

Official Analyst's Laboratory

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Constable Karen Shenton-Stone
Vice-Chair, Public Accounts Committee
Scrutiny Office, States Greffe
Morier House
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18 January 2022

Dear Constable Stone

PAC Review of COVID Response

I write in response to your letter seeking information to assist in your review of the response to the COVID pandemic. I note that the review is focused on governance procedures relating to decision making, procurement and supply chain management, and the management of public finances.

The Official Analyst's Laboratory is a small, specialist department providing chemical analysis services to Government departments, Police, Viscount and members of the public. The department played no part in the direct response to the COVID pandemic and no staff were redeployed and no additional resources were required. The focus remained on providing business-as-usual services, albeit under the challenging conditions prevailing at the time.

I attach answers to your questions in relation to this department although for the reason above many of the questions are not readily applicable.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Nick Hubbard", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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PAC COVID Response Review Questions – Official Analyst

1. How did your responsibilities as the Principal Officer to/Head of your department change during the COVID-19 Pandemic? What new responsibilities did you take on and what responsibilities did you hand over to other officers?

a. How was this tracked?

b. What new responsibilities did your department take on and what responsibilities did you hand over to other departments? How were these tracked?

c. How did you work with other departments and key stakeholders to identify new areas of work to mitigate the impact of the pandemic?

There was no change in responsibilities.

2. We know there has been a huge impact of COVID-19 response measures on departmental business as usual activities, including the secondment of staff to other departments to aid the response effort. Do you have a 'back-to-normal' recovery plan for your department?

a. In respect of the secondment of Government staff to other departments to aid the response effort, how did you ensure disruptions to certain workstreams were prioritised in an objective and consistent way?

b. What would you do differently next time?

No staff were allocated to other departments. Business-as-usual activities were managed using normal processes, albeit with changes in working practice to reduce risk.

3. How have you monitored the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on departmental business as usual activities and the disruptions to it?

a. What tools were developed by your departments to monitor this?

b. How do you minimise the impact on services and key deliveries?

c. What decision making tools/approach did you use to decide on who should be seconded, and to where?

d. How did you compensate for staff seconded to other departments to aid the response effort?

No staff were allocated to other departments. Business-as-usual activities were managed using normal processes, albeit with changes in working practice to reduce risk.

4. Was any departmental authority changed during the Pandemic, including as a result of crisis management efforts, and if so, were they consistent with existing laws and regulations?

No departmental authority was changed.

5. Who is responsible for monitoring the performance of services established in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic within your department?

a. What and how have you documented lessons learnt?

b. How do you intend to incorporate lessons learned from the performance of these services into the wider performance of your department?

No services were developed in response to the pandemic.

6. How were self-assessment frameworks and Key Performance Indicators used to ensure that key services continued to operate?

a. What worked well?

b. What would you do differently?

Business-as-usual activities were monitored using normal processes and priorities managed as required.

7. What role did your communication with the Council of Ministers and the rest of the States of Jersey play in deciding on resource and staff reallocations? What level of consultation did you have with them?

a. What level of responsibility as the head of your department did you have on how staff should be reallocated and what resources could be taken from your departments and applied to the COVID-19 responses? How was this decision making formalised?

No staff were allocated to other departments.

8. Can you update us on how your department has responded to the recommendations made by the C&AG on the response to the COVID-19 Pandemic? Have any recommendations been implemented?

a. Have any changes made to the operations or working practices?

No recommendation made by the C&AG on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been directed specifically at the department. We continue to monitor recommendations and comply with Government policies.

9. What thought has been given to 'future proofing' services?

Resilience of both staff capability and equipment reliability has been reviewed and form part of plans for development in 2022.

10. How did you work with Commercial Services to understand your department's procurement needs during the pandemic?

No issues required the involvement of Commercial Services.

11. How have you measured, monitored, and reported on your performance, financial management (including value for money and cost benefit analyses) and impact on work programmes during the COVID-19 pandemic? What 3 things could be improved?

No changes from usual practice.

12. What would you do to improve how your department communicated with the rest of the States of Jersey and external stakeholders?

Communication with customers remained as usual during the pandemic.

Nick Hubbard
Official Analyst
January 2022