

23.07.04

1 Deputy L.V. Feltham of St. Helier Central of the Chair of the States Employment Board regarding retention payments (OQ.133/2023)

Will the chair explain in what circumstances, if any, retention payments have been made to public-sector workers since she took office?

Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter (Chair, States Employment Board):

The vice-chair will be answering.

Connétable A.N. Jehan of St. John (Vice-Chair, States Employment Board - rapporteur):

Since June 2022 there have been 3 recruitments and retention payments agreed for those in business-critical roles. The reasons were to ensure the completion of a project while the individual was acting up in a more senior role.

3.1.1 Deputy L.V. Feltham:

Could the vice-chair give some further information about what type of role was considered to be a business-critical role and whether the payments were in the standard of the grade in which the people were acting up in?

The Connétable of St. John:

We have a number of business-critical roles. For example, in finance where we need to recruit accountants we are in a very competitive market but the same can be said if we have plumbers. That is also a very competitive market that we are recruiting in. S.E.B. (States Employment Board) discussed this at its meeting on Friday. All recruitment and retention payments are due to be reviewed every 2 years and we have asked for a report at our next meeting, which is at the end of July, and we want assurances that these 2-yearly reviews are taking place.

3.1.2 Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier Central:

Are these payments targeted ... perhaps not targeted, happen towards the higher end of the pay scales or towards the middle or towards the lower end of pay scales for those involved in the retention payments?

The Connétable of St. John:

It is my understanding that it is across the grades and, in some cases, it requires us to look at regrading jobs. As I mentioned earlier, it could be an accountant, it could be a plumber. It really depends on the area of work and the competitive market that the individuals are in and where we are trying to attract people from.

3.1.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

I was not asking about theoretical what happened, I am asking what actually happened. Can I ask the assistant chair whether the payments that were given were within the higher bands or the lower bands in terms of their retention, i.e. where they have had the most highly paid?

The Connétable of St. John:

None of these retention payments have come to the States Employment Board so therefore I believe they would be under the £100,000. I will need to get clarification on that but, as I said earlier, it covers a whole range of jobs that we have in the public service.

3.1.4 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

Just to take things back to basics, is it fair to say that the retention payments are there to stop people leaving their jobs, so people who would otherwise be leaving are given a retention payment so they stay in their jobs?

The Connétable of St. John:

I believe that would be what a retention payment would be for but also, as mentioned, are recruitment payments which would be to attract people in the first instance.

3.1.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Constable recognise that there are lots of business-critical staff working for the Government of Jersey who are not receiving retention payments and do not seem to need these retention payments or are not asking for them to remain in their jobs? What kind of inequality perhaps does that set up in the mind of the S.E.B.?

The Connétable of St. John:

Of course the majority of our staff do not receive recruitment or retention payments but we do offer a competitive package right across the areas that we have in the public sector. Where we have a competitive area; if we need a plumber, for example, at the hospital, we need to retain plumbers. We are trying to in-source jobs where it is feasible and not rely on agencies or outsourcing.

3.1.6 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier Central:

The inference I believe we have got from the answer supplied was that officers could spend 2 years neither promoted nor otherwise regarded acting up. Is that normal practice and if so, is it something that should be happening normally?

The Connétable of St. John:

As a States Employment Board we are reviewing this. As I said earlier, we have asked for a report at our next meeting.

[9:45]

I believe that 2 years is too long. We have put a lot of emphasis on objectives and appraisals and it is another area that we are looking at, following this being brought to our attention.

3.1.7 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Having looked at what the current practice is, will the Assistant Minister return to the House and inform Members what has been going on?

The Connétable of St. John:

I would be happy to return to the House in September and advise of our update from our end of July meeting.

3.1.8 Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South:

Will the vice-chair confirm that the retention payments are made within the civil service pay bands?

The Connétable of St. John:

My understanding is that the payments are over and above the pay band that the job is evaluated at.

3.1.9 Deputy L.V. Feltham:

I think in one of the vice-chair's answers I also heard him refer to recruitment payments. Given that there appears to be existence of both recruitment payments and retention payments, is he admitting that the Government pay is purely not competitive in this very tight labour market?

The Connétable of St. John:

Our pay is incredibly competitive if you take the whole package into account. Our pay includes a very generous pension scheme, in some cases a final salary pension scheme. But in some areas where we are competing, for example with the finance industry for an accountant, we have a very tough job to recruit people. Therefore the payment is necessary in some cases.