

**2.8 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire of the Chief Minister regarding the financial and manpower commitments of the Communications Unit from its inception to date:**

Would the Chief Minister advise members of the financial and manpower commitments of the Communications Unit from its inception to date, please?

**Senator F.H. Walker (The Chief Minister):**

Before 2003 a number of committees employed their own P.R. (public relations) or communications agencies at a cost to the States in the region of £250,000 per annum. Between 2003 and 2005 the then Policy and Resources Department employed consultancy support for its communications. The Communications Unit as we know it today was formally established in May 2006 with 3.6 full-time equivalent posts, one of which was transferred from the Social Security Department. Last year the staff complement stood at 5 full-time equivalents, one of which was funded by the Economic Development Department. The 2008 budget for the Communications Unit as agreed by the States is £294,000.

**2.8.1 Senator S. Syvret:**

That is quite a significant account of taxpayers' money given the kind of discussion we have just had in the previous answering session. Will the Chief Minister say to the Assembly whether he is going to demand our money back from these people given their catastrophic performance?

**Senator F.H. Walker:**

I am not going to be drawn into yet more sparring with Senator Syvret. I think I will merely say that I gave well over 20 interviews in the days after the Haut de la Garenne story unfolded and while I will accept that the Newsnight interview and the press conference were not anywhere near as well handled as they might have been, there were extenuating circumstances. The other interviews where I was supported by the Communications Unit were well received.