

Freedom of Information - yet another broken promise!

Written by WRT

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On the day when Chief Minister Allan Bell gave his 'Agenda for Change' statement to October Tynwald he also reneged on his promise for Freedom of Information legislation by the end of this current parliamentary year.

He started by saying ***"I promised Tynwald, and the people of the Isle of Man, that I would lead an open and collaborative government"*** and later ***"We will..... improve transparency by routinely making more information available in anticipation of the introduction of Freedom of Information legislation"***.

However, hidden in a written answer about changing priorities in the Government's legislative programme, FOI is not listed as a priority because "policy issues continue to be worked through" It won't appear in 2012-13 despite promises that it would.

Bell seems to be no more reliable than his predecessor Brown over this issue. How can he and CoMin expect public support for all the the change programme when we are let down like this.

Even Speaker Steve Rodan can't get complete answers about information he originally asked for 10 months ago.

Since the beginning of the year Mr Rodan has been trying to find out the total picture of government employment of consultants. Tracing the question back reveals that information has had to be reluctantly leached out over a series of questions, starting with 1 in January. There were 2 more in February, 1 in April and 1 in July.

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With the latest question, on 16th October, he asked the Chief Minister:

Further to the Written Answer to Question 34 in July -

(a) when he intends to provide the full answer; and

(b) what data protection issues prevent the answer being fully provided?

In answering Mr Bell states ***"I am keen to resolve this matter and to that end I shall contact the Departments who have withheld information on the basis that the individual has withheld consent and ask them to either provide the anonymised information or clarify the reason why they cannot"***

The only way to convince the general public that this government is really "open and collaborative" is to give us a Freedom of Information Act - stop prevaricating Chief Minister. Honour your promises!