

2.4 Senator S.C. Ferguson of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding the operation of the abattoir:

Would the Minister confirm whether the abattoir is operated in accordance with the Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) E.U. (European Union) Rules and, if so, state what the extra cost of doing so is and inform Members whether he has investigated running the abattoir on sound commonsense rules rather than the detailed Defra E.U. Rules and, if not, why not?

Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade (The Minister for Transport and Technical Services):

I can confirm that the abattoir operates the E.U. Food Hygiene Regulations and is regulated by the Planning and Environment Department. E.U. Food Hygiene Regulations require risk-based safeguards to produce products fit for human consumption. Over the last 3 years, the annual cost of operating the abattoir has increased by some 93 per cent, some £140,000. This significant increase is due to a combination of the decision to allow cattle over the age of 30 months, which has now been raised to 48 months, to enter the food chain and operating to E.U. requirements. The additional costs equate to increased contracted staffing levels and an increase in the operational costs of running the abattoir to meet statutory requirements. The department will shortly be undertaking a cross-departmental review of the abattoir in conjunction with the Economic Development and Planning and Environment Departments to establish whether any of the operational efficiencies can be made and looking at options of how the increased cost of operating the abattoir can be funded in the long term. The working group will report the outcome of this work at the end of July. The Planning and Environment Department as regulator oversees the operational rules and their implementation to verify they are commensurate with E.U. standards. We can confirm that the regulatory aspects will be challenged within the working group.

2.4.1 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Given that anything that goes via Defra adds bells and whistles to any regulations, and given that the original upgrading of the abattoir was set up for export but there is no export trade, will the Minister confirm that it is running a great deal more expensively than it need to?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

As I indicated in my answer, we will be challenging the regulatory aspects within the working group. However, I am not prepared to compromise on the quality of meat emanating from the abattoir as a result of commercial pressures in the interests of the general public.

2.4.2 Deputy A.E. Jeune:

Could the Minister advise us, please, what percentage of the personnel costs are actual management?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

No, I cannot tell the Assembly that, but I am certainly happy to forward the information later in the day.

2.4.3 Senator J.L. Perchard:

Would the Minister consider, as happened in many abattoirs in the U.K. (United Kingdom) and throughout Europe, privatising the abattoir? Much like his predecessor's refusal to consider the privatising of the green waste and composting operation, is it a new initiative of the Council of Ministers and the Ministers to consider privatisation in order to offer a better, more efficient service?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I do not think pure privatisation is the answer, although I think public/private partnership is something to be considered. On the basis of the costs so far, I think it is unlikely that any private organisation would wish to consider running the abattoir, but certainly I am keen to make the operation of the abattoir commercially viable in the interests of the meat producers in the Island to satisfy the requirements of Islanders so that we can produce meat of a high quality and support the local industry.