

2016.02.02

**5.9 Deputy R. Labey of St. Helier of the Chief Minister regarding the creation of a £120,000 per annum senior officer post at External Relations:**

Will the Chief Minister explain to the Assembly why he is considering the creation of a new £120,000 per annum senior officer post at External Relations?

**Senator I.J. Gorst (The Chief Minister):**

The existing chief officer post has been vacant since the transfer of function led to the merger of Home Affairs and certain aspects of my department to form the Department for Community and Constitutional Affairs. The vacant chief officer post is being replaced with a head of service post. The post holder will also support other Ministers and departments whose responsibilities include external facing work.

**5.9.1 Deputy R. Labey:**

Does it have to be such a high salary? Could they not have gone fishing to find this role with smaller bait?

**Senator I.J. Gorst:**

By tradition we put as little bait on our fishing rods as we have to, considering our heritage. But it is an important role. The work of the External Relations Ministry is extremely critical and I think in this Assembly we would all accept that in the coming months and years it is going to be even more so.

**5.9.2 Deputy M. Tadier:**

I thought the whole point of having mergers here in different departments was to eliminate the need for certain posts. That is certainly what the workers on the ground are being told when they at very short notice face voluntary or, in fact, compulsory redundancy. Does the Minister accept that not only is this a slap in the face for those aforementioned workers, but that the policy is not being consistently applied throughout the different ranks of the Civil Service?

**Senator I.J. Gorst:**

If it was a simple replacement of chief officer with chief officer that might be an argument. But all departments are looking to see where they can make savings; where they can reduce headcount. In the Ministry they have reduced headcount and they will continue to work carefully to manage their budget in conjunction with other areas that do external work. This is a department that has gone from being created not very many years ago to doing really great work on behalf of Jersey. We set up the Brussels office, the London office; we have reinvigorated the office in France. They do that with very, very few people. When I travel to those offices and I see other offices of similar size and even smaller entities in London and in Brussels, I see that we work in a very lean and cost-effective way. If we look at some of the things that that office has done we see that they have been extremely successful, and the replacement with a head of service I believe is going to continue to deliver that succession in an area which is extremely important to all of our futures.

**5.9.3 Deputy M. Tadier:**

What the Minister has just said about that particular department being lean, *et cetera*, doing great work, could equally apply to many of the other sectors like Transport and Technical Services Department who I think do wonderful work on the ground, and it is certainly valued by the population. Yet they face savage cuts and a privatisation programme. Was a privatisation

programme perhaps for External Relations or for senior civil servants never considered? Perhaps outsource it to a provider such as G4S or some consultants who we could perhaps expect to pay the minimum wage to. I am not sure that I identify the question, I am afraid.

**Senator I.J. Gorst:**

I am not sure I did. I understand that there might be concerns, but this is a department which has managed its headcount and will continue to do so; is working far more closely in a joined-up approach. It now sits alongside those areas of other departments that it supports on a daily, weekly and monthly basis, and they will be working more closely together to make sure that they are getting the best value for money right across those sections. I have no reason to doubt that they will continue to do that

**5.9.4 Deputy S.M. Wickenden of St. Helier:**

I go back into my broken record moment again: succession planning, succession planning, succession planning. Was there any succession planning for this post and if so, is the person being put forward as a replacement?

**Senator I.J. Gorst:**

In the first instance of course what we are doing is looking across the organisation and across the offices of the Ministry together with the Civil Service except that it is an open competition. When I come to this Assembly on other occasions I get accused of not being open and transparent. I have no reason to doubt that there are not people existing within our organisation that will not have a really good chance of being appointed to this post.

**Deputy S.M. Wickenden:**

Was there a succession plan?

**Senator I.J. Gorst:**

That is what succession planning is. Succession planning is not necessarily picking a person and saying this person is the anointed one. It is making sure there are people across an organisation that can move into senior places when those become available.

**5.9.5 Deputy J.A. Martin:**

Can I go back to Deputy Tadier's question and get a straight answer please? We were told joining departments and ministries, *et cetera*, would be a great saving. Who is looking down on these chief officers and saving us any money? Who is joining across departments that are doing similar work? We are looking at this at P.A.C. (Public Accounts Committee) and we need some more joined-up thinking. But who is deciding on the very top jobs? Who is looking down on the top people?

**Senator I.J. Gorst:**

The Council of Ministers, together with officers, think about structural redesign and making changes right across the organisation. As I said, that is why we have brought together on one floor - and this is one of the reasons that we are delivering an office modernisation programme - because when you bring together people and they work together, there are a number of things that flow out of that. One is better value for money; one is synergy of operation; and ultimately one can see where posts can be managed in a better way. This is the start of that process in regard to those departments. But be in no doubt, if we do not appropriately resource those outward facing departments, if we do not deliver economic growth which is an important and some would argue primary remit of why we

have the External Relations Ministry, then the flexibility that we need, the protection of the income line that we need, will not be delivered.

#### **5.9.6 Deputy J.A. Martin:**

He never answered my question. He is talking about the External Ministry and he is now talking about the modernisation strategy. What I am asking the Minister is: if you put all the chief officers in one place are we going to save any posts?

#### **Senator I.J. Gorst:**

The difficulty I have in answering that question is going into the public domain and giving information whereby members of the public and Members of this Assembly can point to individuals and say: "Oh, your job is at risk as an individual" and that is a difficult area. But I have no doubt that over the course of this reform and redesign we will have fewer departments, we will have fewer chief officers, we will have fewer managers. If you look at the voluntary redundancy scheme you already see that people are being taken out of the department, leaving States employment right through the levels of the organisation. But that does not mean to say in this extremely important area this replacement post should not be filled.

#### **5.9.7 Deputy R. Labey:**

The Chief Minister's own former adviser on these issues who left to go to the zoo was quoted in the press just this week as saying that the States needed to focus on administrative jobs, not just manual worker positions. We are clearly not doing that. Many people would regard the creation of this post and other fat cat posts as an obscenity. It is not only insensitive timing but a broken promise, is it not?

#### **Senator I.J. Gorst:**

The first thing is the questioner has tried to use a word which this is not. This is a replacement of a post and we are organising right across the organisation. I do not think the Deputy for a minute is suggesting that this is not an important area that we should not put appropriate resource into, and that we need to get right. If we had not had the Ministry of External Relations it is not an overstatement to say that we may still be on a French blacklist and that would be detrimental to all of our economic interests. As the U.K. faces its deal, which we will see is about to be announced in the next 15 minutes, that the U.K. Prime Minister has been negotiating with the European Union on, and then we see the Council meeting at the end of February and if there is a deal there we will see a referendum in the United Kingdom. Never before has our relationship with the United Kingdom and with members of the E.U. (European Union) Member States been so important to us. If we do not resource that, if we do not have the right people to continue to get that right and build on it, then I do not believe any Member of this Assembly would like to find us in that position. It is going to be through building that relationship, having the right resource, having the right people that we navigate the waters ahead of us to Jersey's best advantage. I am committed to doing that. I believe that we can do it and that I believe in his heart of hearts so does the questioner.