

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE  
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER**

**ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 15th MAY 2007**

**Question**

- (a) Will the Minister explain what is meant by ‘calculating staff vacancy factors and reallocating’ contained in his answer of 1st May 2007 relating to cuts required to meet the £698,000 cost of staff pay awards?
- (b) Will he inform members what non staff costs have been reduced in each primary and secondary school and which areas had already been subject to the £350,000 efficiency savings?
- (c) Can the Minister inform members of the average life of a paperback compared to hardback book in library use and advise the Assembly whether the replacement of hardback books with paperbacks will increase replacement costs in the future?

**Answer**

- (a) The full sentence from which the quotation is taken reads: “This was achieved by reducing non staff costs, calculating staff vacancy factors and reallocating to meet the pay award shortfall”. To achieve savings, staff changes were reviewed and the effect of keeping some posts vacant for a longer period than would normally be the case was calculated. Where it was possible to keep posts unoccupied, budgets were reduced to reflect the saving and the associated funding used to reduce the shortfall in the budget resulting from the pay award. “Reallocating” refers to the transfer of budgets between budget headings in order to meet the expected costs of the pay award.
- (b) The Department does not yet have a breakdown of what measures schools will adopt to minimise the impact of the pay awards on their year end position. Schools operate under a Delegated Financial Management which allows them to carry forward surpluses and deficits from one year to the next and some are using this facility to manage the shortfall over a longer period of time.

The efficiency savings have primarily been met by withholding non-staff inflation and have affected all areas of the service. Some areas have also taken specific cuts as reported in the response to the question tabled for Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> May.

- (c) In recent years, it has been the library policy to adjust the balance of paperback to hardback purchases. T approach was approved as part of the Library Improvement Plan published in 2005.

This trend is in response to a range of factors:

- Customer demand: paperbacks are very popular with many readers; they are attractive, light and easy to carry.
- Some titles are published in paperback only.
- Paperbacks are cheaper.

However, bestselling titles continue to be purchased in hardback and additional copies are purchased when the paperback edition is published.

The main change in the last two years has been the purchase of a greater proportion of adult fiction in paperback format. This allows the Library Service to offer a wide range of titles, including multiple copies of very popular titles, and constantly to refresh the shelf stock.

- The average price of hardback fiction purchases in the last 12 months was £12.62 compared to the average paperback price of £5.23.
- The average price of hardback non fiction purchases in the last 12 months was £20.45 compared to the average paperback price of £10.04.

### **Average life of library books**

The average life of each library book depends on a range of factors and, for the bulk of expenditure, is most usefully measured in terms of number of loans, rather than years:

- The minimum expectation for all titles purchased for the library is between 20 – 30 loans. Many popular titles, both fiction and non fiction, exceed this.
- Examination of a random sample of popular paperbacks indicates that a paperback novel can easily achieve in excess of 20 loans. At an average price of £5.23, this represents very good value for money.
- Some very popular fiction titles achieve many loans in a short time and are replaced within 18 months, whether paperback or hardback.
- Some non fiction titles will be removed from the shelves after two or three years with fewer loans because a new edition has been published.
- Key works, classics and local material are purchased with the intention of them being retained in stock and permanently available. This may be in hardback or paperback format depending on availability and the anticipated number of loans. For these purposes rebinding is possible for both paperback and hardback editions and represents good value.

### **Replacement costs.**

Book stock for the library largely consists of the purchase of new titles rather than replacement of existing titles. It is not expected that the move towards the purchase of a greater number of paperbacks will increase the replacement costs in future years.

Replacement titles are purchased as required but these do not form a significant proportion of annual expenditure.

The Library Service aims to maintain a current, clean, and attractive stock on the open shelves.

Books are withdrawn from the shelves as part of a regular programme of stock maintenance according to criteria set out in the library stock management procedures.

In addition to the condition, criteria for withdrawal from the open shelves include the currency of information for non fiction titles and popularity of the author/title for fiction titles.

Some material withdrawn from the open shelves is retained in a 'reserve stock' area. These titles can be identified on the library catalogue and are available on request.