 then other services will have to be reduced.

SPECIFIC STRATEGIC PLAN AIMS REQUIRING COMMUNICATION SUPPORT BY THE POLICY AND RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

The following specific aims require professional communications support.

- 5.1.1 Consult with young people in planning activities and facilities that directly impact on their lives.
- 6.1.2 Encourage greater appreciation and celebration of the diverse nature of Jersey Society and of the 'new' Jersey Identity.
- 6.1.4 Promote pride in Jersey amongst those who live and work in the Island.
- 6.2.2 Ensure that information is communicated in ways which reach all members of the community.
- 7.2.1 Develop a co-ordinated marketing and communications strategy which will help to raise Jersey's profile and enhance the Island's international personality.
- 8.3.1 Improve overall communication/consultation with the public through a range of media and events.
- 8.3.2 Listen to public feeling and be willing to explain the rationale behind difficult decisions.
- 8.3.3 Develop a more consultative approach to governance and encourage public participation in policy-making.
- 8.4.2 Require the use of formal consultation papers as policy develops to provide an opportunity for input.
- 9.1.5 Ensure that the States' workforce recognises and shares States' priorities.

-

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY COMMUNICATIONS UNIT

- Design, develop and deliver the communications aims set out in the Strategic Plan across the States.
- Plan, organise and deliver Imagine Jersey I and II.
- Plan and organise major consultation processes and events –
 - Fiscal Strategy
 - Migration Strategy
 - Economic Growth Plan
 - Sustainable Transport Strategy
 - Waste Strategy etc.
- Support the Royal visit, and other high profile state or political visits, managing the demands and activities of the national and local media to ensure the visits run smoothly.
- Produce press releases on request.
Provide communications support to the Jersey contribution to the British Irish Council.
Provide communications support for the public sector change programme.
Provide communications support for the gov.je development programme.
Advise on the production and printing of documents and booklets to ensure best value.
Advise on effective consultative processes to ensure that public confidence is established in the States intention to reconnect the community and the States of Jersey.
Act as a point of contact for on-Island and off-Island media requests.

When requested –

- Assess and, if necessary, advise on the redrafting of technical documents to ensure that they are easy to read and understandable to all sections of the Island community.
- Advise on appropriate methods of consultation to ensure that effective dialogue is possible between States Members and the community.
- Produce standardised publication guidelines, templates etc. and help staff implement them.
- Work with IT staff to improve the content and accessibility of information on the web.
- Review internal communications processes to help improve communication across the States with staff. A major contribution to the change programme.
- Liaise with local and national media to make it easier for them to contact politicians and senior staff , ensuring easy access and prompt responses.
- Provide advice to all departments when requested on any of the above or any other matters which will improve clarity of communication with the public or staff.
- Support any major events in order to ensure that they run smoothly and so that the media is given access – wherever possible – to key participants.