

2015.03.10

#### **4.7 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of the Chief Minister regarding the implementation of e-Government:**

Could the Minister explain to the Assembly precisely whether anything has gone wrong with the implementation of e-Government and, if so, what?

##### **Senator I.J. Gorst (The Chief Minister):**

e-Government remains integral to public sector reform and it has my full support as sponsor of the programme. Providing efficient online services to our citizens is essential if we are to maintain competitiveness in an increasingly global economy and it is what Islanders expect. The process of engaging a lead partner has been paused while we refocus our approach to implementation, the work, of course, that has already been done remains relevant to the continuing programme.

##### **4.7.1 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:**

Does he agree with Digital Jersey's Mark Loane, who, on his blog site, said that this whole project has suffered from a lack of leadership and ownership, and even went so far as to call it inadequate and shameful?

##### **Senator I.J. Gorst:**

No, I do not. I have subsequently spoken with the writer of that blog. There are certain things that we disagree on but what we do agree on is that it is a critically important programme and it needs greater focus and probably, over time, is going to require greater resources - that is financial resources - to ensure that this process is speeded-up.

##### **4.7.2 Deputy T.A. Vallois of St. John:**

In the media the Chief Minister stated that there were personal issues in regard to the e-Government project; would he care to explain exactly what those personal issues are?

##### **Senator I.J. Gorst:**

No, I would not. This is part of the problem, I think, sometimes with what happens in Government. We get fixated on personalities rather than dealing with delivering policy and delivering programmes and all working together for the common good.

##### **4.7.3 The Deputy of St. John:**

Supplementary? Does the Chief Minister therefore think it is appropriate to state in the media that part of the reason for the problems with e-Government are personal issues?

##### **Senator I.J. Gorst:**

I did not state that. I said there were or had been and I think that the Deputy's initial opening question referred to a blog that spoke about personalities. That is what I was referring to.

##### **4.7.4 Connétable J.E. Le Maistre of Grouville:**

Senator Maclean in November 2013 said that less than 8 per cent of our transactions, or the government's transactions, were done online. At the last sitting he said exactly the same thing, that is 14 months later and no progress has been made. Would the Chief Minister accept that this is simply not good enough?

[10:30]

##### **Senator I.J. Gorst:**

A lot of progress has been made but just because the underlying number is not yet improved... having said that, there probably is more action and activity, I should say, sorry, on the new and improved government website but this is a programme which takes time. The Connétable knows

that our digital engagement with the community, I would agree, is nowhere near where we want it to be and if we are to deliver an efficient digitally led public service then we need to speed this programme up.

#### **4.7.5 The Connétable of Grouville:**

The target set in 2013 was 75 per cent, would the Chief Minister set a timeframe by which that will be achieved?

#### **Senator I.J. Gorst:**

I do not have a timeframe with me today but that is part of the pause and the rethinking is developing a timetable so that we can be held to account for delivery.

#### **4.7.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Can the Minister state in direct terms how much has been spent before the pause on this particular initiative? In particular, whether any disbursements have been made to the partners in this scheme, either at Atos or Capita, which I believe are the 2 in the hunt. What has been spent so far?

#### **Senator I.J. Gorst:**

I do not have the detailed budget figures in front of me but the Deputy will know that there was a written answer provided by the Minister for Treasury and Resources which gives the combined spending of the various phases to date. The important thing, of course, is that all that work remains valid and will be used going forward.

#### **4.7.7 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Can the Chief Minister explain why there is, in the Digital Jersey terms and conditions of membership, a so-called non-disparagement clause, which is clause 8, saying that users shall during and after the participation in and use of the facilities refrain from making any statements or comments of a defamatory or disparaging nature to any third party regarding Digital Jersey or any officers, directors, employees, personnel, agents, policies, services or products other than those to comply with the law?

#### **Senator I.J. Gorst:**

I cannot say why that was put in but it sounds eminently sensible to me.

#### **4.7.8 Deputy M. Tadier:**

So the Minister who did himself go to the Charlie Hebdo rally in Jersey to fight for freedom of expression supports ... the defamatory clauses, of course, are completely understandable but non-disparagement. So if there are problems with Digital Jersey or related, a member is not allowed to say that because that could be interpreted as being disparaging to Digital Jersey. One has to say that everything is rosy in the garden or one's membership can be revoked and discipline action can happen. Is that really a wise state of affairs? Is it even human rights compliant, more to the point?

