



Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel

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People and Culture Follow-up Review

Dear Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel,

Many thanks for your invitation to participate in your review of People and Culture within the Government of Jersey. We have responded to each of your key questions below.

- *Any department specific challenges or concerns in relation to improving and maintaining a satisfactory workplace culture.*

The Government of Jersey still face significant workplace culture challenges within a number of Departments. One of the most impacted areas is Health and Community Services (HCS). We have a significant numbers of Allied Health Professional members and they all report a culture of overwork, stress, employment of higher paid interims or temporary staff and a lingering bullying and harassment environment.

HCS have a serious recruitment problem. It is clear that the package offered is not enough to encourage recruitment from either within the island or the United Kingdom. HCS are then forced to take on interim staff, on temporary contracts, paid significantly more than permanent staff. These interim employees are also provided with free or subsidised accommodation. Existing permanent staff observe the employment of these high paid temporary staff and this further decreases morale. This results in further resignations thus increasing the recruitment need.

A dependency on so many interim staff creates a culture of permanent employees feeling they are not valued and become less motivated to do their important jobs.

The GOJ need to consider more creative ways of addressing the situation, by maintaining local skills and offering competitive and attractive packages to reduce the dependency on temporary staff.

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Looking more broadly across the Government of Jersey we are aware of a significant number of employees who have been working in the public sector for considerable time without being offered permanent contracts of employment. In April 2023 we were told that there were 650 people on fixed term contracts ( 260 were civil servants) and the number of temporary contracts was unknown. This means that a considerable number of GOJ employees are working without the certainty of knowing they have permanent future salaries. This impacts on their ability to arrange mortgages, loans and many other aspects of their life and creates a culture of detachment and absence of commitment to their work. The GOJ should review this position and seek to establish more permanent contracts where sensible and relevant.

- The effectiveness of the current grievance, disciplinary, and bullying and harassment processes for employees and any changes required.

The GOJ had attempted to improve its policies covering grievance, disciplinary and bullying and harassment. The main focus has been to try to improve the historic extremely lengthy timescales associated with addressing these issues. Whilst there have been some improvements, we still see lengthy cases, many of these with employees suspended and the associated impact on their mental health. In our view, the most damaging action resulting from the policies is the suspension of employees who are either under investigation or have made allegations of others. We believe there would be real value in the GOJ trying, where possible, to maintain some type of work involvement for those impacted by the policies.

Another area of concern is the quality of the investigations undertaken. There is significant variation in the quality and accuracy of investigations. In many cases comments and interview notes have to be revised a number of times.

The new policies place a strong emphasis on firstly trying to resolve by informal meetings. In principle this is fine (and it helps with the aim to reduce timescales) but we need to ensure that employees do not perceive this drive for informal resolution as a degrading of the seriousness of their allegations. The same can be said about the ' 5 day fact finding' exercise. This is normally undertaken by the line manager and we have to avoid an employee perception that they might be motivated to 'downplay' any allegations. These also take far more time than five days, sometimes as long as five weeks!.

- How employee morale and wellbeing could be improved.

In general GOJ employees report that they are overworked, stressed and mostly they do not look forward to coming to work. It is recognised that the GOJ are not unique in encountering difficulties recruiting into vacancies however it has to overcome the challenges of offering less attractive packages covering annual leave, health schemes, etc as well as pay. The GOJ need to develop competitive remuneration packages which get closer to those offered in the private sector in Jersey.

The GOJ has invested in a number of wellbeing initiatives and it is recognised that this has helped in several areas. Most of the initiatives relies on the employee identifying there are struggling with their wellbeing and some are reluctant to express these views. The GOJ needs to consider create ways to address this problem.

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- Whether the employee exit interview policy and procedures could be improved and how.

The GOJ now offer exit interviews to all employees and we do see data of trends in some departments. A key question is how the GOJ respond to the information it receives. The willingness of employees to participate in exit interviews depends upon their perception on whether their comments will be addressed by the employer. We understand many employees choose not to undertake an exit interview. In addition, exit interview comments may be constrained by the fact that the GOJ is the major employer in Jersey and the employee may seek employment with it in the future.

- The effect of frequent Chief Executive Officer (CEO) changes on leadership of the public sector, people and culture in the workplace and service delivery

We believe the frequent changes at CEO level impacts on the culture of the organisation and its ability to deliver the services needed. Looking back a few years we are very aware of the structural damage resulting from the initiatives emerging when Mr Parker was the CEO. Some years later we are still recovering from the impact on delivery of services and the skills loss. More recently we have seen a CEO, Suzanne Wylie, who demonstrated a desire to work with GOJ employees and their representatives. Unfortunately she has left the organisation and we are, yet again, faced with an era of uncertainty. It is important the we appoint a CEO who will stay for a reasonable number of years and develop the right relationship with the GOJ employees and their representatives.

- The impact of the CEO role's restructure on the Cabinet Office and the broader public sector.

We have seen very little to no changes other than a larger department to support the ministers.

- Any other issues that the Panel should consider as part of its review.

There had been significant improvements in the ability of the unions to directly engage with the SEB. There are now regular quarterly meeting where unions can submit agenda items. In addition relationships with senior HR management have improved and a mutual respect has developed between both parties.

We are soon to meet in relation to further possible improvements in the process of misconduct in investigations which will hopefully help going forward.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues at any Scrutiny Hearings you call.

Yours sincerely

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President, JCSA Prospect

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