

Tuesday 30 March 2021

The COVID-19 Related Emergency Support Scheme provided support that was needed

Comptroller and Auditor General issues latest report

Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG), Lynn Pamment, has today (30 March 2021) published a report on ***The COVID-19 Related Emergency Support Scheme***.

The C&AG is undertaking an extensive programme of work in respect of the Government of Jersey's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Her ongoing work is considering:

- Overall governance and decision making
- Communications
- Procurement processes and supply chain management
- Management of the healthcare response
- Test, trace and vaccine roll out
- Risk management
- Management of public finances; and
- Schemes to support businesses and individuals.

This first report in the series focusses on the COVID-19 Related Emergency Support Scheme (CRESS). The C&AG report considers the CRESS objectives, business case and decision making, the design and operation of controls and CRESS monitoring and reporting.

The objective of CRESS was to support workers who fell outside the Payroll Co-Funded Scheme and who were not eligible for public support under any other benefits. At its peak, CRESS supported over 330 households from a variety of backgrounds, with £550,550 spent during the lifetime of the scheme. There were over 470 applications for support.

Lynn Pamment found that Ministers were clear in their articulation of the scheme objective when making their decision to implement CRESS. The objective of CRESS remained consistent throughout the lifetime of the scheme.

The C&AG noted that the business case supporting CRESS did not set out the risk appetite in relation to the scheme and its impact on the level of acceptable risk to be borne. The Council of Ministers acknowledged that the implementation of CRESS at pace meant that there had been insufficient time for officers to review and stress-test the new procedures.

The C&AG found that a framework of internal controls was implemented to manage the scheme. She also noted that the CRESS team has assessed the key lessons from designing and operating the scheme.

Lynn Pamment said:

“The Government moved quickly to develop and implement CRESS to support individuals who were not eligible for support under other schemes in place. In doing so, an appropriate balance was struck between the speed of response to the claimant and the controls put in place to guard against the risk of inappropriate payments.

CRESS provided support that was needed. However, it was difficult to administer due to the extent of the manual administrative processes required in a scheme set up quickly and without time to develop supporting IT systems. Going forward, the lessons learned from CRESS should be used to provide valuable input into the design of future schemes.”

The report *The COVID-19 Related Emergency Support Scheme* can be found at:
<https://www.jerseyauditoffice.je>

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For further information, please contact:

Rozena Pedley

M: 00 44 7797 733553 / T: 00 44 1534 629800

E: rozena.pedley@jerseyauditoffice.je

Notes to Editors:

- The Office of Comptroller and Auditor General ('C&AG') was established in 2005 and operates under the Comptroller and Auditor General (Jersey) Law 2014
- The remit of the C&AG includes the audit of financial statements, corporate governance, internal control and wider consideration of public funds, often expressed as 'value for money'
- The 2021 Audit Plan (including further details of the C&AG COVID-19 work programme) can be found at: www.jerseyauditoffice.je
- Lynn Pamment took up the Office of C&AG on 1 January 2020 for a fixed term of seven years. Following the introduction of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Jersey) Law 2014 the term of office is fixed at seven years and is non-renewable.
- The Office of Comptroller & Auditor General is known as the 'Jersey Audit Office'.
- Contact details are: de Carteret House, 7 Castle Street, St Helier, Jersey JE2 3BT / T:716800 / E: enquiries@jerseyauditoffice.je

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