

5.1. Cabinet Office (Legislative Amendments) Bill 2014 – Second Reading approved

Mr Robertshaw to move:

That the Cabinet Office (Legislative Amendments) Bill 2014 be read a second time.

The Speaker: We turn to Item 5, Bill for Second Reading, the Cabinet Office (Legislative Amendments) Bill. I call on the mover, Mr Robertshaw.

Mr Robertshaw: Thank you Mr Speaker.

I am pleased to be able to move the Second Reading of the Cabinet Office (Legislative Amendments) Bill on behalf the Council of Ministers.

This Bill is a short technical Bill resulting from the Modernising Ministerial Government proposals approved at the January sitting of Tynwald, and is the result of one of the Report's recommendations relating to the creation of a Cabinet Office consisting of the current Chief Secretary's Office, Economic Affairs Division of Treasury, Information Systems Division of the Department of Economic Development and the Office of Human Resources.

As Hon. Members know, the creation of the Cabinet Office is intended to bolster Government's strategic long-term planning, giving central direction to the work of Government by driving forward into departmental policy development, service delivery and the co-ordination of departmental work programmes.

I am pleased to advise Hon. Members that work continues to progress well with the establishment of the Cabinet Office and we will be ready to hit the ground running on 1st April.

This Bill is only concerned with references to the Chief Secretary's Office in Manx enactments which require primary legislation to amend. The Cabinet Office (Legislative Amendments) Bill 2014 therefore amends other enactments to substitute references to 'the Chief Secretary's Office' for references to 'the Cabinet Office'.

The Bill also deals with references where applicable to the Chief Secretary's Office in other legislation, for example, secondary legislation and UK legislation applied to the Island. Any such references are to be read as a reference to the Cabinet Office.

Given the short technical nature of the Bill arising from the proposals which were approved by Tynwald, and which have previously been subject to consultation with Tynwald Members, the Council of Ministers decided not to release the Bill for public consultation in the usual manner.

Mr Speaker, I beg to move that the Cabinet Office (Legislative Amendments) Bill be read for a second time.

The Speaker: Hon. Member, Mr Teare.

Mr Teare: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I beg to second and reserve my remarks, sir.

The Speaker: Hon. Member, Mrs Cannell.

Mrs Cannell: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Normal practice when a Bill comes before the House of Keys for consideration is it will have an element in that says whether or not there is going to be any additional cost in bringing in the legislation. That is the normal course of things. There is nothing in here, other than in the explanatory memorandum at paragraph 11, it says:

'In the opinion of the member moving the Bill its provisions are compatible with the Convention of Rights within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 2001.'

So, okay, it complies with the Human Rights Act, but I just wonder what the actual cost of putting together a Cabinet Office is going to cost the taxpayers.

I think this whole idea is absolutely ridiculous. It is empire building. It is creating a new empire by putting together a Cabinet Office. I realise that the Bill is to amend certain pieces of legislation to give recognition to the fact that there will be a Cabinet Office. I accept that is what the Bill is about, but I think it is an absolute waste of space, unless the Cabinet was going to replace the Council of Ministers system, which clearly it is not.

So, I would like to know what it is going to cost the taxpayer, how effective this move is going to be, but I will not be supporting it.

The Speaker: Hon. Member, Mr Karran.

Mr Karran: Vainstyr Loayreyder, I would be interested to know the rationale of – the mover of the Bill is such a one for business – why he feels that business should not be exempt from jury service and why the likes of he feels... Maybe we should be looking at the issue of turning back to... turning away from the general exemption, as far as public staff is concerned.

I would also like the Shirveishagh, the mover of the Bill, when he talks about the personal liabilities of Ministers, Members and officers, I would be interested in his reply if he would just explain to this House what is the present *status quo*, as far as that is concerned, and if he does not have that, maybe he can discuss that when he comes to the clauses stage.

I will not be voting against the Bill. I have no reason to vote against the Bill, but what I do feel is that it is interesting to see, when we talk about the personal liabilities, the complete and utter imbalance that we have got, as far as Government has got all the cover in the world, and yet backbench MHKs – apart from inside this House – have got no cover as far as liability of the threat of vexatious litigation against them.

The Speaker: I call on the mover to reply, Mr Robertshaw.

Mr Robertshaw: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Turning to the Hon. Member for Douglas East, Mrs Cannell's comments, she may very well have her own views about the future importance and role of the Cabinet Office, but that is really a matter which I am sure she will have mentioned during the Tynwald debate when Members supported the concept. This is simply a technical Bill concerning the renaming and I think she really is stretching the debate a little bit too far.

Mrs Cannell: Freedom of speech.

Mr Robertshaw: As far as the Member for Onchan is concerned, I will consider *Hansard* in due course and come back to him with my comments later.

Mrs Cannell: The costs.

Mr Robertshaw: Thank you, Mr Speaker.
I beg to move.

The Speaker: Hon. Members, I put the question that the Cabinet Office (Legislative Amendments) Bill be read for the second time. Those in favour, please say aye; against, no. The ayes have it.

A division was called for and electronic voting resulted as follows:

For

Mr Anderson
Mr Bell
Mr Cannan
Mr Cretney
Mr Crookall
Mr Hall
Mr Henderson
Mr Houghton
Mr Quayle
Mr Quirk
Mr Robertshaw
Mr Shimmin
Mr Singer
Mr Skelly
Mr Teare
Mr Watterson
The Speaker

Against

Mr Karran
Mrs Beecroft
Mrs Cannell

Mr Watterson: 'I'm not going to vote against the Bill; I've got no reason to vote against the Bill.'

The Speaker: With 17 votes for, 3 votes against, the motion therefore carries.
Hon. Members, that concludes the Order Paper today.