

23.04.18

7 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of the Chief Minister regarding workplace culture of Government offices (OQ.67/2023)

Will the Chief Minister advise what concerns, if any, have been raised with her, either formally or informally, by either Ministers or civil servants about the culture and workplace environments in the Government offices during her time as Chief Minister?

Deputy K.L. Moore (The Chief Minister):

Both public servants and Ministerial colleagues have discussions with me about working environment. As I have confirmed in writing to Scrutiny, while there are no formal investigations at present there will be informal processes going on. One allegation has been made, which was found on initial review to be both speculative and not factually correct or substantiated. There is another complaint which remains at the stage of informal resolution through mediation. People have different perspectives and it is important to take time to understand one another and adapt as necessary. This is especially pertinent in working relationships. We are doing this. The States Employment Board recently undertook a workshop on values and culture within organisations. I think it would be beneficial for others to do so as well, including the Council of Ministers and senior civil servants and I have made a request to that effect. Culture is always evolving and I recognise the importance of developing the right working environment.

4.7.1 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Could the Chief Minister outline the nature of concerns that have been raised to her and what action she has, therefore, taken to address them if she has ever found them to be founded concerns? In what format would she say the greatest concerns that have been expressed to her have been expressed in what format?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

I am not the line manager of the officials working in and around me and, therefore, they will raise their concerns, I am sure, through their own channels and we will say a line manager. The concerns generally that come to me about the working environment tend to be about our responsiveness, about our use of paper and general working practices, nothing of any concerning nature.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Sir, I did ask in my question as to what format those concerns are raised. I guess that can be verbally, in writing or an email, could she elaborate on that, please, as I did ask?

The Deputy Bailiff:

Yes.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Apologies, I had missed that part of the question. Generally verbally, I try to have formal and informal catch-ups with as many of my colleagues as I can on a regular basis.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Generally or exclusively?

The Deputy Bailiff:

I think the Minister has given ...

Deputy K.L. Moore:

I do not recall receiving a written email raising any concerns.

4.7.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can the Chief Minister confirm if any civil servants have raised through any channels concerns about behaviour of Ministers towards them?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

No, I do not recall any concerns being raised with me directly.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

No follow-up.

4.7.3 Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I think the Chief Minister might have answered it but I just want to make sure. Has the Chief Minister received any communication from either fellow Ministers, colleagues or senior executives, communication by letter or email expressing concern about her conduct towards them or others?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

No, only from one particular person, who I have already identified, has a difference of opinion to myself.

4.7.4 Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I wonder that in the interests of transparency the Chief Minister might be prepared to make such correspondence public.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

If I were to do that I would also wish to share a note of a meeting that I have had with the same person, which I found to be totally unacceptable and a rather distressing experience.

4.7.5 Deputy L.V. Feltham:

I recall that when the Chief Minister was the chair of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel, one of the things that she seemed most concerned about was workplace culture within the Government of Jersey. Could she explain what steps she has taken to alleviate some of those concerns and what changes she has personally made to ensure that that culture is not pervading within her offices?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

I think I have already talked today about our values-based approach. One of the first things the States Employment Board did was to adopt the values of the organisation. As I have already outlined today, we have recently conducted a values workshop, exploring that and we found it to be a really useful process. I have asked for the Council of Ministers to have the same workshop and suggested that it would be valuable for the whole organisation to do the same. Values do help to focus us all and to help us think through our approach to our colleagues and our work. I think it is something that we would all benefit from and it is a useful process. I have already mentioned that I have asked if HR Lounge can come back and do a follow-up report. Their previous reports have been very useful and of course we are continuing with the roll out of the Be Heard survey later this year.

4.7.6 Deputy L.V. Feltham:

One of those core values is always respectful. Can the Chief Minister give her guarantee that her and all of her Ministers are always respectful to the senior staff and any other colleagues that they work with?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

We are a values-based organisation and we always endeavour to adopt those values.

4.7.7 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Could I ask the Chief Minister to confirm whether or not there are any cases right now of senior civil servants who have raised what may be defined either as a complaint or perhaps less than that, just a significant concern about the Chief Minister herself?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Sorry, I am not aware of any concerns being raised about me.