

2025.01.21

Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement of the Chief Minister regarding the Digital Government Platform in 2024 (OQ.6/2025):

Further to Written Question 380/2024, will the Chief Minister provide specific examples of expenditure on the digital government platform in 2024, including details of the expenditure on “consultancy” and “managed service” mentioned in his response, and will he outline how the project budget will be spent in 2025?

Deputy L.J. Farnham of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter (The Chief Minister):

The digital government platform progressed well during 2024 and the total expenditure for that year was £1.41 million and was focused on 3 key projects: the digital registration cards, which moved into final testing, will be available to the public in the first half of this year; the integrated appointment and queuing system, also in final testing, which will enable Islanders to make and manage appointments online initially with employment; social security and further development to the “Tell Us Once” project for when Islanders change circumstances such as their address and need to tell various departments. A staff with high levels of technical skill are needed to deliver the complex projects, especially at user-testing stage. Their expertise has resulted in enhancements and stronger security. In 2024, £290,000 was spent on consultancy roles such as systems, architects, business and business analysts, and £826,000 was spent on the development of specific projects by technical experts. These, as the Deputy knows, are managed services.

3.1.1 Deputy A.F. Curtis:

I thank the Chief Minister for providing the response, and I note that the figures provided by him for the total years shows a significant increase in expenditure between his response on 4th November, where managed services spent £526,000 to what is now £826,000 within only 2 months. But I would press the Chief Minister to be more specific in how that money has been spent. £826,000 is a huge amount of money and I would like the Chief Minister to be specific in how that money is broken down and how he can assure us that that was value for money on those specific projects.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I am sorry, I cannot break that figure down here and now in the Assembly, but I am happy to provide a written breakdown to the Deputy and discuss an analysis of that later, if necessary.

3.1.2 Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North:

Would the Minister please clarify if all this expenditure is now managed by the newly-created department, Digital Services, that he has a political oversight of?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Yes.

3.1.3 Deputy I. Gardiner:

Would the Chief Minister advise when the Digital Services, as a standalone department with a dedicated chief officer, has been created?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

It is just a name change; it is the same department.

3.1.4 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier Central:

Could the Chief Minister explain why he has not got a breakdown to the figures that he knew he was going to refer to in his answer?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

We can provide a breakdown. I do not have a detailed breakdown in front of me but I will provide it in writing. It is a lengthy piece of information, maybe hundreds of lines of detail, and I would not have time to read it all out now.

3.1.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Not having time to read an answer to a question is really a poor excuse for not having the facts at his fingertips, which he should have had if he knew he was going to rely on the figures he was quoting. Does the Chief Minister think that what he has produced is an inadequate answer?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I would be happy to provide the information, but I think we are constrained by the time allowed for oral questions.

3.1.6 Deputy A.F. Curtis:

In Written Question 380, the Minister answers that the funding for the project in 2024 was reduced by a Treasury-led reprioritisation exercise from £2.194 million to £1.051 million. Today the Minister has told us that they spent £1.41 million in 2024. Could the Chief Minister advise how the budget increased £400,000 post-Treasury reprioritisation and how the Assembly can know what is spent on any project, given the numbers so quickly change?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

If I recall correctly, the budget related to the consultancy and the managed services costs were additional to that, which were part of the bigger budget, were internal costs of approximately £300,000. The capital budget for 2025 is reduced to £600,000. I think that the spread of the expenditure will work out about to where we wanted it to be over the course of the project.