

STATES OF JERSEY

Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel Cultural Strategy Review

MONDAY, 4th OCTOBER 2010

Panel:

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier of St. Saviour (Chairman)

Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour

Witnesses:

Executive Director, Société Jersiaise

President, Société Jersiaise

Also present:

Ms. S. Power (Scrutiny Officer)

[10:48]

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier of St. Helier (Chairman):

Are you new to scrutiny, both of you?

Executive Director, Société Jersiaise:

Totally.

President, Société Jersiaise:

Yes.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Okay, so the statement there is for you to read, the one in the middle. It essentially boils down to the fact if you tell us the truth you are protected.

Executive Director, Société Jersiaise:

I am glad to hear that.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Well, you are protected until you leave this room. I do not know what happens to you after that. Okay, are you ready? Okay, I would like to welcome you all to this formal scrutiny session of the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel. This is a sort of halfway house scrutiny, usually we send out a big invite and say: “If you want to tell us something please come” and then we target certain groups. But on this one we are really doing a health check on the cultural strategy, just a little health check to find out where it is at and what some of the key players think of its progress or lack of progress, as the case may be. That is really what this scrutiny is about so, although it is a contradiction in a way, it is a faster scrutiny than we have been used to. So I will introduce myself, Roy Le Hérissier, Chairman, Deputy of St. Saviour.

Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:

Good morning, Deputy Jeremy Maçon of St. Saviour.

Executive Director, Société Jersiaise:

Official title Executive Director of the Société Jersiaise.

President, Société Jersiaise:

President of the Société Jersiaise.

Ms. S. Powers

Sam Powers, Scrutiny Officer.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, thank you very much and, as I said, you have read the little statement for witnesses. So thank you very much for coming. As you can see from the questions they are fairly broad but we obviously generated a fair amount of material at the last session when we were talking about the broader issues that the Minister and his assistant deals with. So to kick off, can you outline your relationship with the Department of Education, Sport and Culture?

President, Société Jersiaise:

We do not have a formal relationship with Education, Sport and Culture but we are on very good relations with the organisation generally and we work closely with some of the branches. For example, the office of the Jersiaise and the libraries and indirectly through the Heritage Trust.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

As we know, there has been a lot of emphasis lately placed upon the Heritage Trust, its financial issues and its future and so forth. In looking at the way the Heritage Trust situation has developed has that required you to talk more to the departments or do you talk more directly to the Heritage Trust? How has that situation impacted on you?

President, Société Jersiaise:

Well we have deliberately made an effort to talk directly to the department, directly to the officers and directly to the Minister and, in fact, they have come to us as well. It

has been a 2 way increase in inter-relationship and hopefully the understanding between the organisations is increased considerably.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Part of the cultural strategy - a huge part of it - has been about better communication between organisations and the department and also between different heritage groups and art groups and things like that. The department argues that it is an enabler in order to achieve better communication, in one particular way. Have you found the department has been an enabler in that sense?

President, Société Jersiaise:

It has been an enabler with regard to the Heritage Trust but to the other organisations we have always had a very good relationship. That applies to the Heritage Trust as well, we have been very close to them since their inauguration. We appreciate any support we get in the communications but since 2005, when the strategy was set up, the relationships have not really changed in any way but they have consolidated, I think especially with the Heritage Trust and with the National Trust for Jersey. But previously we have always had a good relationship with them and a lot of interaction.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

In a way we had on paper, and in practice, a wonderful model of cooperation around Hamptonne where the 3 of you were sort of bound together, so to speak, in an arrangement. Obviously Hamptonne has suffered as a result of the cuts, how has that impacted upon you?

President, Société Jersiaise:

Well, it has caused us quite a lot of frustration because it was an agreement in fact and there were legal implications as well and we found that having the usufruct and putting out the administration to a third party changed our relationship with the first party, the actual owner of the real estate which that was the National Trust. But we have talked about it, all 3 organisations have talked, always talked, and are talking still and we are going to go on talking together for the benefit of Hamptonne.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Do you feel you were properly consulted at all steps to do with the decision to severely curtail its opening hours?

