

STATES OF JERSEY



DRAFT ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2012 (P.123/2011): ELEVENTH AMENDMENT

**Lodged au Greffe on 30th August 2011
by Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier**

STATES GREFFE

DRAFT ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2012 (P.123/2011): ELEVENTH
AMENDMENT

PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (a) –

After the words “withdrawn from the consolidated fund in 2012” insert the words –

“except that the net revenue expenditure of the Home Affairs Department shall be increased by £39,000 in order to cancel the proposed CSR saving ‘Jersey Field Squadron – Military Liaison Officer staff reduction’ and the total net revenue of the Treasury and Resources Department (Provision for Central Reserves) shall be reduced by £39,000 for 2012.”.

DEPUTY M.R. HIGGINS OF ST. HELIER

REPORT

The Home Affairs Department's Comprehensive Spending Review proposal to save £39,000 by removing the post of Military Liaison Officer from the Jersey Field Squadron is not only an example of a false economy, but also, in my view, an example of how departments are cynically manipulating the entire CSR process.

The post of Military Liaison Officer is little known to most States Members and Islanders. It was established formally in 1998, and with the advent of Ministerial government, became a standalone position within the Home Affairs Department before becoming fully absorbed into the Jersey Field Squadron in 2008.

The Military Liaison Officer acts as a vital link between military units visiting the Island and the Island authorities and community groups with whom they interact. His tasks are many and varied. He has, for example, arranged –

- for the use of accommodation and facilities in the Island by regular, territorial or reserve military units who are holding camps in the Island;
- for community projects to be undertaken by visiting military units, such as establishing safe cliff pathways for walkers, constructing new facilities at Durrell and various Scout facilities around the Island; and helicopter lift of gun barrels for the Channel Islands Occupation Society from below cliffs to restored gun battery positions;
- air experience flying for the Cadet forces in the Island;
- support for the Liberation Day celebrations, the Battle of Flowers and the Jersey International Air Display.

During the tenure of Mr. Ian Robinson, a very dynamic and active Military Liaison Officer, some 10,000 bed nights of accommodation were provided in one year alone, and the military forces who came to the Island made a direct/indirect financial contribution to the Island estimated to be in the region of £1,000,000 in addition to the community work they undertook and goodwill they generated.

Many of visiting military personnel who came to the Island on duty also subsequently returned to the Island as tourists with members of their families, thus further contributing to the Island's economy.

Whilst in recent years less military personnel and units have visited the Island – partly as a result of defence cuts, but largely, in my opinion, due to a lack of interest or dynamism on the part of the Jersey Field Squadron who absorbed the post – with the result that less money has been spent in the Island. The post, however, still generates considerably more money than the £39,000 that would be saved annually by extinguishing it. It is therefore a false economy and the money and post should be retained.

I believe, however, that the post should be removed from the Jersey Field Squadron and re-established as a standalone position within the Home Affairs Department, with a direct reporting line to the Minister, and that a new dynamic Military Liaison Officer should be appointed.

I also believe that the transfer of this post to the Jersey Field Squadron some 3 years ago, and its subsequent sacrifice as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review, was a cynical manipulation of the CSR process rather than making genuine cost savings. Whilst I am a supporter of all 3 branches of our Armed Forces, and have tremendous admiration for those members of the Field Squadron who have served overseas in Afghanistan and Iraq, this unit has underperformed since it was formed, and genuine savings could have been made either by eliminating the unit's Administration or Quartermaster positions, or the very generous housing subsidies given to permanent Military or Territorial Army staff.

Financial and manpower implications

This amendment is financially neutral as the reinstated saving is offset by a reduction of £39,000 in the £12,485,000 proposed allocation to Treasury and Resources Provision for Central Reserves. One post would be retained.