

STATES OF JERSEY



PROPOSED GOVERNMENT PLAN 2022- 2025 (P.90/2021): FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT (P.90/2021 AMD.(14)) – COMMENTS

ESTABLISHMENT OF MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS

**Presented to the States on 9th December 2021
by the Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel**

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

Background

The Minister for External Relations and Financial Services has [recently lodged an amendment to P.90/2021 Proposed Government Plan 2022 – 2025](#) requesting the establishment of a Ministry of External Relations. This follows a recommendation made by the Island Identity Policy Development Board and would re-establish External Relations as a separate Department within the Government of Jersey.

Rationale

In the report accompanying the amendment, the Minister's rationale for establishing a separate Ministry of External Relations was as follows:

- To better reflect the constitutional status of Jersey and the norms and language used when engaging with international partners.
- Ensure that future Government Plan's reflect the operational reality of implementing the Government's External Relations Common Policy.
- The scope and extent of the work now undertaken by External Relations which necessitates for a separate and distinct Ministry.
- Increased accountability to Scrutiny, States Members and the public through a separate Operational Business Plan for External Relations, which will include separate spending requirements in future Government Plans and a separate funding provision in future annual reports and accounts.
- The establishment of the Ministry of External Relations will be cost neutral, per the advice of the Policy Development Board.

Panel concerns

On 10th September the Panel held a Public Hearing with the Minister when he explained that he was in favour of establishing a Ministry of External Relations, as a separate Department from the Office of the Chief Executive.

Minister for External Relations and Financial Services:

"I strongly support the moving out from the office of the Chief Executive. If we look back over the target operating model, of course previously the Chief Minister's office was too flooded with various responsibilities. That was just replicated by flooding the Chief Executive's office, which looked even odder than it being in the Chief Minister's office."

Once the amendment had been lodged, the Panel wrote to the Minister to ask why the establishment of a separate Ministry of External Relations had not been considered prior to the drafting of the Government Plan 2022-2025. In addition, the Panel also asked why the amendment was lodged by the Minister in his own right, and not the Council of Ministers.

The Minister informed the Panel that he has been supportive of the proposal for the Ministry of External Relations for some time, however, could not envisage it happening during this term of Government due to the workload and priorities under his remit:

Minister for External Relations and Financial Services:

“I have been supportive of this change for some time, but other matters have rightly taken greater priority and I hadn’t given particular attention to the mechanics of how this would be delivered. It was, therefore, not a matter that I thought to raise during Council of Ministers discussions on the Government Plan.”

In relation to the reasons why the amendment was brought forward in the Minister’s own capacity and not by the Council of Ministers, the Panel was advised that:

Minister for External Relations and Financial Services:

“There isn’t a particular reason why the amendment is presented in my capacity as Minister and not by the Council of Ministers. Given that this is an amendment that relates solely to my area of Ministerial responsibility, and that I would be the rapporteur in any event, I thought it appropriate to lodge it in my Ministerial capacity.”

Conclusion

The Panel believes that establishing a separate Ministry of External Relations should have been considered during the drafting stage of the Government Plan. This would have been a more efficient use of time in terms of scrutiny and debate in the States Assembly. Notwithstanding this view, the Panel can see merit in establishing a separate Department of External Relations, particularly given the comments and recommendation made by the Island Identity Policy Development Board.