

2020.03.09

9 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Chief Minister regarding his interaction with the Government Plan Efficiencies Review Panel: (OQ.75/2020)

Further to the indications in his recent letter to me as Chair of the Government Plan Efficiencies Review Panel that there is little background material for planned efficiencies beyond what is already in the public domain and that a sustainable well-being impact assessment is still in development, will the Chief Minister explain how he will assist meaningful and public scrutiny of planned efficiencies by the Panel?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré (The Chief Minister):

I think there has been some slight confusion arising in the correspondence between background material, which is what was requested and supporting material. But, anyway, trying to move matters forward, what I have understood is that a meeting of officers is being arranged to meet Scrutiny officials on Thursday and that is with a view to trying to resolve matters.

3.9.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

So, peace of mind, can the Minister assure me that there are supporting papers that lie beneath the cost-cutting efficiencies, for example, £10 million on one side of A4 and (b) that work that is ongoing will not be used as a pretext as policy under development to prevent me from exploring other parts of what he proposes in the coming research?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

In terms of the efficiencies that are presently being implemented and have been previously approved, as far as I am concerned there is ... **[Electronic interruption]** sorry, Sir, that is definitely not me. I think that is a second incursion by Senator Moore's P.C.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Could someone find Senator Moore and tell her that her computer is making a noise? Thank you.

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

In relation to the efficiencies that have been approved, there will be supporting documentation, which various groups considered when they were being put together. There will be somewhere, they have made very clear, that there have been summary business cases and there are more detailed business cases being put together, depending on what the circumstances are. In terms of things being developed, it will depend on the circumstances as to when Scrutiny can get access to it, but they will have access to it in terms of it will probably be a case of once they have been approved, or considered, by either the relevant political oversight group, or when it goes out to Council of Ministers, but we can have a discussion around the access on that. It will always follow the normal rules for Scrutiny and access to information.

3.9.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Is it the case that if efficiencies are unable to be implemented, or unwilling to be implemented, that agreed growth from this Assembly voted on in the Government Plan may well be withheld?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

What we have said is that there were 3 levels and it was identified in the efficiency plan that the intention would be to try and achieve the efficiencies identified. If there was an issue one looks for

alternative efficiencies and if not it would be a reprofiling of the growth expenditure. At the end of those, the focus is very much we have got to achieve the target in some shape, or form, to meet the funding commitments, because, as we keep saying, there is not an unlimited pot of money.

3.9.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Does that not mean that the democratically agreed growth funding of the Government Plan we debated and voted on in this Assembly could therefore not happen? So we have lost the primacy of this Assembly in the allocation of funds.

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

No, we made it very clear in the efficiencies plan, which was part of the whole principles, as to what the principles were behind identifying the efficiencies and so that is not a case of primacy, we were very clear as to the way the efficiencies would be triaged, for want of a better expression, in terms of them being achieved. It is not about the primacy. That is about delivering what we said we would do and that the £100 million of efficiencies that we have to identify over the course of the Government Plan - and the £40 million particularly - are basically funding some of the growth.

3.9.4 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Point of clarification, if we voted on a growth bid in the Government Plan and that is withheld, should there not be specific reasons given to this Assembly, seeing as we voted on that? Is that not the issue, that was the question I asked?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

I have not said that any growth will be withheld, I said it could be reprofiled. That does not mean it does not happen. It might mean it might start slightly later, for example. That was an example I gave in the Assembly and in Scrutiny at the various times, which means that if one recruits a month later than one might have originally budgeted for, then that is one twelfth less of expenditure in that year. That is not a recurring saving, but it is enough to get over the line. That is not about use, one will still get the growth and the new resource, or the new work in place, it just does not start as quickly as it might happen. That has always been the case. Some Departments budget for everything starting on 1st January, but generally, even if the Department has been given the go ahead one month before, one cannot recruit people in for 1st January and, therefore, the expenditure that has been approved by the Assembly - and I am going back for years - is not always what is spent. That was the principle being applied. That was what I called about reprofiling. I thought I was very clear into many Members at briefings and to Scrutiny, so that was the approach. But the crucial thing is trying to achieve the efficiencies in the first place.

3.9.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

To use a specific example, then, when the Assembly says we want to provide £375,000 of spending this year to employ new *Jèrriais* teachers to start this year at some point and then hypothetically a Minister says: "Actually, I cannot find that money and therefore I am not going to do that", which takes precedence? The desire of a Minister, who has not been able to find savings to cut growth, or of the Assembly to charge a Minister to deliver a particular growth aspect?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

Using the very hypothetical scenario that the Deputy is hypothetically referring to, hypothetically there may well have been some conversations with the Deputy hypothetically to consider that very hypothetical situation how we might hypothetically resolve it.

3.9.6 Deputy M. Tadier:

I know we are not supposed to ask hypothetical questions and that was not entirely hypothetical, the first part is certainly fact. Could I ask: would the Chief Minister give an assurance that there will be *Jèrriais* teachers employed this year at some point, which has already been delayed and that money will be released in sufficiently good time in order for the employment process to take place for those teachers to start by September?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

The Deputy knows my full support for the teaching of *Jèrriais* and I give as much assurance as I can possibly give on that matter. I am waiting for some further updates on that matter in less than 10 days.

3.9.7 Deputy G.P. Southern:

I thank the Minister for agreeing to meet with officers on Thursday and for his clarity today about an assurance, we will not see anything untoward. But, can I just trouble him about the last statement he was making about reprofiling and other such magic management speak words, which mean if you do not reappoint a post for 3 months, 6 months, you end up with 6 months' worth of unpaid salary to spend elsewhere. Is he going to clamp down on that as a simple efficiency in the first place?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

It is not going to be spent elsewhere. The objective here is if there are difficulties in making the original planned efficiencies. But, as I said, that was laid out in the reports that accompanied the Government Plan. It is not new in the last few days. It was made very clear in the run up to the debate.