

4.3 Deputy S. Power of the Chief Minister regarding the resignation of the Treasurer of the States:

Thank you for approving it. Would the Chief Minister explain to the Assembly whether the resignation of the Treasurer of the States was expected, and does he believe that her resignation is related to other resignations of senior Treasury officials in the past year?

Senator I.J. Gorst (The Chief Minister):

The resignation of the Treasurer was not expected. She has resigned from her position to return home to the U.K. (United Kingdom) and we value the significant development work for the Treasury that she has led over the last 4 years. The Treasurer has said that it has become increasingly important for her to be nearer to her family and she feels now is a fitting time to hand over the baton and to look for new challenges. I am not aware that her decision was related to that of any other Treasury staff who have left the organisation.

4.3.1 Deputy S. Power:

Is the Chief Minister concerned with what I would loosely refer to the attrition rate and loss of senior management positions in Treasury including a Comptroller and Auditor General, 2 previous Treasurers, an interim Treasurer, the head of Property Holdings, the head of Waterfront development, all within the last 4 years? Does this not cause him concern that this is the latest resignation in a senior management position related to Treasury? It is causing concern, will he not agree?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

No, as far as I am aware they have all resigned for their individual reasons. We are a large organisation. Some areas of the organisation work under pressure delivering specialised services and if the Member were to look at the expected tenure in the U.K. of these senior types of positions they are anywhere from 3 to 5 years.

4.3.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Chief Minister have any evidence of disagreement between the Minister for Treasury and Resources and the Treasurer prior to her resignation?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Ministers and chief officers disagree all the time. They work through those disagreements on behalf of the public. If we look at the work that the Treasury have delivered over the course of the last 4 years I think we can say there is a partnership that has worked well and delivered on behalf of Jersey.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

If the Minister does have evidence will he reveal it?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I have answered that question. The results of the work that has been delivered shows that the Treasurer and the Minister for Treasury and Resources have worked well over the last 4 years contrary to what the Deputy is trying to suggest.

4.3.3 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

I thought our senior officials usually lasted longer than 4½ years but my question is, is there a compromise agreement attached to this?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

There is no compromise agreement as such. There is of course agreement when somebody is wishing to resign in this way. It is a very important job. It is very important that we ensure continuity and we believe that that is what we have delivered in this instance.

4.3.4 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Is there a payment, a golden handshake to be paid to the departing Treasurer?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

There is no golden handshake. The Senator is aware that the States Employment Board delivered a new policy in regard to departing employees about 2 years ago. That was looked at by the Comptroller and Auditor General. It arose out of a number of issues that this Assembly is well aware of and the agreement reached with the Treasurer is well within the policy of the States Employment Board and meets simply the contractual obligations.

4.3.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

The Chief Minister was careful to preface his earlier answers with: "As far as I am aware", which leaves open the suggestion that the Chief Minister may not be fully aware of all the facts. Will the Chief Minister advise whether or not an exit interview has taken place or will take place with the Treasurer to find out what lessons can be learned either for her resignation or for ways to improve things in that area?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I have no doubt that an exit interview will be undertaken. I simply worded my answer in the way that one would expect. The reasons that I have been given for the Treasurer's resignation do not include the reasons indicated in the question and therefore I say that I am not aware of any. The Treasurer will continue working over the next few weeks. She will be delivering the Budget to States Members later this week and to members of the media as well.

4.3.6 Deputy M. Tadier:

Will the Chief Minister also be able to report back to the Assembly to show whether or not the Treasury-related senior civil servant office post holders seem to suffer from a higher attrition rate than perhaps those of other departments, and if so why that is?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

That is a good question. I am not aware that that is the case. I was simply quoting what happens elsewhere in the world. I think that senior officers... they are pressurised jobs. They are important jobs. Ministers rightly hold them to account. This Assembly wants them to deliver on the priorities of this Assembly and with the best will in the world people cannot remain providing that service for a great length of time. That is one of the reasons that they command the salaries that they do so. I do not think there are issues as suggested by the question.

4.3.7 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Would the Chief Minister care to comment on the strong rumour going around that one of the reasons for the resignation was a disagreement between the Minister for Treasury and Resources and the Treasurer over the presentation of the accounts and whether it will show a deficit or not?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

The accounts have been published as far as I am aware. If I were to listen to every single rumour that I hear every day it would be a very strange world. The Treasurer has her reasons and I believe that we should accept and respect them. She is an individual. She has worked hard on behalf of Jersey and we should thank her and respect the decision that she has given and let the department continue with the good work that it has started.

4.3.8 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Can I ask a supplementary? Obviously Members have been asking about the number of people, can the Chief Minister advise us whether Senator Ozouf attended his anger management classes that he was going to ... the Chief Minister said that he was going to have some counselling.

The Bailiff:

I do not think that arises out of the question, Deputy.

4.3.9 Deputy J.H. Young:

Can the Chief Minister give the Assembly a categorical assurance that he is not aware that the events surrounding the Treasurer's decision to resign can be in any way construed as constructive dismissal requiring a compromise agreement? Can he give that assurance specifically to the Assembly?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

That is a legal definition and people argue about that in front of the Employment Tribunal. I do not believe that that is the case. I have said that we have reached agreement. It is not a compromise agreement. The Treasurer, as I said, will continue her work. Members will be speaking to her later this week as she supports the Minister for Treasury and Resources in delivering the Budget not only to Members but to members of the community and to the media. I also said, and I reiterate it, that the States Employment Board delivered a new policy with regard to departing employees of such seniority and the agreement that we have reached with the Treasurer is in line with that policy, and that policy was reviewed by the previous Controller and Auditor General as reasonable.