#### **Senator I.J. Gorst:**

I am not one to pass judgment on whether it is human rights compliant. We would need legal advice to do that. I do not see, sitting here, that it would be. The Deputy is trying to suggest that such a clause means that those on Digital Jersey will not make negative comments or critical observations about certain programmes. Yet the Deputy that asked the initial question read out a blog from such a person who is on the board of Digital Jersey. I have no problem with constructive engagement. I will not agree with everything that perhaps is said about a government programme but I have no problem with that whatsoever. Therefore I do not think that that clause limits conversation or criticism in the way the Deputy is suggesting.

#### **Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

The Constable of Grouville asked my question through a supplementary question, so I will pass.

**4.7.9 Deputy A.D. Lewis:**

With the delay, what is the new timeline that the Chief Minister expects for the roll-out of e-Government and if it is delayed, as it is, is there any additional cost, and is it significant? Also, this obviously has an impact on the whole structure and change of the States and there will be an impact on costs there because we will not be able to reform the States as quickly as some would like. Could the Minister advise as to what the whole knock-on effect of this delay is and how does it affect the reform of the States?

**Senator I.J. Gorst:**

I believe the knock-on effect is that we are going to have an improved service, that we are going to be able to do it in an appropriate manner, learning from elsewhere in the world. Not least of which is the U.K.'s Government digital services, which is recognised around the world as the best approach to take. Delivering I.T. (information technology) and technology programmes has changed and is constantly changing from the all-encompassing programme that tries to get perfection before you have even started and decide what that perfection is, meanwhile technology and solutions have moved on and one is left in not the place that one wishes to be. If you take an incremental approach, as they have done in the United Kingdom, and you are able to respond to technological changes and make up dates and improvements as you go along, that is a far better approach and that is an approach that we will be taking to implementation. But the simple truth of the matter remains that we need to enhance our digital and technological provisions so that members of our community can engage with us via technology because I believe that that is what the public want.

**Deputy A.D. Lewis:**

They do, but what is the timescale?

**Senator I.J. Gorst:**

I answered that question when the Connétable of Grouville asked it of me and that is part of the pause programme that we will be delivering a timescale so that we can be held to account.

**4.7.10 Connétable J. Gallichan of St. Mary:**

Is the Chief Minister still supportive of the role of the Parishes as key players in delivering e-Government and, further, is he aware that although some elements of the programme may have paused, as he said, the Constables are still working fully with senior deliverers of the programme within the department to ensure we get as many quick wins as possible delivered for the public as soon as possible?

**Senator I.J. Gorst:**

Absolutely, and of course I do not think any Member of this Assembly would expect any Connétable to have missed a beat. They are continuing to work with officers in the department and they provide, or will provide, a very important front line to digital provision right across our community.

**4.7.11 The Deputy of St. John:**

Could the Chief Minister advise who was the accounting officer and who will be the accounting office for the implementation of e-Government?

**Senator I.J. Gorst:**

With regards to the accounting officer, I do not think there is any change.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Can the Chief Minister explain who the accounting officer is then?

**Senator I.J. Gorst:**

The Chief Executive of the States.

**4.7.12 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:**

My final supplementary I think has already been asked twice, that was about the timetable. So since we do not know what the timetable is, do we know when there will be a timetable? Could I ask for a timetable for the timetable?

**Senator I.J. Gorst:**

This is absolutely the right thing to do. Technology is changing all around us and we need to make sure that we are responding to that, that we are going in the right direction and that we are applying our resources appropriately. If things had gone wrong, then I would have expected Members to be getting excited in the way that they are this morning, but things have not gone wrong. I am absolutely committed to delivering this programme. As the Connétable of St. Mary rightly says, work continues and work with the Parishes is continuing. So it seems to me that we are trying to create a problem where there is no problem and therefore, of course, I will not be offering to provide a timetable of when I am going to provide a timetable. That would be a complete waste of resources and officers' time.