

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR
EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE BY
DEPUTY R.G. LE HÉRISSIER OF ST. SAVIOUR**

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 19th JUNE 2007

Question

At a recent Ministerial briefing, the Minister stated that the Department was going to subject itself to a form of external examination. What is the purpose of this exercise, who is the external body and what will this cost?

Answer

As Minister for Education, Sport and Culture, I maintain the view that the aim of my Department ‘to strengthen our community through learning and engagement’ is vital for the future success of our Island. We often hear or read statements from government and organisations in both the public and private sectors that “our people are our greatest resource” and, without doubt, our Island is dependent on the creativity, commitment, industry and engagement of those who live here and contribute to the economy and society in general. The role of my Department is central to this as investment in learning and continuous development for all members of the community and the provision of opportunities for participation in education, sport and culture for all to achieve through active engagement is essential.

However, there is a legitimate debate regarding the appropriate level of public investment to provide those opportunities and a proper concern that the investment made is applied efficiently and effectively. There are those who would argue that the current level of investment is insufficient to meet the needs of a society and community that is dependent on high value added activity and anticipates sophisticated skills and abilities. There are also those who would argue that too much is spent on public services, including those provided through DfESC. For these reasons, I believe that it is important that there is a fundamental review of expenditure on Education, Sport and Culture in order that there may be a well-informed debate to assist decisions regarding future spending. I recently agreed terms of reference for such a review (see attachment) which have been forwarded to the Chief Minister’s and Treasury and Resources Departments for consideration. At this stage, the appropriate independent authority that may undertake the review has not been identified nor is it possible to give an estimate of cost.

As a separate exercise, the Comptroller and Auditor General has decided to undertake a Review of financial planning practices in the Department and is already working with officers of the Department to undertake preliminary work which he has advised will be undertaken over the course of the next few weeks.