

Access to Public Information Response

October 27th 2015

REQUEST UNDER THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION

Request sent on October 27th 2015:

Firstly, can PSD provide a breakdown on the money spent on the airport rehabilitation project. The department published a project cost summary within an appendix to the September 2009 States report – could the department provide the equivalent figures for what was actually spent and a brief summary of what the money was spent on with an explanation for any variance?

The report also states that the contingency sums include provision for three additional air traffic control staff on a temporary basis during the apron works at £240,000. Were these staff employed, for how long and at what cost? What was the headcount for air traffic control before the project and what is it now?

Can we have similar information available for the harbour berths work which the department announced earlier this month was finished on budget?

In its February 2012 report, the department on p714 provides a breakdown of total project costs, on p715 the anticipated cash flow profile and p716 the current income and associated cost of operations. Again, could we have the equivalent actual amounts spend on each element of the project, what the cash flow profile was and what the updated income projections now are, with any commentary the department wishes to supply to explain any variance?

States of Guernsey response February 3rd 2016:

States of Guernsey capital projects are a matter of considerable public interest and disclosure of costs is a key aspect of transparency and openness. In dealing with relevant requests regarding the Airport 2040 project and the refurbishment of the freight handling facilities at St Peter Port Harbour, the issue has not been one of disclosure, but primarily timeliness and accuracy.

On major capital projects, following construction or contract completion there are often elements of costs still to be finalised and other matters outstanding. These are potentially very significant and releasing detailed cost information in a piecemeal fashion:-

- a) could prove subsequently to be incomplete or inaccurate, or
- b) might prejudice the interests of the States (and therefore taxpayers), for instance in resolving outstanding legal or contractual issues.

It is acknowledged that for such long term projects the time taken until completion and final accounts is far from ideal from the media's perspective.

Some reassurance has therefore been provided that the projects remain within budget, and the Department intends to provide overall cost information when the accounts are finalised on project completion (as opposed to construction or contractual completion).

In terms of further reassurance and scrutiny, a post-implementation review is required under States of Guernsey project management procedures for any project costing in excess of £1 million. This will be an expert, independent appraisal, on behalf of the Public Accounts Committee, and the Department fully expects this to be published.

The States accounts updates on the amounts spent on capital projects, both as an annual basis and total spend to date. The most recently published States show that up to 31st December 2014, capital expenditure on these two projects totalled:-

- Airport pavements rehabilitation – £71.4 million.
- St Peter Port Harbour Crane Strategy – £12.2 million.

In response to the specific information requests:-

“Firstly, can PSD provide a breakdown on the money spent on the airport rehabilitation project. The department published a project cost summary within an appendix to the September 2009 States report – could the department provide the equivalent figures for what was actually spent and a brief summary of what the money was spent on with an explanation for any variance?”

Response

The general principle above is currently relevant to this request and the Exception 2.10 to the presumption of disclosure, relating to information that “will soon be published”, applies. Exception 2.3 relating to information which could “prejudice the commercial interests of the States” has also applied, as has exemption 2.5 regarding to “legal proceedings”.

The Programme Board is due to meet in early December and will consider the request then, after which a further response will be provided to the enquiry.

In terms of a breakdown, in the September 2009 States Report some items of the work were estimated separately for budget purposes (e.g. the runways and taxiways) but will subsequently have been amalgamated within the main contract. It may therefore not be straightforward to provide the final accounts in an identical format but some breakdown under the main headings should be possible.

“The report also states that the contingency sums include provision for three additional air traffic control staff on a temporary basis during the apron works at £420,000. Were these staff employed, for how long and at what cost? What was the headcount for air traffic control before the project and what is it now?”

Response

None of the £420,000 for additional ATC staff has been spent. This was included in the budget as a contingency to introduce additional ground movement control during the construction works, but in the event this did not need to be implemented.

The full complement, before the project and currently, is 15 Air Traffic Controllers, plus one ATC Manager.

“Can we have similar information available for the harbour berths work which the department announced earlier this month was finished on budget? In its February 2012 report, the department on p714 provides a breakdown of total project costs, on p715 the anticipated cash flow profile and p716 the current income and associated cost of operations. Again, could we have the equivalent actual amounts spend on each element of the project, what the cash flow profile was and what the updated income projections now are, with any commentary the department wishes to supply to explain any variance.

Response

The general principle above is also relevant to this request as far as the overall costs are concerned and Exception 2.10 to the presumption of disclosure, relating to information that “will soon be published” also applies.

The Project Team is due to meet in early December and will consider this request then, and the information regarding cash flow and income/expenditure.