

4.1 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of the Chief Minister regarding what action, if any, is being taken against those who may not have followed the rules under States' Travel Policies: [9500]

Following the release of the review of travel policies and recommendations for improvement, which stated the review has not uncovered widespread misuse of procedures, could the Chief Minister outline where any misuse has been uncovered and what action, if any, is being taken against those who did not follow the rules?

Senator I.J. Gorst (The Chief Minister):

The investigation did not identify any serious occurrences which would warrant disciplinary proceedings against any individual. It did find some examples of documentation left uncompleted; for example, written authorisation was not received in advance for some flights supporting Ministers. However, it was clear to all that the flight was accompanying a Minister. It did not identify any deliberate attempts to circumvent procedures but in some cases processes were not clear. Departments had developed their own procedures and there was variation in how rules were interpreted, hence, of course, the recommendations made in the review, which is now published on the Government website.

4.1.1 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

A supplementary: there have, of course, been occasions where even if the rules relating to booking flights have been followed according to the book, the accounts given about those flights, given to the public afterwards, have certainly been unsatisfactory. Has the Minister given any consideration to making further statements about the flight which was taken by 2 civil servants to South Africa and the account they gave afterwards, which did not seem to match the account they gave initially?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I say things and I read about it and hear about it and it does not match the account that I gave and I was there in the room. How much more so, Members of this Assembly should know, that they can be misquoted and taken out of context from the things that they say in a way that the investigation, which was carried out by the Chief Internal Auditor, supported by an independent person, found in this case. So I hope the Deputy would realise that that report and the findings of the other report show that we need to focus on the changes that need to be made and we need to respect those independent reports and recognise that there are people that we are asking to work in various areas like Locate Jersey, like growing the economy, that need to travel around the globe and deliver inward investment and jobs into our community for the benefit of all.

4.1.2 Deputy S.M. Wickenden of St. Helier:

I would like to ask: on this independent review when did the States Employment Board receive this review and talk about it at their meeting?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I do not have exactly the date that the States Employment Board received the review. It was an independent review so the States Employment Board could not influence the outcome of that review. It was a review to be received by them. The meeting of last week did not take place, but I can certainly find exactly the details of when the report was given to members of the States Employment Board. I think it was the end of the week before.

4.1.3 Deputy A.D. Lewis:

In a recent P.A.C. hearing, the Chief Executive of the States of Jersey did state: "I will say right at the outset today my own department has not complied with the absolute letter of the law of financial direction 5.7." Does the Minister feel that that comes over clearly enough in the report that has been produced and does he also feel that the report does not address cultural issues in the way that these funds are spent, which we have had pointed out on a number of occasions in regard to public expenditure? Cultural behaviour within the States, does he feel that that has been addressed within this report?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

If I take the cultural issue first, there are a number of facets to this, are there not? There is the need for the trip and then there is about getting value for money once it has been agreed that the trip needs to take place. I can speak for my own area. There is oversight by the External Relations and Financial Services Board that looks at the trips that Ministers and officials will be taking and that meeting, therefore, in effect, says: "Yes, that is a necessary trip." Then what this review is doing is saying that we need to make sure that where appropriate we are using the appropriate level of flight, and this report says that broadly that should be economy. Only in extremis, on long distance flights, should it be business and, even where it is business, we should look at ways of reducing that cost, perhaps, for officers. This is more difficult for Ministers, of course, but perhaps for officers they should be using different hubs around Europe for connecting flights, thereby reducing the cost. That is what departments will be doing.

The Bailiff:

Final supplementary?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

No, thank you, Deputy Lewis touched upon the thing I wanted to ask.