

STATES OF JERSEY



DRAFT ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2010 (P.117/2009): TENTH AMENDMENT

**Lodged au Greffe on 8th September 2009
by Deputy S. Pitman of St. Helier**

STATES GREFFE

PAGE 3, PARAGRAPH (b) –

After the words “withdrawn from the consolidated fund in 2010”, insert the words –

“except that the net revenue expenditure of the States Assembly and its services shall be decreased by £11,300 through the cessation of free lunches for States members on States meeting days and the cessation of free sandwich lunches during all meetings of scrutiny panels, the Public Accounts Committee and the Privileges and Procedures Committee”.

DEPUTY S. PITMAN OF ST. HELIER

REPORT

Over the past few weeks we have heard much about the need for government to 'tighten its belt' and make efficiency savings. Some of these proposed savings have caused public outrage, not least being those initially targeted at services to vulnerable people such as Patient Transport and the work of the Grands Vaux Family Centre. As a politician I have shared that outrage at these suggestions. The fact that these decisions were subsequently reversed in the face of public outcry says it all, I believe. To suggest cutting such crucial services, and to people who need them so badly, demonstrates clearly how little thought had gone into these proposals.

If genuine efficiency savings must be made in difficult economic times, then the question must surely be asked of Government – why are we not targeting the truly unnecessary for these cuts? Every pound surely counts if Government is serious about making savings. Yet nowhere within the Business Plan have I come across proposals to cut the completely unnecessary money we outlay on providing States Members' lunches during Sittings; or the large amount of sandwiches we provide throughout the year as lunches for Scrutiny and other meetings. I believe that this is unacceptable.

I fail to see why members need to have a free lunch during States Sittings. We get an ample lunch-break that allows plenty of time to visit a café – an exercise that would obviously also give a boost to some local businesses. For those who do not wish to do this, provision of facilities within the States Building make it quite possible for Members to bring and consume a packed lunch. With regard to Scrutiny and other meetings, I believe that provision of tea, coffee and biscuits is more than adequate.

It is true that the monies that would be saved by acceptance of this amendment would not be huge. Some £8,000 for States Sitting lunches and £3,300 for the sandwiches provided for Scrutiny sessions and other meetings. Nevertheless, I believe that if we are serious about making savings and about convincing the public of the need to do so, then the message that we will send out by making these cuts is of significant importance.

I ask the question – how can we expect the public to accept we need to cut public services when we are not prepared to make savings on lunches every one of us can well afford. I do not believe that we can. I believe it is time Government, and particularly the Council of Ministers, was seen to practice what it preaches.

Financial and manpower implications

As I have not sought to re-allocate the financial savings made from cutting States Sitting lunches and the sandwiches provided for Scrutiny and other meetings, I believe there to be no financial or manpower implications if this amendment is accepted.