

**REPLY BY THE MINISTER OF
THE PUBLIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT
TO A QUESTION ASKED PURSUANT TO RULE 6 OF THE
RULES OF PROCEDURE BY DEPUTY BARRY PAINT**

Before the maritime section of JESCC came into force in May this year (2015) there was the equivalent of 8 full time staff (6 full time and 4 part time) at the harbour, managing both Port Control and Guernsey Coastguard.

At present it is understood there is the equivalent of 6 full time staff (5 full time and 2 part-time)

At JESCC there are 8 full time staff managing Guernsey Coast.

The two, now the separated services now employ the equivalent of 14 full time staff where 8 or equivalent managed both services.

If the above is correct this means that separating the services has a much higher cost staff wise then previously.

The two services have had to duplicate all communication equipment at great cost and have had to oversee the maritime JESCC since its formation with at least 3 part time staff and two full time staff.

Question 1.

Could the Minister confirm that this information is correct and explain how the separation of the now two services has been a benefit cost wise to the tax payer?

Answer

No, this information is not correct.

The provision of a Coastguard service remains a function of Guernsey Harbours, whilst the Joint Emergency Services Control Centre (JESCC) provides the Coastguard call handling function.

There has been a reduction in staff at Guernsey Harbours Port Signals Office, since May 2015, from 9 to 6 full time equivalents (FTEs).

It is also not correct that 8 full-time staff manage the call handling function of Guernsey Coastguard at JESCC. The staff resource plans for JESCC did not increase, following the addition of the Coastguard call handling function (it remained at the 25 full time staff equivalent for the whole of JESCC).

Each of these staff are able to fulfil the multiple functions of the JESCC, including the Police, Fire, Ambulance and Coastguard call-handling facility. All staff have undergone significant and appropriate training to fulfil the role of the Coast Radio Station and the dedicated position of coastguard 'listening watch' for the Coastguard service, thus reducing the requirement of separate, individual service control rooms.

This has resulted in an overall cost saving to the States of Guernsey and direct savings to Guernsey Harbours of approximately £70k per annum.

Guernsey Harbours have employed staff to oversee the maritime functions at JESCC during a transition period; however, now that the new JESCC Coastguard call handling function and Coast Radio Station function are operating effectively, we have been able to reduce this support. Guernsey Harbours will continue to provide a lead officer, as part of the duties of an Assistant Harbour Master, to maintain the relationship between the functions of the Coastguard services and the call handling function at JESCC.

Question 2.

If the information above is not correct can the minister confirm exactly how many staff are employed in the now separated services?

Answer

These have been provided in the response to Question 1. There are now 6 FTEs employed at Port Control and no additional staff at the JESCC.

Question 3.

Could the minister explain how separating the previous single service into two separate services has improved maritime safety?

Answer

There has not been any degradation to maritime safety by moving the Coast Radio Station and call-handling function of Guernsey Coastguard to the JESCC. The previous arrangements resulted in long periods where both functions were carried out by a single operator, who could become overwhelmed when having to deal with both port operations, emergencies and Coastguard incidents.

The resilience of multiple operators at the JESCC, at any given time, assists greatly during a Coastguard operation, as multiple functions can be carried out simultaneously. Equally, Port Control can now focus solely on port operations and port related emergencies, without distraction.

There is the additional benefit of better co-ordination and enhanced joint working, with the other emergency services being on hand to assist with the operation now at the JESCC. There have already been a number of incidents where assistance from the other emergency services has been deployed during a Search and Rescue (SAR) incident, as a direct result of the SAR communications being handled at the JESCC.

By way of illustration, there was a recent maritime incident where no mayday call was transmitted by the vessel. However, due to a number of 999 telephone calls from members of the public, which were received by JESCC, operators passed information very quickly and effectively, to the two operators who were running the Coast Radio Station. The timely response of all concerned in this emergency incident undoubtedly saved lives.

Question 4.

Could the minister confirm the total cost of setting up the new Coast Guard operation at the police station?

Answer

We have invested in new technology, including specialist new equipment for the dedicated Coastguard position. This enables the highest quality response to calls, delivered in the most coordinated, efficient and cost effective manner.

The total additional costs to set up the equipment, relating to the new Coastguard operation at JESSC, was approximately £36k.

One additional communications controller has also been relocated to the major incident control room (the Silver Suite) at the Police Head Quarters, at a total cost of £1k. This is required, so that during a protracted Search and Rescue operation, the co-ordination can be moved to this dedicated area.

Wherever possible, equipment has been re-located from the Harbour office, rather than purchasing new equipment, so avoiding duplication. Some of the equipment upgrades would have been needed, regardless of the relocation of the call handling function to JESSC.

Date of Receipt of the Question: 4th November 2015

Date of Reply: 18th November 2015

Cost (approx.)	£300
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