

STATES OF JERSEY



STRATEGIC PLAN 2006 TO 2011 (P.40/2006): FIFTH AMENDMENT

Presented to the States on 25th May 2006
by the Connétable of St. Helier

STATES GREFFE

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After the word “Appendix” insert the words –

“, except that,

- (1) in Commitment Two, Outcome 2.6, in Action 2.6.1, after the words ‘*access to affordable*’ insert the words ‘*and equitable*’;
- (2) in Commitment Two, Outcome 2.7, after the existing indicator, insert the following additional indicator –

‘• *Increased numbers of speakers of Jèrriais, and increased protection of Jèrriais under the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages.*’

and after Action 2.7.3 insert the following action –

‘2.7.4 *in 2006 investigate the feasibility of adopting Jèrriais as the Island’s official minority language and work with the Société Jersiaise, Le Don Balleine and L’Assemblée d’Jèrriais to revive the language of Jèrriais (ESC).*’ ”.

CONNÉTABLE OF ST. HELIER

REPORT

Amendment (1) Equitable early years education and care

It is a matter of concern that in February this year the Minister of Education, Sport and Culture should have signed off the creation of another States' subsidised nursery unit in spite of the responses to the Minister's own consultation process on Early Years (R.C.54/2005), (to which he has not responded, despite assurances that he would do so before the end of 2005) together with many representations made to his Department about the adverse impacts this outdated policy is having on private sector provision of nursery care. The issue of the funding of early years' Education and Care has also been the subject of numerous States Questions but this has not deterred the Minister from pressing ahead with the creation of another free day-nursery.

The purpose of this amendment is to achieve equity or fairness as well as affordability in the States' provision of Early Years Education and Care. If adopted it will ensure that a 'level playing field' is provided by the Minister in respect of access to pre-school nursery provision. This will help private sector day nurseries to remain viable, and will ensure that the other unintended consequences of the application of current policy are dealt with in a timely manner. I do not think I am alone in wanting the Minister to cease using taxpayers' money to provide a service which is already being provided by the private sector anyway.

The Minister has argued in the past that Early Years provision by the public sector is materially different from that provided by the private sector, but he has not shown this to be the case; if it can be shown that there is some truth in this, I believe the Minister has an obligation to ensure 'equity' in respect of the quality of Early Years Education and Care, too.

If the States adopts this amendment to the draft Strategic Plan, the Minister of Education, Sport and Culture will be required to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that all early years' childcare provision is equitable – this should effectively prevent him from staffing a further nursery unit as part of the St. Peter's primary school redevelopment unless he can first bring to the States for debate the policy that is both overdue and critical, in the sense that private sector nurseries are continuing to close in the face of anti-competitive pressures from the Minister's publicly provided free facilities.

The financial and manpower implications of this amendment, were it to be successful, would require the Minister to, at the very least, redistribute the revenue funding that is currently being expended in Early Years Teaching and Care by way of a means-tested subsidy to all parents and guardians of pre-school children. Were this mechanism to be adopted the implications would be neutral.

Amendment (2) Jèrriais

While the Cultural Strategy suggests that the States will give high priority to the protection and promotion of our indigenous language, the draft Strategic Plan of the Council of Ministers does not reflect this. The purpose of this amendment is to ensure that this vital part of our cultural heritage is given the importance that it deserves and requires, and the resources that would be devoted to it in, for example, the Isle of Man, where approximately five times more funding is provided than is the case in Jersey at present.

The financial and manpower implications of this amendment, were it to be successful, would require more teaching resources to be devoted to Jèrriais. I would argue that this can be achieved by a proportionate reduction in administrative posts in the Department of Education, Sport and Culture and that the implications are, therefore, neutral.