

STATES OF JERSEY



PUBLIC SPENDING AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION: INFORMATION FOR STATES MEMBERS

Lodged au Greffe on 6th May 2003
by Senator S. Syvret

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

to request the Finance and Economics Committee to distribute to all States members the reports produced by Tim Morgan Associates after each of the three Fundamental Spending Review Workshops.

SENATOR S. SYVRET

REPORT

The purpose of this proposition is to bring a more corporate, 'joined-up government' approach to the fundamentally important subject of public spending. At present, committee members are having to make extremely difficult decisions concerning prioritisations, cuts in services and de facto taxation increases in the form of charges. However, most committee members will not, through lack of information, be in a position to cross-compare the service priorities of their departments with other departments; nor will they be able to compare the relative merits, or otherwise, of suggested charges. The 3-part decision conferencing process has attempted to address these issues and has produced a range of detailed information, including 3 summary reports. The participating Presidents have the reports and are, therefore, in possession of the full, 'joined-up' picture. Committee members, on the other hand, will only have the detailed information that relates to their committee. A majority of States members will thus be making decisions in 'silos'. Proceeding upon this basis cannot lead to good decision-making. How can committee members make effective, corporate decisions concerning prioritisation of public spending if they are denied access to *all* of the options that have been on the agenda?

All States members will have to participate in debating a Resource Plan and then a Budget. This year, probably more so than any other, these decisions are going to be extremely difficult and contentious. The Resource Plan and the Budget will be shaped by decisions that are being made now in isolated, fragmented committee meetings. It is a reasonable assumption that the public will expect each and every States member to have made fully informed decisions throughout this difficult and important process. We could not make that claim unless we have the relevant information. If we regard all States members as a team, working for the good of the community, only a few players have the game-plan at present; the majority are being kept in a state of partial ignorance. This cannot be good teamwork.

I have asked Senator T.A. Le Sueur, President of the Finance and Economics Committee, to distribute the 3 reports in question. He initially agreed to do so at the briefing for States members. Regrettably he has now changed his mind and has declined to let other States members have the reports; hence the need for this proposition.

There are no financial or manpower implications.