

2019.07.16

2 Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat of St. Helier of the Minister for Treasury and Resources regarding the publication of figures showing departmental expenditure: (OQ.186/2019)

Further to the Minister's responses, during Questions without notice on 2nd July 2019, for what reasons have she and her department not provided figures showing departmental expenditure at the end of each month of 2019; and will she commit to now publish that information?

[10:00]

Deputy S.J. Pinel of St. Clement (The Minister for Treasury and Resources):

As confirmed in response to the Deputy's previous questions, a half-year report will be published this month, which will present departmental expenditure to the end of June and full-year forecasts against available budgets. This will be available later this month. In reference to the earlier months, the Deputy will be aware that, in the first months of this year, Treasury officers put a considerable amount of effort into producing the States accounts and then managing its effective internal audit of them. During that time, financial performance information is produced and discussed with the executive management team, with Ministers briefed by their departments. But this information is prepared as internal management information and not with publication in mind. Forecasts, by nature, remain live throughout the year. Providing a snapshot from earlier in the year is of little relevance now when more recent information will be provided.

5.2.1 Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

From the Minister's response, there obviously is still staff within the planning, financial and budget department. I would therefore ask this question: if they are able to provide the figures month on month, why can they not provide the figure at the end of April? Can I assume, therefore, that this is because some departments are overspent; and if that is the case will she please tell me which departments were overspent and by how much?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

I have to reiterate that the department and the officers produced the report and accounts on 24th April this year and that is 6 weeks earlier than in previous years. The forecasts will remain live and, as I said in my opening remarks, the full report of the departmental expenditure will be produced at the end of June.

5.2.2 Deputy S.M. Ahier of St. Helier:

In response to Written Question 281, the Minister said: "The information requested by the Deputy will be available by the end of July with the intention to provide it before the last States sitting on 16th July." Obviously, Members have not received such information, so will the Minister provide the Assembly with a timeline for presentation of the accounts to satisfy Deputy Le Hegarat's request?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

Yes, the Deputy is quite right. It was supposed to be by the last States sitting, but I cannot emphasise how much is going on at the moment. I have already said by the end of this month; if the Deputy wants a precise date, I will find out and let him know.

5.2.3 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier:

Will the Minister answer the question? She must know whether there have been overspends in various departments and by how much those overspend were. Can she not publish that list of overspends by the close of play today?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

No. As I have said repeatedly, the figures will be published at the end of this month. The departments are just producing them.

5.2.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Minister know what the overspends have been, or does she not know at this stage? Is she waiting for the calculations to be done?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

I think I just answered that. All the departmental expenditure and forecasts are coming in as we speak to be produced as comprehensive figures at the end of this month.

5.2.5 Deputy K.F. Morel of St. Lawrence:

When I hear the Minister say: "You have no idea how much is going on at the moment" is the Minister accepting that her department is under-resourced and unable to meet the deadlines and targets that is expected of it by this Assembly?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

Not at all. As I said earlier - very repetitious all these answers - the report and accounts were produced 6 weeks earlier this year than in previous years, so the Treasury Department are working extraordinarily hard to meet targets and accept ...

5.2.6 Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

We fully accept that the accounts were delivered early, but having worked in the Treasury Department myself, I would have assumed that you were able to provide the position of the department at the end of each month; like any other place of work, you would have the information on a month-to-month basis. I do not understand the answers the Minister for Treasury and Resources is giving me in relation to why we cannot have this information. Can I please ask again: can we have the figures as of the end of April?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

No, as I have said, it will be the end of July, when they are all accumulated together. Formal financial reports have been prepared by each department on a monthly basis since March, but these are department manager term briefs for each Minister based on those reports. They are not public at the moment.