

24.01.16.

**3.1 Deputy M.R. Scott of St. Brelade of the Chief Minister regarding expenditure of public funds (OQ.2/2024)**

Given the Government's focus on "prudent and effective allocation of public funds", will the Chief Minister explain how the former chief people and transformation officer was able to approve expenditure of a reported £11,000 of public money on entering public service employees in the U.K.'s (United Kingdom) Personnel Today Awards 2023, including flying 10 employees to London, providing them with accommodation, a 3-course meal with wine and an afterparty?

**Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter (The Chief Minister):**

It is important, of course, that we recognise the achievements of staff across our organisation and we should acknowledge that our H.R. (human resources) team won the team of the year award at this event. The decision to enter these awards was taken by the former chief people and transformation officer, who held accountable officer responsibility at the time. I can confirm that the decision was taken in accordance with the business travel policy and travel bookings were made using HRG in line with that policy. I recognise the public response to the decision to enter these awards, and I am in no doubt that this will be taken into account when similar decisions are taken by officials in future.

**3.1.1 Deputy M.R. Scott:**

Was the Chief Minister surprised by the public response, given the cost of this self-congratulatory exercise?

**Deputy K.L. Moore:**

No.

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

Can I ask the Chief Minister what role the members of this winning H.R. team had in producing the letter to teachers, which has been so disappointing to our profession on this Island?

**Deputy K.L. Moore:**

I do not believe that the same ... I am not aware of the exact composition of that team. It is, as I stated in my opening comments, a personnel matter, a decision that was taken by an accountable officer. I have opportunities later to address the issue of the position that we are in with teaching unions and the way that we are trying to find a way forward through that.

**3.1.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I assume that they did take a role in producing the letter that has upset so many professionals on this Island. Can I ask the Minister whether this is the future of H.R. in this Island; this threatening approach to employees?

**Deputy K.L. Moore:**

I disagree that there is a threatening approach being taken, but there are a number of people working in our H.R. team, and looking after the people in our organisation, which, as Members know, is an organisation which runs to some thousands. Therefore, there is a large team of people supporting them.

**The Bailiff:**

Deputy Barbara Ward.

**Deputy B. Ward:**

My apologies, Sir. My papers just touched the light.

**The Bailiff:**

Just as well it was not a vote then.

**3.1.4 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier Central:**

Is the Chief Minister aware of what, if any, legal advice the appropriate department has sought over the 2-handed issue and treatment of its teaching force?

**The Bailiff:**

I am sorry, Deputy, that is, I think, far too far outside the ambit of the question. The question relates to the payment of public money for some form of celebratory event. [Aside] You will have the opportunity perhaps to do so then.

**3.1.5 Deputy L.V. Feltham of St. Helier Central:**

Following the public discomfort with this expenditure, what instructions has the Chief Minister or her Ministers given to officers about any future expenditure such as this?

**Deputy K.L. Moore:**

We have not had an opportunity to consider at the moment the spending limits for accountable officers. But I think the sums given in this example are acceptable sums for an accountable officer to have and therefore it is unlikely that any change will be made. As I referenced in my opening answer, I am sure that officers will be most aware of the public response, and that will have necessarily an impact upon any decision-making in future, which of course may have positive and negative implications.

**3.1.6 Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

While the amount of money may be appropriate for an accountable officer to be able to spend, I think the public is dissatisfied by the way in which this money was spent and whether it met the Government's view about value for money. Could the Chief Minister tell us whether she considers this type of expenditure on this type of award to be good value for money?

**Deputy K.L. Moore:**

I think my personal views have been made quite clear already. What I would like to say in these circumstances is that my experience of dealing with officials in the public sector is that they are motivated by public service. They want to do right for the Island and for the public. They use public money wisely and take decisions carefully. This issue is a regrettable one, and I am sure it will not happen again.

**3.1.7 Connétable D. Johnson of St. Mary:**

I, myself, received in the last 2 weeks an email kindly advising that I had been nominated for the best small legal practice of the year, notwithstanding that I ceased to be in practice for 10 years, would I like to accept that nomination and donate £800 towards it?

[9:45]

Will the Chief Minister accept that most of these organisations - and I am not saying this was the matter in our discussion is one of those - organising conferences are effectively money-making enterprises and nothing more?

**Deputy K.L. Moore:**

I think it would be rather complicated to go into the ins and outs of such processes, but I wish to congratulate the Deputy on his achievements and recognition that has clearly been found in some corners of the legal world, and I am sure it has not been the first time either. There will always be opportunities for recognising service, and some people do turn that into something of a business enterprise. But it is also important that people are given opportunities to recognise their hard work and dedication in various industries. I am sure that this experience will not have a chilling effect on the whole industry.

**3.1.8 Deputy M.R. Scott:**

Noting that the Chief Minister does not seem to think that officers should have been aware of the public response to the expenditure on what has been perceived as a jolly, could she explain, given its motives, what measurable effect has this perceived jolly had on the morale of the public sector?

**Deputy K.L. Moore:**

We have not yet taken a pulse of the public service since this particular incident, so I would be unable to answer that specifically. I am not sure the Deputy has perhaps heard me right in the first part of her question, which I think suggested that the ... sorry. I think the first part of her question suggested that there was some acknowledgement. I simply disagree with the first part of her question.