

# Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel

## PUBLIC MEETING

### Record of Meeting

Date: **1st August 2008**

Meeting Number: **69**

Present	Deputy P J D Ryan, Chairman Deputy C Egré, Vice-Chairman Connétable J L S Gallichan Deputy R Le Hérissier
Apologies	Connétable D Murphy
In attendance	M. Haden, Scrutiny Officer

Ref Back	Agenda matter	Action
1	<b>Minutes</b> of meetings held on 19th and 24th June were approved and signed	
2	<b>Matters arising</b> - Action update noted.  Draft letters to Chief Minister re Corporate Management Board and to the Minister for Treasury and Resources re Land Transactions Tax and commercial property transactions were approved. It was agreed that copies of the letter to the Chief Minister should be sent to all States members and the media.	
3.	<b>Draft States Business Plan</b>  <b>(a) Financial forecasts</b> - The Panel received notes of meetings between its adviser and the States Economic Adviser and Professor Allsop of the Fiscal Policy Panel and noted that further discussions would be held with other members of the forecasting group which advised the Minister for Treasury and Resources on the financial forecasts. The Panel also noted comments of the Comptroller and Auditor General in an e-mail dated 11th July 2008.  The Panel discussed the apparent tendency to under-forecast income in order to constrain States expenditure. The Panel acknowledged that reducing public expenditure was a high priority for the Minister for Treasury and Resources and also for the public. It was clear that in the past there had been a tendency for States Members to try to utilise any apparent surplus income for new spending initiatives. However, the Panel was mindful that forecasts could equally be used in a different political climate to promote increased States spending.	

The Panel therefore came to the view that it would be more appropriate for financial forecasts to be removed from the possibility of political influence. It believed that it would be preferable for States members to take spending decisions based on objective financial information rather than income forecasts which might have been manipulated to a political end. The Panel suggested that forecasts might be published separately from the States Business Plan by the Statistics Unit, in the same way that other economic information, such as inflation figures, was produced.

The Panel considered lodging an amendment to the draft States Business Plan to this effect but agreed instead to prepare a comment asking that this suggestion be considered by the next Council of Ministers for its Strategic Plan.

The Panel requested that its adviser be asked to prepare a draft report and recommendations based on his discussions with members of the forecasting for consideration by the Panel at its next meeting on 22nd August 2008.

**(b) Property Plan 2009** - The Panel received notes of a meeting held between Deputy Egré and Constable Murphy with the Director of Property Holdings. The Panel noted that the discussion had been held on a confidential basis as it referred to matters arising from the recent Condition Survey undertaken on all States buildings which had yet to be finalised.

The Panel noted that a further meeting had been arranged with the Director of Property Holdings in three months time at which pointed he expected to be able to share with Panel members further details about actions arising from the Condition Survey and about the proposed Office Strategy.

The Panel agreed that this method of working with Senior Officers enabled members to have access to important information and to understand better how key strategies were being developed. The Panel reserved the right to conduct a public enquiry into these matters at some point in the future and was of the opinion that these discussions would lay the groundwork for such an enquiry.

**(c) Information Services** - The Panel noted that a meeting had been arranged between Deputy Egré and the Director of Information Services.

**(d) Human Resources** - The Panel agreed to request the opportunity for a similar meeting Deputy Le Herissier and Deputy Egré with the Director of Human Resources.

**(e) Business Planning process** - The Panel noted that the report from its adviser had been delayed due to technical difficulties. The Panel agreed to defer discussion of this issue until its next meeting.