President, Société Jersiaise:

We were consulted to a certain extent, we did not have a lot of input into it. Communication was fairly good but decisions had to be made and they had to be made before they were published and that left us sometimes a little bit surprised at some of the decisions that were made, but they were, to an extent, commercial decisions and the Société Jersiaise is in no way a commercial organisation, although we have to be business like in our financial affairs. We do not have a commercial motive.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

If we could move on to a slightly different area now. How does the Société allocate the annual grant received from the department?

President, Société Jersiaise:

We get a grant of just over £40,000 which is dispersed to us by the Heritage Trust and it has certain obligations on us. One is to provide us a general service and to allow the heritage trust to use our facilities freely. That includes our 2 archives we have in Pier Road, our photographic archive which is frequently used and that is run by a professional archivist and we have a library which contains quite a lot of Jersey's early archive material which is referred to and a general library. That is freely available to the Heritage Trust and both of which are or should be employing full time professionals. At the moment, due to wastage, we have not replaced the librarian, we would like to as soon as we can. Not because there are no librarians around without employment but because we have not the finance to do it at the moment. The £40,000 is not allocated to any specific projects. The accounts are run as a general account. Furthermore, we do still take an interest and have quite a lot of input into the preservation of the museum collections, which we have the original ownership of, and we still have to take an interest into that; not a financial consideration but it is of considerable general interest. So if that does not answer your questions it is because our accounts do not take the £40,000 and divide it up into little bits and put them into different accounts.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

You obviously anticipated that question and the issues. Do you think, John, it would have been better if the States were to ring fence the money, or you were to say: "Look, we will use it for project X and focus on that." Do you think that would have been a better arrangement from the States?

President, Société Jersiaise:

I do not know; this is pretty historic. I think we have got a number of income streams and a number of expenses. It is about a fifth of our income stream, or something like that. The other income streams are similarly allocated, mostly into the general account. But the general account is available, it is published every year in detail so we have just got to make sure that the bottom line comes out reasonably in the budget.

Executive Director, Société Jersiaise:

Yes, I would like to go back to your original question and just give my input as well. But as far as the grant is concerned - and we call it a grant, a subvention, which was the original term in the agreement - that was direct from Jersey Heritage really, so it has not been a direct application to the States for funding. It has been discussed as to whether we should go direct to the States or to increase that grant because it is much needed.

[11:00]

I would actually like to go back to the relationship with the Department of Education, Sport and Culture. I would like to actually say that I think it has changed and it has really opened and I do feel now that we have a direct relationship with them. The Minister and his 2 Assistant Ministers have been incredibly supportive and have made it their business, and have answered our invitations, to have come down to see what the Société has got to offer. I know James Reed in particular has been 3 times and has said he had no idea what we actually provided for the Island and I think that is a really important aspect of the relationship that we have developed with them since Deputy

Reed has been in office. I do not feel we had that relationship before, I feel it has greatly improved.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

So do you think then, in a way, the relationship is partly dictated by the personality of whoever is in the position at the time? Do you think that would be an accurate comment to make?

Executive Director, Société Jersiaise:

Yes, I suppose it would be. Yes.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

In the last session, Madam Director, we looked at the issue of the pressures on the Heritage Trust and how they then were spilling over into pressures on you and I know one of the areas - and I declare an interest as a member by the way - of course were competing membership drives. Do you feel that has really posed problems for you? That as the Heritage Trust has experienced problems, in a way it is suggested you are both looking to a point at the same membership pool and that has created problems. Do you think that is an accurate reflection of the situation?

