

Senior Civil Servants - "the key people in all Government Departments"

Written by Zephor

Saturday, 29 January 2011 14:37 - Last Updated Thursday, 03 February 2011 00:08



In January 2011, Tynwald received and approved (with amendments) the Report of the SELECT COMMITTEE OF TYNWALD ON THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM.

If all the amended recommendations are implemented they will have a significant effect on the scrutiny of Government. It is a major development which is wholeheartedly supported by PAG.

The essential remit of the Select Committee was to assess the benefits of establishing a system of standing committees relating to the work of Government departments including indentifying the related costs and staffing requirements.

In the Appendices at the end of the lengthy Report is a submission giving a **revealing insight into the relationship of Senior Civil Servants with politicians**

It is the extract of a letter (July 2010) from John Cain, who recently retired as Director of Education.

(We have highlighted those points from the extract of the letter which we feel merit consideration)

1. In a small democracy the amount of knowledge available to the elected representatives on important issues may be limited with the implied changes that the decisions made and implemented may not always be in the best interests of the island.

Senior Civil Servants - "the key people in all Government Departments"

Written by Zephor

Saturday, 29 January 2011 14:37 - Last Updated Thursday, 03 February 2011 00:08

2. However, ultimately all decisions should be approved by those elected by the residents of the island to represent them in Tynwald.

3. From my limited political experience I am of the opinion that the key people in all Government Departments are the Senior Civil Servants therein whose main duties are:

a) To administer the relevant Acts and Regulations of Tynwald and with that purpose to make sure that people with the appropriate skills are employed.

b) To ensure that the Minister and his colleagues are given all appropriate options to enable them to develop and initiate departmental policy.

c) To ensure that the Minister is supplied with appropriate information to contribute to relevant debates on financial matters and questions that may be posed.

4. In my view the island has indeed been very well served by those Civil Servants who have risen to high ranks and it is indeed very important that people of the highest calibre are recruited to that body. This is, in my opinion, a more important issue than the remit of the committee when there is so much competition from the private commercial and finance sectors.

5. I am of the opinion that, if he or she should need outside advice on any issue the CEO of every Government Department should, perhaps after consulting his Minister, be empowered to obtain appropriate advice.

6. I am also of the view that the best available advice should be sought when appropriate committees are considering the introduction of legislation which, in particular, has international implications.

7. In my view, if the recommendations outlined above are followed there would be no need to

Senior Civil Servants - "the key people in all Government Departments"

Written by Zephor

Saturday, 29 January 2011 14:37 - Last Updated Thursday, 03 February 2011 00:08

introduce the standing committees outlined in the remit - we should be aiming to contain bureaucratic cost in our small democracy - not increase it.

We invite you to draw your own conclusions!