

2018.09.25

5.6 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the outsourcing of cleaning and gardening services to “responsible employers”: [OQ.130/2018]

I am sure the Chair will be grateful that this is a very specific question. Will the Minister state what information his department considered when deciding to outsource cleaning and gardening services to “responsible employers”, particularly in respect of whether the terms and conditions offered were “appropriate to the sector they were operating in” and of how these terms related to those found in the States of Jersey?

Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour (The Minister for Infrastructure):

The department does not hold detailed information on pay terms and conditions and staff numbers for each contractor to enable a before and after comparison to be made. However, through the formal tendering process, tenderers were required to indicate pay levels, which were seen to be above the minimum wage, together with employment conditions commensurate with similar private sector undertakings. They were required to consider existing States staff being displaced by the outsourcing when recruiting and informal meet and greet sessions were organised by the department to introduce both parties. Contractors were required to employ locally-qualified staff and no new employment licences were to be issued. Use of zero-hours contract terms was and is not permitted in order to fulfil the normal contract staffing requirements.

5.6.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

I thank the Minister for his answer, which is not an answer. The question was about, and it was one of the criteria to decide who was a responsible employer to outsource to, were the terms and conditions offered by that company appropriate to the sector they were operating in. So the question is what levels of terms and conditions were they operating in relative to the rest of the sector and how did that compare with the rates within the service already maintained in the States of Jersey? So, what average figure - never mind what particular employers were doing - what average figure did the Minister have to decide that these were responsible employers?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

As part of the formal tendering process all responses were required to include statements of the number of staff to be engaged in the work, the employment contract type and the general information on pay levels and benefits offered. All contractors appointed stated that the staff to be engaged in fulfilling the contracts would either be full-time or part-time permanent contracts of employment. The department’s contract managers have seen no evidence of this not being the case.

5.6.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

So the Minister has just said that he had some figures for the levels of remuneration existing in these particular groups. Will he release those figures to us today?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I do not have the figures today. The Deputy will be aware I was not with the department at the time this action was taken. But I think it is fair to say that the terms were commensurate with existing terms and other private sector employment.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I will take away the “today” but will the Minister release that information to Members?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I will endeavour to get further information for the Deputy.

5.6.3 Deputy K.F. Morel:

The Minister mentioned contract managers had not seen any evidence. Would the Minister explain how often the contract managers review the terms and conditions that these kind of contracted employees are operating under?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I do not have that information but I presume on renewal of contracts ... but I will find out for the Deputy.

5.6.4 Deputy K.F. Morel:

Does that mean that in between contracts that the contractor is running, there is no review?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I will endeavour to find out that information.

5.6.5 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can the Minister confirm that all contracted workers who are in schools or with any vulnerable people have been D.B.S. (Disclosure and Barring Service) checked and they are currently up to date?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I do not have that information. I would imagine so but I will check on that.

5.6.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Yes, final supplementary since the Minister mentioned it. Will he inform Members when these contracts are due for renewal or when there is a break clause in existence so that they can be reviewed?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, I will get back to the Deputy with that information.