

QUESTION TO BE ASKED OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICES COMMITTEE ON TUESDAY 9th SEPTEMBER 2003, BY SENATOR E.P. VIBERT

Question

Would the President inform members –

- (a) of the fare revenue achieved by the Connex Bus company during July and August 2003?
- (b) how many officers of the Public Services Department have been engaged in monitoring the performance of the Connex Bus Company to ensure that it is delivering the bus service in accordance with its contract?
- (c) how many representatives of the Committee travel on the buses to carry out ticket inspections, as provided by the contract, and how often this is done?
- (d) how many penalty points, if any, have been accrued by Connex for service failure and the financial value of those penalty points since the start of the Company's operations?
- (e) of progress in implementing the improvements to the core bus service as promised by Connex in their contract for the summer of 2003, such as the introduction of a rural 'transport on demand operation to meet the needs of the more isolated rural communities', more journeys later in the evening, regular inner and outer loop services, a round the Island service and the provision of a 'hop on-hop off' service for local residents and tourists, as well as increased ridership and increased bus revenue promised through sales and marketing and a real-time information system provided both on buses and at key locations?

Answer

- (a) The fare revenue on Connex services for the reporting period 7th July to the 3rd August 2003, was £255,239.75. The fare revenue statement for the next four-week period, covering the remainder of August 2003, will not be available until 20th September 2003. We are now entering the final 4 week period of the first year of operation. A report on the first year's operation will be prepared and published around the end of October 2003.
- (b) The Department has one officer whose responsibilities, together with supervising managers, include monitoring the public bus service. However, the Department has insufficient resources to continually monitor the performance of the local bus operator in the operation of its contract. The Department is grateful for the role played by the Jersey Bus Users Forum, the written and verbal reports from members of the public, and the comments of those in the Department who regularly travel by bus. All input from these sources is followed up.
- (c) Provision is required in the contract to permit the Committee's officers, consultants or auditors to travel on the buses for the purpose of ticket inspections and surveys. However, using customary industry practice, the Committee relies on the four Connex bus inspectors to carry out ticket inspections on its behalf. These inspections are carried out randomly rather than at regular intervals.
- (d) Connex is required by the contract to notify the Department of all operational and administrative instances of service failures. These failures can be allocated as penalty points with a monetary value, to be exercised at the discretion of the Environment & Public Services Committee. To date, the number of penalty points is 167 over the total operating period of 47 weeks. The financial value of the points is currently nil since the threshold for application has not been breached.
- (e) Planning for improvements in the local bus service has been underway since the start of the contract. Changes have been modest at first but are accelerating as more is learned of the requirements of the public

and the operation of the network. A full Island-wide survey has recently been completed, from which will stem a new core network to be progressively introduced after consultation. Members should please note –

- (i) that the previous operator failed to make available any information relevant to the operation of the network, which has set back expected progress by approximately 12 months;
- (ii) the contract is for a seven year rolling improvement to the local bus service; and,
- (iii) features such as ‘transport on demand’ and ‘real time passenger information’ are not part of a core bus service and were not ‘promised’ for 2003. Nevertheless, they are being actively researched. Whilst the cost of on-vehicle location equipment is provided for in the full length of the contract, it will be up to the States to provide funding for the off-bus infrastructure if these features are to be fulfilled in future contract years.”