

STATES OF JERSEY



MINISTERIAL OFFICES: REDUCTION (P.171/2010) – COMMENTS

Presented to the States on 25th November 2010
by the Council of Ministers

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

The Council of Ministers recognises the intentions of Deputy Le Claire in his attempt to streamline the machinery of government to meet the challenges of the future. The Council believes that it is fundamental to consider how ministerial government can be reformed and restructured in order to provide a more efficient and effective structure for the delivery of services to the Public.

The Council of Ministers wishes to assure States Members that, as part of the broader Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) process, the structures and functions of States Departments will be reviewed and proposals will be brought forward by the Council of Ministers next year. However, the first priority for the Council in relation to the CSR is to ensure that full savings are delivered across all States departments. The scale of the savings will require dedicated and focused attention, particularly in relation to staffing levels, procurement, terms and conditions and working practices. It is inevitable that the structures of some departments will be amended and this will have an impact on the overall number of departments and Ministerial functions. However, the proper impact of these changes on Ministers and their Departments will need careful research, analysis and consideration.

Without careful examination of how restructuring could work or how services would be best delivered to achieve efficiencies, the Council cannot say for certain whether the changes put forward by the Deputy are practicable or acceptable. The Council is supportive of the need to restructure the work of the Housing Department, which is already engaged in a programme to bring about changes to the way social housing is provided on the Island. This complex review will inform what functions currently undertaken by the Minister for Housing can be retained as part of Government or transferred externally. It is anticipated that the States will debate significant propositions related to the transformation of the Housing Department in 2011, but before a proposal is brought forward there is a need to properly review and evaluate how this can be best achieved.

Therefore, whilst the Council of Ministers is fully supportive of the need to amend the structure of Government to reflect the level of savings required, it cannot support this Proposition because it would be inappropriate at this stage to decide where changes or improvements can be made without proper consultation or detailed analysis of the issues, risks and desirability of proposed changes. The Council does, however, believe that a review of the overall structure of Government Departments should take place once the programme of delivering the CSR is firmly in place and the risks have been fully covered.

The Council of Ministers therefore urges States Members to reject this Proposition and to accept the Council's commitment to properly research options for changes to Ministerial portfolios once the CSR savings are properly planned, all risks have been fully assessed and addressed and implementation is firmly underway.