Executive Director, Société Jersiaise:

Yes, if we are totally honest it did come as surprise to us that Heritage Trust launched a membership drive because we had never actually looked or thought of Jersey Heritage as having members. They have supporters, they have volunteers and they have issued their passport under a different term, which I suppose in reality it was

members. So it did come as quite a shock to us but we feel that people who join the Société perhaps join it for different reasons than Jersey Heritage. I am sure the National Trust also felt a threat to the membership because it is a small Island and the 3 organisations - Jersey Heritage, National Trust and the Société - all having membership, basically it is the same people.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Do you think there is any other way of dealing with that situation so it is - to use the jargon - win/win? Is there any possibility of some joint card for example, or are we stuck with 3 people at the end of the day competing for the same membership pool?

Executive Director, Société Jersiaise:

We have discussed this many times.

President, Société Jersiaise:

We have discussed this many times and it has been suggested a joint membership but I think the 3 organisations are so different, they are so different in provision, size and interests that ... there are a lot of things they do across the board and co-operate with but they are not the same. For example I would say membership of the Jersey Heritage is more like a season ticket. The Société is more like joining an organisation and getting in and doing things, whereas the National Trust is very much a volunteer organisation supporting what they do and membership is a contribution.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, good.

President, Société Jersiaise:

I am a member of all 3.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisssier:

You experience no contradictions, conflicts, tensions, differences?

President, Société Jersiaise:

No, it is not. It is difficult not to be contradictory because, as you probably realise, the President of the Société Jersiaise is a member of the board of the Heritage Trust. So I have to express my opinions but support my loyalties to both organisations.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

What are current key issues that are facing the Société?

President, Société Jersiaise:

The current issue, I think, possibly indirectly but quite a lot of it is the financial situation. It is getting the budget balanced and keeping to that budget. As I have already said, we have a number of income streams and one of them is dependent almost entirely on the last 3 years of the world situation where our donations and sponsorship has dropped dramatically. Our income from our investments has dropped more dramatically and we have had to dip into our investments, our legacy that has been given over the last century. The only one that we have really any control over is our own subscriptions. We have to give value to the members for the subscriptions.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

As a result of this financial crisis have you had to cut back on services offered or ...?

You mentioned the library.

President, Société Jersiaise:

We have cut back on services offered in our library unfortunately. Due to a situation of natural wastage we did not replace the librarian when we would have liked to. We have managed to keep the library running. We have a very good assistant librarian who took over the reins of the job but we have not been able to give the full free service that we could otherwise have given.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

You mentioned earlier, John, the photographic archive. Now, it has been suggested in the evaluation of the cultural strategy, this is one area where we have 2 agencies obviously, yourselves and the Jersey Archive, are there any opportunities for rationalising the provision of that service?

President, Société Jersiaise:

I suppose one could say there are opportunities but I do not think we would be in agreement with that. We have professional photographic archivist who does a lot more than just limited to looking after the archives. He is developing it all the time, he is also selling it worldwide, the products of it. Images are being dispersed throughout the world in a very professional manner. It is one of our income streams. We also have a custom built building for the preservation of the fragile material and he is also responsible for some of the information technology that we use, both for the

photographic archives and for the other services of the Société. So whereas it has been mentioned, it has not been seriously looked into.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

In terms of the cultural strategy and the Council for Culture, we asked a lot of questions about how they are involving people and so forth, and whether they are broadening the involvement because there was a lot of talk about the bodies, all the voluntary bodies are very involved but we wondered if they moved beyond the voluntary bodies and they got on to new people. But 2 questions: first, were you sufficiently involved in the formulation of that strategy and, secondly, in the follow up that occurred? If you remember there was a big meeting, for example, last November. Secondly, in the way it has been formulated, do you see greater opportunities for yourself where you would like to move in and say: “Yes, we could do that if you allowed us to or if you put a little bit of money our way” or whatever?

President, Société Jersiaise:

I do not think that we have considered that we want to expand outside our present role and historic brief that we have had; just expand what we have done. That is to study the different disciplines that we have always been involved in, which covers a wide range of Island cultures, I suppose they are, but it goes into a lot of the natural sciences as well where we are involved. A lot of it goes into the build heritage and things like that which we want to show a great interest in studying and researching without becoming political.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

How do you manage not to become political?

