

2.6 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding tenders for the bus service contract:

Further to his reply to my question of 29th April regarding the likelihood of putting the bus service out to tender, would the Minister undertake to inform Members before his decision whether or not the re-tender takes effect in order that Members are not faced with a fait-accompli?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye (The Minister for Transport and Technical Services):

In my answer to the Deputy on 29th April 2008, I stated at that time I had not yet made a decision as to whether the bus service will be put out to tender when the current contract expires in September 2009, but I stated and I quote: "I can assure the Deputy that I will inform States Members as soon as a decision has been made." This is still my intention and I will be making a statement under part K of today's agenda, as can be seen on the supplementary agenda on Members' desks.

2.6.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Can the Minister inform the House whether in the process of reaching his decision he took due account, for example, of the views of Scrutiny and of other people who had a strong interest in this particular issue?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I very much wish to be able to take due account of the views of the Scrutiny Panel and they have been in possession of the briefing statement that I gave to them, I believe now, for some 2 months. I have had an indication from the chairman of the panel that he does not agree necessarily with the approach I am taking, but regrettably despite laying down a number of deadlines I have had no response from the Scrutiny Panel, I understand because they wish further information from the department, some of which we simply have not been able to reply to or provide. In fact, Scrutiny were being advised as a matter of courtesy. In reality, the operation of the contract is an entirely executive issue.

2.6.2 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

Would the Minister not agree to inform Members that it was not the case that Scrutiny has been sitting on this for 2 months and, in fact, what had happened was the Minister had called Scrutiny into his confidence and has been meeting with the Minister and his department to look at this issue in quite a large amount of detail - specific detail - in relation to this contract; and what he is asserting this morning is trying to indicate some sort of onus upon Scrutiny for the delay when, in effect, what has happened is he has just disregarded the process altogether because he has got wind of the fact that we may not be agreeing with him and gone ahead and signed the deal?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

It has always been my intention to make an announcement at this particular States meeting. I have attempted to work with Scrutiny. Indeed, I have been before a Scrutiny Panel to discuss this matter, but I have also, in fairness to myself, laid down a series of deadlines for the chairman of the Scrutiny Panel because I simply wish to make the announcement today, which I am going to do. I would have been extremely interested to have had a full amount of advice from the Scrutiny Panel, but frankly I just cannot keep waiting. At the end of the day there are some important benefits to the travelling public which the agreement that I have agreed will release and the reality is that continued waiting is simply not in the public interest.

2.6.3 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

Is it not the case that the reason the Minister has been waiting is due to the fact that his own department has not been able to furnish the Scrutiny Panel with the information that it requires to make a valued judgment on the issue that he has requested us to look into? The delay is not the

Scrutiny Panel's fault; it is the department's fault for not having the information that the Scrutiny Panel requires to make a valued judgment.

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

The department has made every effort to provide information when Scrutiny Panel has requested it. The only information that has not been forthcoming are the most recent comparisons for the bus Connex annual figures and that was simply because it was decided that we were not effectively comparing like with like, and that was due largely to the integration of the service. We have been as co-operative with Scrutiny as we possibly can. I really cannot see how it takes over 8 weeks to analyse a 2-page briefing document. I did not ask Scrutiny for a full review of the entire bus service; I simply wanted their advice and their views on a 2-page briefing document. Why it has taken so long, and why so much information is required, I do not know. The department has attempted to assist where it can.

2.6.4 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

It seems when the Minister answered my question he kindly reminded us of what he said on 29th April, but of course that was the reason why I put this whole question, because the Minister appears to have overlooked the fact that I am asking whether he would undertake to inform Members before his decision takes effect whereas on 29th April he advised us that he would advise us after his decision has taken effect. My query is will Members have some indication of which way the Minister intends to move before that decision is made because after the decision is made it is too late to change anything?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I have done my very best, I think, to be as courteous as possible to Deputy Baudains. The blunt fact is the short answer to his question is, no.

2.6.5 Deputy R.C. Duhamel of St. Saviour:

I will be making some comments and asking questions in relation to the statement that the Minister for Transport and Technical Services is going to be making later during the day. Before that, could the Minister confirm a conversation with his Chief Officer - a timetable for the receipt of the comments from the Scrutiny Panel that the Minister has been working behind the scenes with in confidence - and that deadline was set for yesterday? The panel did meet yesterday. A letter was prepared and is wending its way to the department at this very moment. In fact, it should be there by now. Contrary to the remarks that he is making the Scrutiny Panel has not held up the decision making in any shape or form and would he confirm that?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I certainly would not. It is to the knowledge of my department and conveyed to myself that the Scrutiny Panel have been in a state of complete disarray as my department has attempted to establish quite when we were going to get a response to our request for their views. As I said, I have laid down a series of deadlines - the very latest deadline was by the end of the month and I was informed, and we have received information, that we would be getting the final response last week. The fact that it turned up yesterday is news to me because I was in the department until 6.30 p.m. yesterday and I have received nothing from the Environment Scrutiny Panel. Quite frankly, given the series of deadlines the Scrutiny Panel has had, if information has simply turned up today it really is far too late and I cannot be expected to keep hanging around waiting for views when in all seriousness it was out of courtesy that I made the initial contact anyway.