

3.2 Deputy A.D. Lewis of St. Helier of the Chief Minister regarding the process for the redemption of business loyalty points under the States' travel policy: [9561]

Further to the publication of the review by the Chief Minister's Department entitled *Review of Travel Policy and Recommendations for Improvement*, can the Minister explain what the process is for the redemption of business loyalty points and advise who has responsibility for ensuring best value is attained for the public purse?

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

Departments have now been asked to notify corporate procurement before making bookings where business loyalty points can be used. The central procurement team then apply the corporate points we collect as part of the booking. This means we are using the points we are collecting. A revised Financial Direction is being finalised to cover these business points and it will also encompass use of other points, such as Avios points. This meets the recommendations of the recently published travel review. Of course accounting officers are ultimately responsible for best value but all elements of the public sector have a duty to consider value for money.

3.2.1 Deputy A.D. Lewis:

I wonder if the Chief Minister could therefore explain as to why there has been such a long gap between the last redemption of points being in July last year. Also can he explain why 2 of his chief officers at a public hearing recently admitted that they were unaware that they could redeem centrally accumulated points for their departments' travel and 2 other officers said that they believed the centralised booking system prevented them from redeeming points?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

We have had conversations in this Assembly about the difference between B.A. (British Airways) corporate or business points and personal points, such as Avios. I do not think it helps the conversation of the improvements and the changes that we are putting in when we confuse them. This is, as the Deputy would expect, we are changing policy, we are changing the way that we redeem points and the process, and we are using, going forward, procurement more at the centre of this, and therefore he can expect to see that, what he was questioned about at a hearing a number of weeks ago, the policy is in the process of change. I welcome him to review the changed policy and to work with us to his satisfaction that that changed policy is going to deliver best value because I think he will find that it is.

3.2.2 Deputy A.D. Lewis:

The Minister did not answer as to why his officers, 4 in this case, still do not seem to be aware of the policy and not aware that there are 1.5 million points that can be redeemed, and they are not aware as to how they can go about redeeming them, and indeed most officers that have accessibility to them are not redeeming them. So if policy is in place but it does not seem to be working. This is only last week.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Your question is?

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Can he assure us that the policy that he has implemented is now in place and is working because the evidence suggests at the public hearing it is not.

Senator I.J. Gorst:

That is not the case. The policy is working. The Deputy knows that when we last spoke about this matter there were a bank of B.A. business points - over a million of them - which had not recently in recent months been redeemed. But since there has been a change in policy over the last 90 days, I think we have earned something like 99,000 points, they have been earned in the same period. We spent 56,000 of those points reducing the cost of travel to important meetings in Tokyo by officials and reducing the cost of travel over to China by educationalists. So the policy is now working. We accept that it needed to change. It has changed and we will be working with all departments to ensure that they now follow their new centralised policy and at the same time Treasury are working on improving Financial Directions to ensure right across, not only business points but also those personal points, that they are going to be used in a consistent and appropriate way delivering best value for taxpayers.