

2015.12.01

4.16 Deputy J.M. Maçon of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding outsourcing and privatisation:

What aspects of his department and portfolio, if any, does the Minister intend to outsource or privatise, or terms similar to that effect, over the term of this Assembly and in the longer term?

Deputy E.J. Noel (The Minister for Transport and Technical Services):

In line with the Strategic Plan agreed by this Assembly all departments have been required to undertake a comprehensive programme of zero-based budget service reviews including consideration as to whether there is an obligation to provide a service. T.T.S. is moving into a period of significant change. Extremely challenging saving targets have been set for the department and there is an expectation for States departments to slim down in size and reform the way services are delivered even in the departments that are expecting substantial growth over the next 3 to 4 years. T.T.S. is in the process of comprehensive reviews of both its technical and non-technical services, which will enable T.T.S. to continue to provide essential public services to the Island and manage the finances in a sustainable manner in the longer term. The majority of these reviews will be completed during 2016 and into 2017. Only as each review is completed will the department be able to say whether it intends to reduce, cease or outsource any of the services provided in that particular area.

4.16.1 Deputy J.M. Maçon:

As these reviews are completed will the Minister be bringing a proposition to the Assembly for endorsement to change those services in that way, should that be the conclusion of the department?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

It is not our intention to change any services provided to the population. We will continue to provide those services or we may do it in a substantially different way than we are currently doing it.

4.16.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Can the Minister give an indication, first of all, of the size of the workforce at T.T.S. and, secondly, the size of the population in some of the areas that they are considering privatising or delivering in another non States way?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

T.T.S. currently has just a little over of 500 F.T.E.s (full-time equivalent). That number will be reducing from, I do not like to use the term, but natural wastage; people retiring and not filling vacancies, and some people have gone for the voluntary redundancy package. So the numbers will reduce from that just over 500 F.T.E.s but we are looking at every single aspect of T.T.S. over the next 18 months, so I cannot really comment on the second part of the Deputy's question.

The Bailiff:

For the benefit of the listening public, F.T.E.s, you mean full-time equivalent posts?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

Yes.

4.16.3 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Supplementary? Could the Minister tell us how many people have taken voluntary redundancy from that staffing figure he gave us?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I do not have the figure to hand. I have a figure in my head but I am not sure if it is correct so I will get clarification and circularise that figure to Members.

4.16.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Firstly, will the Minister give an indication of when he will come to the House with some firm proposals about the way forward? Secondly, in the report from the adviser there was a suggestion along with some figures to suggest that his department was less efficient, or departments in general were less efficient, in Jersey than they were elsewhere and I think the comparison was with Guernsey. Will he undertake to bring those figures and that research to the department so we can clearly understand what the inefficiencies are?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

The comparison between Jersey and Guernsey is not an apples and apples comparison; it is an apples and pears. We provide very many different public services to our cousins in Guernsey so it is not easy to compare the 2 islands in the way that that report did.

4.16.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Nonetheless, will he give us a timescale when he intends to report back to the House with intentions, and can he produce figures that do give some sort of comparison so we can understand what is going on?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

As each review is completed through 2016 and 2017 the outcomes of those reviews will be implemented.

4.16.6 Deputy J.A. Martin:

The Minister keeps to referring to these reviews that are looking at all aspects of his ministry, the T.T.S. Department and to what he will need to either reduce, cease or outsource and then he says people at the same time are jumping ship and taking V.R. (voluntary redundancy). Now, should the Minister not be designing the "should look like at the end" before he decides who he is letting go in the middle? To me, would the Minister not agree, a shambles of a way to run a T.T.S. Department?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

This Assembly has tasked not only T.T.S. but every single States department to reduce in size and to make savings. We have agreed. This Assembly has agreed £70 million worth of staff savings over the life of the M.T.F.P. I have been tasked to implement that and that is what I am doing.

4.16.7 Deputy J.A. Martin:

Supplementary. I am not denying that this House has agreed this. I am asking the Minister; he should surely know what he wants to achieve at the end and not start cut, cut and find out at the end he may not have the right employees to do the operation, how the reviews say they should be done. It is quite simple. Is the Minister not getting that?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

The good Deputy Martin is conflating 2 issues here. The V.R.s that have been accepted do not have any impact on frontline services, do not have any impact on the services that we provide to Islanders

and therefore we can accept those individuals who have come forward and requested V.R. for the Public Service Voluntary Redundancy.

4.16.8 Deputy A.D. Lewis:

I am aware that this has been looked at before but as the Minister gradually implements a new parking charging strategy, which I know he is reviewing at the moment, will he be considering whether ownership of the car parks should remain within the public sector in the future?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I am not sure how that relates to this particular question.

The Bailiff:

The original question was so wide it seems to be quite difficult to contain supplementaries.

Deputy E.J. Noel:

That review will take place and we will act on the findings from that review.

4.16.9 The Connétable of St. John:

The principle of outsourcing, and, sorry, I am a new entry to this Assembly, but the principles to me seem important and will the Minister come to this Assembly prior to implementing outsourcing or will he just go ahead on a Ministerial Decision?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

We have been tasked by this Assembly to reduce costs in the payroll of the States by some £70 million over the next 4 years. I am afraid that you cannot do that without some people moving on from States employment.

4.16.10 The Connétable of St. John:

The question was: will you come back to this Assembly before outsourcing projects rather than individuals being laid off or whatever? The principle of outsourcing, will it come back to this Assembly or not?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

We are here to provide public services to the Island in the most efficient way. It does not need for any department to come back to this Assembly if they decide to outsource those services and provide those services to the public in a more efficient and less expensive way than they are currently doing now.

The Connétable of St. John:

I take it as an answer, no.

4.16.11 Deputy J.M. Maçon:

My question did cover the department and portfolio. One of the recommendations within the report was also looking at the sports facilities. Is that also under review and when is that review to be completed and reported upon to the Assembly?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

That does not come under my remit either as Minister for Transport and Technical Services or as Assistant Minister for Treasury and Resources. That review is being done by Economic Development and by the Assistant Minister there with responsibility for sport.