**(f) Finance Sub Panel** - The Panel considered how the role of the Finance Sub Panel could be enhanced. The Panel believed that it was important that there should be a single group of members with a clearly understood mandate and responsibility for monitoring the corporate financial strategy and the process of developing the

	<p>Business Plan. It was maintained that this was clearly within the remit of the Corporate Services Panel but that membership of the Sub Panel should be drawn from a wide group of members to ensure that all other Panels were represented in investigating overall corporate financial issues.</p> <p>The Panel recognised the level of disinterest among many members for financial scrutiny which was perceived as difficult and unrewarding but it was felt that opportunities for Panels to drill down for information on specific areas of expenditure were being neglected.</p> <p>To ensure that the Sub Panel develops an authoritative voice it should be supported by strong expert advice. The Panel recommended that identification of such advice should be a priority for a new Corporate Services Panel.</p>	
<p>4</p>	<p><b>Panel Work Programme</b></p> <p>The Panel noted an update summary of current reviews. It noted that a complaint had been received from Deputy J. Gallichan regarding the premature release of its report on the Importation of Bovine Semen to the Royal Jersey Agricultural and Horticultural Society. The Panel acknowledged that this had been an error which had occurred in the context of the time pressures involved in finalising the report in time for the States debate in the last sitting before the summer recess.</p> <p>The Panel considered and approved review evaluations for the reviews on the Proposed establishment of the Jersey Enterprise Board and the Proposed Importation of Bovine Semen and agreed to refer these evaluations to the Chairmen's Committee.</p> <p>The Panel wished to express its appreciation for the work undertaken by the Scrutiny Officer in finalising the report on the proposed Importation of Bovine Semen within a very tight timescale and the Chairman undertook to write a formal letter of appreciation.</p> <p>The Panel reviewed its work programme for the remaining months of the year (in addition to the States Business Plan - see above).</p> <p><b>(a) Migration Policy</b> - It was noted that the Migration Advisory Group had forwarded copies of the draft Register of Names and Addresses (Jersey) Law 200- and the first part of the draft Migration (Jersey) Law 200- dealing with Registration cards, in advance of the public consultation which was due to begin in August. The draft laws had been forwarded to the Sub Panel's adviser for comment.</p> <p><b>(b) Budget</b> - It was recalled that the Panel had agreed to scrutinise the Minister's proposals for First Time Buyer discounts. However, any such discounts were likely to be of little immediate relevance given the recent developments in the mortgage market.</p> <p><b>(c) Deemed rent proposal for non-locally owned non-finance companies.</b> It was noted that the Minister for Treasury and Resources had issued proposals for public consultation with a view to introducing measures into the 2009 Budget. The Panel confirmed</p>	

	<p>its continuing interest in this matter and agreed to request that consultation responses should be made available and to indicate to the Minister that it intended to produce a report for the Budget. The Scrutiny Officer was instructed to request assistance from its adviser, Mr. R. Teather, and to prepare an estimate of expenditure on this review.</p> <p><b>(d) Level Playing Field</b> - It was agreed not to pursue this review in view of the brief time available before the end of the Panel's term of office and the complexities of the issues involved.</p>	
<b>5</b>	<p><b>Meetings with Ministers</b></p> <p>The Panel noted that there were issues it wished to discuss with Ministers in the normal course of its six monthly meetings, for example the role of the Corporate Management Board and the central authority of the Treasury on financial matters. Mindful of the forthcoming election period the Chairman undertook to seek clarification from the Privileges and Procedures Committee regarding the appropriateness of conducting public hearings in the period between the Senatorial and Deputorial elections.</p>	
<b>6</b>	<p><b>Draft Public Elections (Expenditure and Donations) (Jersey) Regulations 200-</b></p> <p>The Chairman informed the Panel that he had been invited to attend a meeting of the Privileges and Procedures Committee in order to discuss the views expressed in his letter to the media on the above legislation.</p>	
<b>7</b>	<p><b>Matters noted by the Panel</b></p> <p>Scrutiny Away Day - 26th September 2008 - items for discussion</p> <p>Panel's Quarterly Financial report</p> <p>Chairmen's Committee Briefing Notes from meeting on 21st July 2008</p> <p>Forthcoming Legislation within the Panel's remit</p> <p>Ministerial decisions -summary of recent decisions</p>	
	<p><b>Future Meetings:</b> The Panel agreed to meet on 22nd August and 5th September 2008</p>	

Signed

Date:



5<sup>th</sup> September 2008

Vice-Chairman  
Corporate Services Panel