

STATES OF JERSEY



DRAFT ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2011 (P.99/2010): COMMENTS

**Presented to the States on 23rd July 2010
by the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel**

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

On the 28th June 2010 the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel held Public Hearings with the Minister for Home Affairs and the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture to discuss both Departments' 2011 Comprehensive Spending Review Proposals.¹ Following consideration of the transcripts from these hearings, the Panel agreed it wished to present comments outlining areas of concern regarding proposed savings, but also highlighting the areas where the Panel agrees with the Departments' proposals.

The Panel also wishes to make some general comments regarding the Comprehensive Spending Review process. The Panel was disappointed by the lack of information given by both Ministers in terms of the alternative savings that were considered by the departments. As such the Panel is concerned that potential alternatives to the proposed savings have not been fully analysed. The Panel is further concerned by the proposed series of small cuts which not only cause public anxiety, but if not managed properly, could lead to problems amongst staff in the States.

The Panel is strongly of the opinion that both departments need to fully analyse their management structures, with a view to establishing whether there is the potential to make real savings and efficiencies. The Panel remains concerned that this issue has not been properly and independently considered.

Inevitably there were areas where the Panel could not finalise its views until further information had been made available. This is now being sought from the Minister for Home Affairs and the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture. However, the Panel has agreed to present comments about these areas so that its concerns are highlighted at this crucial stage of the process.

Education, Sport and Culture's 2011 Comprehensive Spending Review Proposals

The Panel was very surprised to note that £1,295,000.00 of the department's savings are yet to be identified once major reviews have been completed (Ref: ESC-S9). The Panel found this approach unsatisfactory, and any real work that the Panel could have undertaken on the proposals was hampered by this. The Panel is concerned that unless major savings are envisaged, the Minister may struggle to reach the target required through numerous smaller savings.

The Panel would wish the department to review the grants structure to all fee paying schools, with a view to establishing whether any savings can be made from this area of the department's budget.

Regarding the specific proposals put forward by the Department, the Panel wishes to make the following comments:

¹ Full transcripts from these hearings are available on the Scrutiny website:
www.scrutiny.gov.je

1. Restructuring the Special Education Needs Service and the way emotional and behavioural support is delivered to primary school children (Ref: ESC-S3):

It was explained to the Panel during the Public Hearing that the proposed saving of £165,000 would occur following the moving of St. James School, and by not replacing an educational psychologist who is due to retire. The moving of St. James School was explained as follows –

Director, Education, Sport and Culture:

“St. James School, as you are aware, is a small school which is located on its own for 20 pupils. It is a very good experience for the children, but the danger in those situations is that the children become isolated from the mainstream. In fact, the teachers become isolated from the mainstream as well. So, we are looking to use some of the surplus places that have been created by closing a form in other schools to co-locate St. James on the grounds of a mainstream school. That means you have the best of both worlds because when the children need the specialist unit in accordance with the recommendations that you have made in your suspensions report, it is there for them but there is also... they do not become isolated and they will have the opportunity to move back into mainstream, maybe not for 100 per cent of the time but for whatever percentage of time is appropriate according to the individual child’s needs. That would reduce the management overhead because quite clearly the structure would then change such that the unit would come under the management structure of the primary school so you would not need two separate structures.”²

The Panel notes and agrees with the rationale for the proposed moving of St. James School. However, the Panel is concerned that not replacing an educational psychologist could have severe implications for the delivery of this section of the department’s remit. The Panel is surprised by this proposal, especially given the findings from several reviews, including the Health, Social Security and Housing Scrutiny Panel’s Report into the ‘Co-ordination of Services for Vulnerable Children’ and the Education and Home Affairs Panel’s Report into ‘School Suspensions.’ The Panel would ask for clarification regarding whether this recommendation has been made in consultation with the Children’s Policy Group.

2. Re-defining core business for Schools and colleges at ESC (Ref: ESC-S4):

The Panel is disappointed with the lack of information that was provided on this proposed saving of £298,000. The Panel notes that a portion of this figure would be saved by reducing the number of language assistants in schools; however the Panel is unclear as to how the remainder of this figure will be reached. The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture explained that the rest of the proposed saving would be from “a range of things in relation to the ... you know, support for schools and colleges.”³ The 2011 proposals explain that the business of the Schools and Colleges team has been redefined to make further savings in lower priority areas. The Panel would ask for clarification in terms of exactly what this involves.