President, Société Jersiaise:

That is for somebody else to answer.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

[Laughter] You invited that one. What about my question, though, about the formulation of the cultural strategy, 2 things, (a) do you feel you were properly involved and (b) do you feel you gave as much to it as you could have? In other words you have got to be self-critical there.

Executive Director, Société Jersiaise:

Can I come in on that?

President, Société Jersiaise:

Yes, of course.

Executive Director, Société Jersiaise:

Because the cultural strategy seems to have been around for decades and I can still remember Peter Crill standing up in our members' room and talking when the first 2 people were brought on board to actually prepare a cultural strategy for the Island. Josephine Burns and ...

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

And a professor. Yes.

Executive Director, Société Jersiaise:

Then I think nothing happened to that for about 4 years and then another cultural strategy review was undertaken. I think the biggest achievement is the appointment of Rod McLoughlin as a cultural officer, I think that is his official title. I have felt since then when we have been meeting with Rod, the cultural strategy core group has been meeting on a regular basis which did also encompass the Opera House and the other party organisations. I felt those were a very, very useful forum and I have felt that the Société was able to contribute to that. We have had several conferences and I have found those very useful in raising awareness of the Société. I think this is one of the major things that we need to be focusing is ... you know, we have been around a long time, we are a much smaller organisation, we have, I think, a very strong, professional, small though it is, staff that do an incredibly important job for the benefit of the Island. I think there is a reason for everything in life and when we made the decision not to employ a librarian immediately on the retirement of our last librarian at the end of September it has been a good exercise because it has given us time to take stock as to what we want from a librarian. It is not just a library; we are a resource and encompass not just books relevant to Jersey and the other Channel Islands but a whole archive as well. When people come to us they are able to research and use the photographic archive and pull it all together. But I think we had to make the drastic step to close the library to non members temporarily. But what has come out of that is that people are realising the value that the Société has to give and they have joined. That is a real asset. Our membership numbers have increased.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

I mentioned earlier the photographic archive as one area that was cited where perhaps there could be some more joint or rationalised provision. Another area is family history, where you are - or maybe you were until your restricted terms - very active and, of course, the Jersey Archive is very active. Have you got any thoughts on how that area can be taken forward in the Island?

Executive Director, Société Jersiaise:

I think we work very closely with Jersey Archive and I think particularly since they have had restricted hours as well ... for example, somebody came in from Tasmania on Friday to discover that they wanted to do family history research and so we were able to help them on Friday, we were able to help them again today. It works. We feel we have a much wider resource.

[11:15]

The Family History Society have chosen to the archive facilities to store their records, which are very much duplicated at the Société but we have a large collection. I see the 2 working very closely together. With photographic archive, we have this temperature, humidity controlled area which we have had now for 10 years and we house the biggest collection, whereas the archive has a very ... it is not their remit to collect photographs as such or early glass plate negatives and all the terms they have. From the Société's point of view, when we are donated, bequeathed, whatever, a collection it is really to create the picture ... to keep the collection together we feel is really important so we have archive materials and photograph archive and it is all kept under one roof rather than interspersing.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Do you think it would be logical for you simply to take over the Jersey Archive collection so people knew there was a one-stop shop?

Executive Director, Société Jersiaise:

We had not thought of that one, had we?

President, Société Jersiaise:

I had not thought of it. I would have to go and look at what they have got. I know they have got some film.

Executive Director, Société Jersiaise:

Film, yes. We do not have film.

President, Société Jersiaise:

There is some film in a refrigerated facility there but as far as images are concerned, I do not know what they have got, or what the proportion would be of what they have got to what we have got.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

In your view, how should the implementation of the cultural strategy be progressed, and are there any areas that should be focused on in the immediate future?

