WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CHIEF MINISTER

BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 11th MAY 2010

Question

"Further to the response to question 5289 on 20th April 2010, which stated that over 1,000 civil servants (one sixth of the workforce) have access to the "Livelink" system, will the Chief Minister advise members how many of these are senior management above grade 10?

How many officers on average, and at what grades, are involved in the process of producing a single Ministerial Decision from its inception to its appearance on the gov.je website?

Can he explain to members why there has been a massive reduction in the number of decisions published on the website by each Department compared with the old Committee system of "Acts" published along with the accompanying reasons or briefing papers?

Has "Livelink" reduced the information available to scrutiny and the public rather than increasing accessibility and accountability, as it was expected to do?

With set up and hardware costs at over £2million and annual running costs of £131,000 for the licence alone, does the Minister consider the system to be an efficient alternative to the Committee Clerks it replaced?"

Answer

It should be noted that the LiveLink system is not used solely for the recording of Ministerial Decisions. LiveLink is a corporate document management system used by States Departments for general document and records management purposes. The Ministerial Decision process is only a small part of the functionality of the system.

The total number of officers who have access to LiveLink is 1,050 and of these approximately 130 officers have access to Ministerial Decision functionality. Some 27 of these officers are above a grade 10.

The number of people involved in the Ministerial Decisions process depends entirely on the nature of the Ministerial Decision itself. A Ministerial Decision might relate to a significant and complex States wide issue(s), or a simple procedural matter.

The Ministerial Decision recording process involves the following key stages:

- Completing the Ministerial Decision template and supporting documents.
- Departmental Quality Assurance by senior managers of the decision, the reason(s) for the decision and supporting paperwork.
- Uploading the documentation on to LiveLink.
- Quality Assurance of the decision by the States Greffe.
- Approval by the Minister following discussion with officers.
- Publication of the Ministerial Decision onto the States website by the States Greffe.

This process takes up a small part of a number of officers overall working time. It should be noted that with the advent of Ministerial Government the costs of recording Ministerial Decisions were absorbed by departments rather than employing Committee Clerks under the previous Committee system. Thus, in this area headcount was reduced and costs were saved as part of the new Ministerial Decisions process.

A Ministerial Decision is not necessarily equivalent to an "Act" of Committee. "Acts" were extracts of minutes of States Committees, whereas Ministerial Decisions record the decisions of Ministers and the reason(s) for the decision. Comparing the number of Ministerial Decisions with the number of "Acts" under the previous Committee system is therefore meaningless and should not be used to indicate any reduction in transparency or the availability of information.

As LiveLink is simply used as a mechanism to process and publish Ministerial Decisions, there is no reason to suggest that the use of LiveLink has reduced the amount of information available to Scrutiny and the wider public.

It is important to point out that the costs identified by the Deputy relate to the LiveLink system as a whole not just the Ministerial Decision functionality. These costs therefore cannot be reasonably compared against the cost of the Committee Clerks who were responsible for recording decisions under the Committee system.