

2014.09.09 3.14 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of St. Clement of the Minister for Treasury and Resources regarding raising J.T.'s standard of customer service and the potential reinstatement of number cross-referencing previously available in the telephone directory:

Before I do may I start with a point of order? I was under the impression this morning that the new wonderful electronic system that has been installed during our break meant we no longer needed to attract your attention with the light but it would come up automatically. The reason I ask that is because I did indicate over the last question, quite early on, that I wished to ask a question. I pressed my button for a moment but you did not call me. Could you clarify what the situation is?

The Deputy Bailiff:

I understand that when a Member presses the button it will flash up on my screen but when he releases it it goes. So until I have acknowledged it Members may take it that I do not know that that request has been made. Usually I do pick it up. I am sorry if I overlooked you on that occasion.

Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

No problem. So we have a semi-wonderful new system. If I may proceed. My question, what action, if any, will the Minister, in his capacity of shareholder representative, be taking to encourage Jersey Telecom to raise its standard of customer service and would he, in particular, undertake to discuss the reinstatement of number cross-reference previously available at the rear of the telephone directory?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf (The Minister for Treasury and Resources):

What an interesting question after a segue of technology. I think computer services and our own internal people are doing great with our technology and our new technology as I think J.T. (Jersey Telecom) are doing. I have discussed this issue at length with J.T. and I am in no doubt as to the seriousness that they attach to the issue of the matter which the Deputy raises. During times of enormous change within J.T., which has, of course, involved the roll-out of new networks and operating platforms. I agree that customer service standards are vitally important and I understand, and have been monitoring carefully, the measures taken and challenging J.T. on the measures they have taken to improve the standard of service. So I am pleased that we have seen the appointment of Mr. Kevin Keen to the board and that is going to help after his astonishing improvements in Jersey Post that we saw in terms of customer service. Also J.T. has done all the things that I have said previously in the Assembly, increasing the number of agents to deal with queries in their call centre. In regard to cross-referencing; this is an important issue. Previously the telephone directory did have an ability to have the numbers in the back; that was removed 4 years ago following a proper decision to ensure compliance with data protection. These requirements state that a data subject's telephone number only or telephone number and address may not be used to generate a name and/or address; i.e. reverse searching. J.T. would be happy to offer the reverse number service again if Data Protection would undertake to take no action but the reality is that data protection requirements about reverse searching is not permitted and that is for a good reason, as I understand it. J.T. needs to make sure that numbers could not be used to perpetrate fraud on unsuspecting subscribers as a result of information being available by misuse of reverse searching even though, of course, many of us found the facility very helpful when it was there.

3.14.1 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

I am grateful for the Minister's response there and I presume that he agrees with me that customer service was not what it might have been. In fact, is still not but hopefully it will improve shortly in the future. Regarding the other matter, the reverse issue, no doubt the Minister will be aware that the Data Protection Office has moved, and is not very far from Senator Le Marquand's office. I wonder if he would agree to pay them a visit because I did and I was told there was no data protection issue preventing Jersey Telecom from printing a reverse directory so hopefully we will get one in the future.

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

On that latter issue, I am not briefed on what data protection ... I have had my information from J.T. and I am happy to look at it. In relation to customer service, we have had a very challenging position with J.T. in relation to what I maintain has been absolutely the right thing to do with the rolling-out of fibre even though it has been disruptive and it has been difficult, but the prize is there. We are now talking increasingly ... there is an increasing recognition. Even comments of the U.K. Chancellor recently on Fintech linked the importance of infrastructure, both wireless and fixed line, in unleashing the whole economic advantage for Fintech and all of the digital stuff going forward. I appreciate that it has been difficult for customers of J.T. J.T. would not have wanted to impose this difficulty by their new computer systems on customers either but they have recognised it, they are now working. I think Mr. Kevin Keen is going to be the non-executive director champion of customer service we have seen and we are going to see an improvement. I think we need to recognise J.T. is changing. We want them to change but, yes, customer service, I accept, absolutely important as it is across the States.