² Transcript of Public Hearing with Department for Education, Sport and Culture, p.10

³ Transcript of Public Hearing with Department for Education, Sport and Culture, p.13

3. Cease annual payment to Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust to allow free entry and teaching time for school parties (Ref: ESC-S5):

The Panel is disappointed to see this as a proposed saving, as Durrell is a very valuable educational resource. School visits to Durrell may help children to develop a lasting support for the facility, which given recent financial difficulties, would prove valuable to the Trust.

4. Review management structure of Highlands College (Ref: ESC-S6):

The Panel is pleased to see some form of proposed management reform, and providing this does not affect the level of service provided, would support this proposal.

5. Review management structure in technical maintenance team (Ref: ESC-S8):

The Panel would support the reallocation of management in this area, providing this would not negatively impact on the maintenance of properties falling within this division, or the supervision of this maintenance.

Home Affairs 2011 Comprehensive Spending Review Proposals

Regarding the specific proposals put forward by the Department, the Panel wishes to make the following comments:

1. Removal of discrimination legislation budget (Ref: HA-S1):

This proposal was explained to the Panel during the Public Hearing with the Minister for Home Affairs –

The Minister for Home Affairs:

“I was reluctant, yes. Initially it was probably I would not support that as a cut for 2011. The problem I face was 2012 and 2013. I went into this long preamble before in relation to the Assembly having to make a decision in relation to this. If the view of the Assembly is the Council of Ministers must find £50 million then obviously life is going to be very difficult. If the Assembly is: “No, it is not possible, you can only find £35 million” or whatever, things will be a little easier. But the fact is that my expectation is that the view of the majority of the Assembly will be more than 2 per cent. Therefore I did not want to bring in a piece of legislation, set up a tribunal for one year and then find it went out the year after. It did not make sense... We can put the law into place, except the Appointed Day Act in relation to bringing it into effect will be dependent upon the existence of the funding.”⁴

The Panel is very concerned about the proposal to remove the funding for the Discrimination Legislation, which, in the Panel’s view, has already been delayed for too long.

⁴ Transcript of Public Hearing with Department for Home Affairs, p.18

2. Reduction of police staff posts (Ref: HA-S2) and reduction of police overtime (Ref: HA-S3):

The Panel is concerned by the impact that is outlined for this saving proposal, which explains that expectations for a high quality policing service may not be met, and that the saving would restrict the capability of the police force to respond to major incidents. The Panel believes that any reduction in posts should come from back office cuts and not from front line policing. The Panel would also wish the Minister for Home Affairs to examine whether police officers at retirement age could be employed in other functions within the service, but not on the full terms and conditions applicable to officers. Similarly, the Panel firmly believes that any reduction in overtime costs should not hit the main front line areas of policing. The Panel awaits the findings of the review currently being undertaken into salaries within the Home Affairs Department, including the States of Jersey Police Force, and would hope that dependent on the findings from this review, it might be possible for savings to be made in this area without negatively impacting on the services provided.

3. Closure of Police Facility/Reduction in non staff costs (Ref: HA-S4):

The Panel notes the following from the Public Hearing with the Minister for Home Affairs regarding the proposal to close the police facility:

Minister for Home Affairs:

“That was something that was always planned to happen in terms of new police facilities and building, and we were not planning for a canteen in the new structures so that is merely bringing that forward.”⁵

The Panel notes that an impact from this proposed saving is that alternative arrangements will still need to be made for prisoner evening and weekend meals and that this is therefore likely to still incur a cost for the department.

4. Customs and Immigration – Staff reductions (Ref: HA-S6):

The Panel would ask for further clarification regarding the impact the reduction of two posts will have on the department’s service provision. Would this reduction in staff impact on the department’s ability to effectively manage the harbour and airport facilities?

5. Reduce the amount of financial support to Building a Safer Society projects (Ref: HA-S9):

The Panel would request clarification of the specific projects that would be affected if the proposed figure of £15,000 is cut from this section of the department’s budget.

6. Jersey Field Squadron – Reduction in Operating Costs (Ref: HA-S10):

The Panel notes the proposed reduction of £55,000 to this section of the department’s budget, and the potential impact that could result in a reduction in revenue to the Island. The Panel would ask what the potential reduction in revenue would equate to. The Panel would further ask what the consequences would be of cutting the funding to this area completely.

⁵ Transcript of Public Hearing with Department for Home Affairs, p.22