4.3.10 Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:

With this 4-year appointment that has been can the Chief Minister advise what succession planning has been put in place, and will we be seeing a local for this position in the future?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

If the Deputy has read the press release it includes that the successor is the chief officer currently of Social Security, who was previously Deputy Treasurer of the States, and he has agreed to act in that role and then we will consider the future and recruit to the substantive position. I believe that that individual is an excellent individual who has served the States well. I believe that he has all the required abilities to work in this role on behalf of the States and I believe that that does indeed show good planning for the future.

4.3.11 Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Supplementary please. Can the Chief Minister confirm that there was no succession planning put in place and will he look to give an undertaking that there will be succession planning for this role in the future?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

How can the Deputy say there is no succession planning in place when we have taken a Deputy Treasurer for the States, moved him across a department, got more experience of a department which is in the future going to be integral to the Treasury Department as a chief officer and then can bring him back as an Acting Treasurer? That is exactly what succession planning looks like. It is exactly what we are aiming at right across all departments.

4.3.12 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

The Chief Minister in his answer almost implied that the person has moved across permanently. Will he confirm to this House that ...

The Bailiff:

No, he did not, Deputy Higgins. He made it clear that this was an interim appointment.

[16:00]

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Yes, but the way he spoke about him it was almost as if he has got the job permanently.

The Bailiff:

No, Deputy, you have had your question and I do not agree with its continuance.

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Sir, I would like to answer that because if the Deputy looks at the evidence last time we needed an Interim Treasurer we had to go off Island. This time we needed an Interim Treasurer and we can find one who is already working for us. I think that is something that we should be pleased about.

4.3.13 Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré:

To paraphrase that saying, to lose one Treasurer is unfortunate, to lose 2 in less than 5 years might be considered careless, given the importance of the position and the previous reference to exit interviews and also the perceived perception of an attrition rate out of Treasury. Will the Chief Minister undertake to ensure that the exit interview does place, and that as Chairman of the States Employment Board he will be in attendance to ensure that all and any causes are known?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

That will give me no problem at all. It is not normal for political attendance at such interview but I have no problem with that and no doubt an exit interview will be undertaken.

4.3.14 The Connétable of St. John:

Will the truth ever come out exactly what has gone on over the last 2 Treasurers?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I have already said when somebody gives the reason for resigning we should, I believe, accept and respect. I do not think that it is very helpful for either the States, the department that the individual is leaving, which continues to have a heavy workload and needs the support of this Assembly, or the individual. We live in a world where things can be said across social media that follow people for the rest of their lives and therefore we have to be very careful about what we say about our employees. We have to respect the reasons for their wish to return to the U.K. in this case and I have nothing further to say.

The Bailiff:

Very well. We will then come to the next question.

Deputy S. Power:

Do I get a final wrap-up question?

The Bailiff:

I am so sorry, Deputy Power. You are absolutely right.

4.3.15 Deputy S. Power:

That is okay, Sir, I can understand why you forgot. My last question is to the Chief Minister and he appears to be a word wizard at plastering over cracks and has 2 parts like the first question. When was the Chief Minister first made aware that the Treasurer was likely to resign, and is he concerned at what are substantial repeated reports of tension within Treasury?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I am not sure whether I should answer that question now or it is the question that Deputy Le Fondré is going to ask me in some moments and I can answer it then. I suppose I can answer it now and answer it again in a couple of minutes. I am informed that the Treasurer offered her resignation on 1st July but I can confirm that I was informed of it the following day. As I have said, within these departments Ministers hold officers to account. The amount of work that the Treasury has done over the last 4 years is phenomenal. More work than I think they have done in many, many decades. They have launched a bond into the market at a phenomenal... They have done 3-year planning. They are doing long-term capital programme planning. Of course there will be tensions within the department to deliver such a large amount of workload but the fact that they have produced that workload and they have been producing on behalf of Jersey shows that the individuals at the top of the department have worked together productively on behalf of Jersey.

Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré:

I do not know if you are aware of the slight exchange I have been having with the Greffier. Is it possible for me to defer this question until the Minister for Treasury and Resources himself is back as it does seem something that really only the Minister for Treasury and Resources can answer and not the Chief Minister?

The Bailiff:

It is up to the Chief Minister and normally we must follow the timetable but if the Chief Minister is happy to see this put off to tomorrow then it can be done.

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I am really in the hands of the questioner. I tried to say earlier that I would be happy to take it. I have just answered the question. It would, of course, be better to try and deal with all of them today but equally the Minister for Treasury and Resources has said he is happy to answer it in the morning.

The Bailiff:

The point is that there is an enormous agenda and today was done in order to ask questions.

Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré:

We were not aware that the Minister for Treasury and Resources was away. It is directly relevant to Treasury and I would think it was appropriate to be able to ask a question and allow Members to ask a question directly of the Minister for Treasury and Resources.

The Bailiff:

The Chief Minister has agreed he does not mind, so do Members agree this can be taken first thing tomorrow morning?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

I am trying to be helpful and I understand the politics behind this but I thought we have just learned the answer to Deputy Le Fondré's question.

The Bailiff:

He is still entitled to ask his question. Do Members agree then that Deputy Le Fondré wants to take this tomorrow morning? Very well. That completes all the questions.