

2.7 Deputy M.R. Higgins of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding the transferral of staff to CTPlus.

Will the Minister advise whether the agreement with CT Plus stated that there were to be no changes to staff terms and conditions for one year? If so, will he confirm that this did not happen and explain why and outline the reasons why the company's compliance with this agreement was not enforced?

Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour (The Minister for Transport and Technical Services):

As set out in my response to written questions 7151 and 7152 lodged by Deputy Southern, CT Plus tendered on the basis that if their tender was accepted, and I quote: "We will not change any of the terms and conditions that we have been made aware of in the first tender documents for the first 9 months of the contract." This was dependent upon proper information about staff terms and conditions being provided. T.T.S. was reliant on the full co-operation of Connex and the union in this regard. Unfortunately, much of the required information was not forthcoming. Please see my response to questions 7102 and 7268. Substantial concerns regarding working practices subsequently came to light when CT Plus met with staff in September and October 2012.

2.7.1 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Will the Minister confirm that that was stated expressly, that providing all the information was given to them, and will he release that part of the contract to Members?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Any part of the contract that is not commercially confidential I am more than happy to release that.

2.7.2 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

As it has become apparent to most people that CT Plus are not able to fulfil their obligation in supplying a reliable bus service, angry customers, demoralised staff, schedules that ignore local traffic conditions, does the Minister have a backup plan in the event of complete failure?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

No, I do not accept that whatsoever. There were obviously many problems to start with. We anticipated several weeks of bedding in. It has been over 2 months, which is regrettable, and I apologise for that, but everything is coming to normality now and members of the public are more than welcome to contact Liberty Bus with suggestions. There are going to be more Parish meetings too for members of the public to discuss their requirements to put everything right.

2.7.3 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Is it not correct that the company have 100 days to get this to the level of a reliable efficient bus service that we had before and if that is right, how many days has the company got left?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I think the company has got it right now and they are running very efficiently and I would congratulate both the company and the drivers for the sterling service they provided during the recent snowstorms. They were absolutely excellent. [Approval]

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

The answer to the question, how many days left of this 100 days, or am I being misled?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I will get back to the Deputy on that.

2.7.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Which failure will the Minister lay claim to? Did he fail to transfer staff from Connex on the same terms and conditions according to paragraph 18.3 of the Connex contract or did he fail to ensure that bids were made in the full light of information about terms and conditions on a level playing field? Which failure does he claim to have succeeded in?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I have not succeeded in either. I refer to 18.3, which is quite explicit. The tender process was fair, above board and very exacting. It was not just my decision. There was a panel of experts and a panel of politicians that went through all the tenders.

2.7.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Did the bidders in the tender for the new bus contract know what the current terms and conditions of their future employees were when they bid?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Like CT Plus, they knew what the current situation was except for the informal arrangements which were not written down.

2.7.6 Deputy S.G. Luce of St. Martin:

I know he has almost answered my question, but I just wanted to ask the Minister if he would convey my thanks and I am sure the thanks of many Members of the Assembly for the efforts of all the staff of CT Plus in keeping the buses working during the snow last week. **[Approbation]**

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I thank the Deputy of St. Martin for his kind remarks and I will see that that is transmitted to CT Plus and its staff.

2.7.7 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

It is still to do with the contract. Did CT Plus have to provide a bond to cover the cost of the purchase of the buses as all other tenderers had to or is the States acting as a guarantee for these buses for CT Plus?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I believe they do have a bond in place and everything was done finance-wise through Jersey companies.

2.7.8 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

If I could ask the Minister to confirm that to Members, that they do have a bond and that we are not guaranteeing their buses?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I will check that out but, as far as I am aware, they have their own bond set up and, as I say, everything was financed through Jersey companies.