President, Société Jersiaise:

There is the areas the strategy ... I have got to say I do not really know the answer to that question. I have not considered having to progress it myself so, no, I feel it is really ... well, I am sure it is what Rod McLoughlin is doing, he is progressing the cultural strategy and the whole broad idea of culture is not really what the Société is talking about. We do not have an interest really in the Opera House. As far as entertainment and stage production, it does not involve the Société except the Jersiaise Group do a little recitation occasionally. There is no involvement in the arts side of it, except of course the visual arts where we have a great interest in the historic pictures and contemporary work as well, together of course with contemporary photography. I do not how to progress them.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

In a way there has been this ... it is not a confusion but there has been this issue, this culture is heritage and culture is arts and we tend to move, maybe wrongly, too quickly between the 2 of them.

Executive Director, Société Jersiaise:

It is defining culture, is it not?

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Yes, and since we have not got 3 weeks at our disposal, I do not think we are going to do that.

Executive Director, Société Jersiaise:

I think it is really important that things like the conferences we have had over the last 2 years, and I think one is planned for November again, it is raising awareness all the time of what the individual organisations are doing.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yes. I think we will start wrapping up at this point, but as I said the focus today is not to focus on yourselves, it is to focus on how you fit within the broader picture and developments around the Jersey Heritage Trust, in particular, have impacted on you or how you see them. So could you tell us, John, what do you see in terms of that area of how you fit into the heritage picture in Jersey, what do you see as your greatest challenges?

President, Société Jersiaise:

Our greatest challenge is what we have increased a deal, and that is communicating directly with the Heritage Trust. That is the challenge at the moment. If we can communicate directly with them and define what each of us are doing and work together. That is the future, I think.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, Pauline?

Executive Director, Société Jersiaise:

I would agree. There has been this perception that we do not work together. We work in a building alongside each other and we have always been able to

communicate, or I feel we have. But that is what it is all about. It is working together and proving that we can work together, and we do.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

If you wanted to choose areas where you think if only we could put a bit more time here or whatever we could really change things, what areas would you like to see an improvement in that relationship?

Executive Director, Société Jersiaise:

Referring to Jersey Heritage again?

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yes.

Executive Director, Société Jersiaise:

We do have regular meetings. I cannot really see where we can work any harder at working together.

President, Société Jersiaise:

I cannot really say that we can do better because I am a trustee of Jersey Heritage by ex-officio, so we are connected from the top to the bottom.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Good, okay. Jeremy?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I think that is it.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, well we have taken a fairly close look at your and your relationships with the Heritage Trust and, indeed, with heritage in general, are there any final thoughts you would like to express, Pauline or John?

President, Société Jersiaise:

I would like to express that we have got a good relationship with the States Departments, not only your department, Education. I am not quite sure about Home Affairs, what our relationship with Home Affairs is, but we also have relationships with the Planning Development; Environment and with the Don Balleine through Education Department via the Jèrriais section; with Tourism Department through our environment studies and through our botany and natural history sections.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, thank you.

Executive Director, Société Jersiaise:

Just thinking about things, Tourism, I do not think a day goes past when Tourism does not ring with a query for somebody. We are there to provide that service and they obviously know that the Société will hopefully be able to help. I suppose it is like every other organisation, it is purely down to funding. If we had more money we could really develop and we ask an awful lot of the few members of staff that we have

that work far beyond their general hours but are dedicated. I think anybody who is working in a field that is perhaps not greatly funded they do it because they like what they are doing and they are passionate about their Island and the resource that we have got and the need to preserve it. Any more funding is the major issue.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yes, quite. Okay, thank you for those words. Thank you for attending. I hope it has not been too bad, your first experience of scrutiny.

President, Société Jersiaise:

I sat over there for one.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Good. We will finish the session now. Thank you.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Thank you very much for your time.

Executive Director, Société Jersiaise:

Thank you.

[11:24]

