

2024.12.10

Deputy D.J. Warr of St. Helier South of the Minister for Treasury and Resources regarding the use of a UK recruitment agency for the Chief Executive of Andium Homes vacancy (OQ.234/2024):

Will the Minister advise the rationale and anticipated benefits of appointing a U.K. (United Kingdom) recruitment agency and advertising the chief executive of Andium Homes vacancy off-Island, and detail the associated costs?

Deputy M.E. Millar of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity (The Minister for Treasury and Resources):

In accordance with the Jersey Appointments Commission's policy on senior recruitment for independent bodies, the recruitment process for Andium Homes C.E.O. (chief executive officer) is being independently overseen by a designated appointments commissioner. The Jersey Appointments Commission has confirmed that the board has applied a fair and robust process in selecting a recruitment agency and received tenders from both local and U.K.-based firms, with a strong background in recruitment to senior roles, including in affordable housing providers, and having experience of working in Jersey. The appointed commissioner is satisfied that an appropriate decision was made. Odgers, which was the successful recruitment agency, has been instructed by the board to conduct its extensive search both in Jersey and the U.K., and will ensure a fair process for all applicants. While the board is using a U.K.-based agency to support them in the recruitment of this critical role, they are fully committed and actively promoting the role on-Island. This is an important and unique role for the Island and it is essential that Andium are able to recruit from a broad, diverse and appropriately skilled talent pool to ensure they secure the very best candidate for the role. Andium are the Island's largest social housing provider with some 4,900 homes housing over 10,000 Islanders and a further 1,000 homes are being delivered in the next few years. Fees are a matter between Andium and the agency, however I would expect the fees to be standard for this type and level of recruitment.

3.5.1 Deputy D.J. Warr:

I thank the Minister for her answer. How would the Minister measure what is the economic loss to our economy of not using a local procurement agency in this instance?

Deputy M.E. Millar:

I think it is very difficult to measure economic loss. A fee will be paid to someone in the U.K. rather than being paid to someone in Jersey. However, it is important that we do get the right candidate and by using an agency that is not up to scratch, we may suffer a much greater economic loss by getting a poorer candidate, and that is why we have to make sure we have an agency who have the best contacts to get the very best candidate for the role. I am sorry, that question was not to demean any of our current agencies, but the point is that having a U.K.-based agency will have greater contacts in the U.K. to make sure we get the best role.

3.5.2 Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade:

Given the local nature of Andium Homes and given that the current incumbent is about to retire after some 20 years, can the Minister explain what succession planning processes have been going on at Andium Homes?

Deputy M.E. Millar of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

Andium has a succession plan for all areas of business, which focuses on the development of its existing staff. Internal applications for the role will be positively welcomed, but any appointment will have to be made on merit alone.

Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North:

First of all, Sir, can I raise the défaut on Deputy Moore, please?

The Bailiff:

Yes, the défaut is raised on Deputy Moore.

3.5.3 Deputy I. Gardiner:

I put my light on when I heard the expression that the local agencies are not up to scratch, and I was a bit concerned. Will the Minister explain why we are going first to outside of Jersey agencies before we explore possibilities of the succession plan, which should be in place, or local agencies before we are thinking that outside of Jersey we have much better candidates?

Deputy M.E. Millar:

Firstly, I did not intend to demean local agencies and I certainly did not say that they were not up to scratch. Andium took tenders from 2 local agencies and from 2 U.K. agencies and selected the one that they thought with the best contact to get the best candidate for the role. This is a very important role for the Island. There is succession planning but, as I have also said, there is a Jersey Appointments Commission process that says there must be an open and fair recruitment process. The Appointments Commission is supervising the entire process. There is a designated appointed commissioner to ensure that there is a fair process, and the process must follow those rules. It would not be appropriate to simply select someone internally without going through a full process, but if anybody internally wishes to apply, their application will be considered in the same way as any other application that is received.

3.5.4 Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

When the Deputy describes the search for the best candidate, how will the weighting be directed in terms of the understanding of the local market and the local environment for the tenants and the business model of Andium Homes?

Deputy M.E. Millar:

As I say, there is a fair process. I do not think that there will necessarily be a weighting to say that a local person is necessarily better. What is important is ... as I say, Andium has almost 5,000 homes. They are the largest developer. They have issued a very detailed candidate brief. There will be other social housing providers all over the U.K. who may have people who are entirely up to the job in Jersey. It is important that we get the right person for the job. It may be that the right person for the job is already in Jersey, and we are speculating. But there must be a fair process to make sure that we do have someone who is best at the job.

3.5.5 Deputy K.L. Moore:

I would like to ask the Minister if she has read the former Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel review into recruitment and retention?

Deputy M.E. Millar:

No, I have not.

3.5.6 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

My question is not so much about why we are not recruiting locally but why we are simply recruiting in the U.K.. If a broad and diverse pool of talent is sought, why are European agencies not used to try and attract multilingual and suitably qualified individuals from the likes of Poland, Portugal, Romania and France, just to name a few countries?

Deputy M.E. Millar:

I did not say that ... I think I was very clear in my original answer that the board are committed to making sure that this role is properly advertised and that there will be an extensive search in Jersey and in the U.K. I understand his question but I think the U.K. and the market in the U.K. is probably closer to Jersey than it is in Romania. I do not know what social housing is like in Portugal or Romania or Poland, and we have to ... I think it is still the case I imagine that the vast majority of tenants are English-speaking, as are most of the board. But I do not think that would stop someone from any of those jurisdictions applying if they were minded to do so.

3.5.7 Deputy M. Tadier:

If geographical distance is one of the reasons for not recruiting in Europe, then perhaps we could think about Normandy and Brittany, which I think are much closer geographically than the southern-most point of the U.K. Does she recognise that that individual, if anyone were recruited from there, there would be a presumption that they would speak English, so the idea that they would not be able to communicate on behalf of Andium is actually incorrect? Does she accept that?

Deputy M.E. Millar:

I think Government and government agencies get enough criticism by bringing in people from the U.K.

[10:15]

When we start bringing in people from all over Europe, I think that is an additional challenge. If somebody from another jurisdiction wishes to apply for a job in Jersey, they are very able and willing to do so. The vacancies will be advertised locally on gov.je, on Andium Home's own social media platforms and by the recruitment agency. Jobs in Jersey are very easy to identify and apply for, I believe.

3.5.8 Deputy D.J. Warr:

Does the Minister not agree that this process sends out a message that we do not have the calibre of individual on-Island, despite a significant succession plan already being in place?

Deputy M.E. Millar:

No, I do not agree with that. I think that if we want to simply recruit from within Andium, then we have to go and discuss that with the Jersey Appointments Commission. We have a process for senior appointments, and I am quite sure that if someone from Andium or from anywhere was given the job there would be criticism for not having a full and fair and open process. We are following the Jersey Appointments Commission process, which has been agreed, I believe, by this Assembly, and I do not think that we can do anything else than follow that process. If we start making exceptions for Andium, we will start make exceptions for all the other A.L.O.s (arm's length organisations) and States-owned entities and every other body where candidates are recruited following that process, and we should follow that process.