

STATES OF JERSEY

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SCHOOL MILK: PROVISION FOR THE YEARS 2003, 2004 AND 2005

**Lodged au Greffe on 28th January 2003
by Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier**

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

- (i) to agree that cost of the provision of free school milk should continue to be met from public funds for the years 2003, 2004 and 2005;
- (ii) to request the Finance and Economics Committee to identify the appropriate source of funding for the remainder of 2003; and
- (iii) to agree that funds for this provision should be inscribed in the budget of the Economic Development Committee, and ring-fenced for this purpose, for the years 2004 and 2005.

DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER

Note. The comments of the Finance and Economics Committee are to follow.

REPORT

There can be little doubt in the brief debate which took place over the amendment to support the continued provision of school milk in the 2003 budget that the overwhelming sentiment of members was that the issue of school milk should cease to be a political football. I believe that this sentiment is shared by the majority of the electorate. The purpose of this proposition is to bring a measure of stability to the funding of school milk.

Over many years, the responsibility has passed from being a charitable concern, through Education to the Health and Social Services Committee. For both of these committees, the provision of school milk is not, and inevitably cannot be of a high order of priority. This factor is what precipitated the most recent debate. It was the intention of my amendment to the budget to transfer this responsibility to the then Agriculture and Fisheries Committee, now subsumed in the Economic Development Committee.

I believe that any competition of priorities will be much reduced if school milk is placed firmly in the remit of the Agriculture industry. Without wishing to re-open the debate over the health benefits or otherwise of milk, I believe the balance of the argument is positive. This approach has the double advantage of maintaining the free school milk service to children and supporting the dairy industry and the continuation on the island of the Jersey cow. In the short term, this gives a stable element of support at a time of fundamental review and probable change in the industry.

I have tabled this issue early in this session so that the Fundamental Spending Review (FSR), can at least take account of any funding in 2004, depending on the States' decision. Clearly there is no point in school milk being subject to prioritisation by FSR, otherwise we would be back where we were last year. I am calling for an early debate so that the States can decide whether they are prepared to support the continued provision of school milk, and that the funding be ring-fenced for an appropriate period of time.

Financial and manpower implications

As stated at the time of the debate on my Budget amendment the present annual cost of school milk is approximately £184,000. There are obviously no manpower implications arising out of this proposition.