

The Bailiff:

We now come to the second question period of the Chief Minister. I invite questions.

4. Questions to Ministers without notice - The Chief Minister

4.1 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

The U.K. Home Secretary has announced that the U.K. will be implementing a quota system when Romania and Bulgaria join the E.U. (European Union). In Jersey, I am aware there are considerable legal and constitutional problems because of protocol 3 to the Treaty of Accession with the European Union, and that Jersey is unlikely to follow the U.K. in restricting the working rights of Romanians and Bulgarians. Will the Chief Minister undertake to keep this under close review?

Senator F.H. Walker (The Chief Minister):

This matter is, I can assure the Deputy - and through him, the House - already under very close review. I would also remind the Deputy that the situation in Jersey is somewhat different, in that we do control the number of job licences available to non-local people. We do have our own means of dealing with any prospective increase in immigration, but the matter is under very close review on a permanent basis at this point.

4.2 Senator B.E. Shenton:

The Code of Conduct for Ministers, which was presented on 10th February, was largely copied and pasted from the U.K. Code of Conduct. However, the U.K. Code of Conduct includes that the government publishes an annual list of all travel overseas by Ministers, together with the total cost of Ministerial travel overseas. Will, at the end of these 12-month periods, the Chief Minister publish all travel and entertaining expenses by Ministers?

Senator F.H. Walker:

Yes, we will, and I suspect the Senator will be desperately disappointed at how meagre it is. [Laughter]

4.3 Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

The Chief Minister will be aware of the recent publication of the *Stern Report*. I wonder whether the Chief Minister will be prepared to advise the House whether he has yet had any consultation about the report with the Planning and Environment Minister, and if this has not yet taken place, when it will do so?

Senator F.H. Walker:

No consultation has yet taken place. I am aware of the report and I can assure the Deputy that consultation will be taking place, but it has not yet done so.

4.4 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

I would like to ask the Chief Minister if he shares my concerns about the language that has recently been used by Dawn Primarolo in the United Kingdom and what steps the Minister will be taking, if any, to communicate our position in a more understandable way to the British Government - in particular, to the Prime Minister - as Jersey does have an internationally

recognisable role within affairs such as British-Irish Council. Why are we communicating inadequately, it would seem, to people who are not at the helm?

Senator F.H. Walker:

I think there were 2 particularly notable things about the Paymaster General's statement to the House. Firstly, and I would agree therefore with the thrust behind the Senator's question, it does seem pretty clear that the measures taken in Jersey to regulate - if that is the right word - the fulfilment industry are not necessary fully understood in the Paymaster General's office, and we do have a further communication task to undertake, I would agree. I think the second notable aspect of her comment was that she, despite outlining the measures that the U.K. Government "could take", conspicuously fell back from suggesting they "would take."

4.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Minister, since he has had the buck passed to him, accept that the changes to teachers' pensions run completely counter to changes that have been made in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man, and that they have a serious effect upon Jersey's ability to recruit and retain teachers? Will he agree to postpone the implementation of such changes from January 2007 to September 2007 as requested by the 6 teachers' unions?

Senator F.H. Walker:

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture has already answered effectively this question, but I do accept that I have a role to play. The position is, as I understand it, that the unions - certainly on a national basis - have not hitherto expressed any great concern, or indeed, interest in the changes to the teachers' pension scheme. Now, at the 11th hour, as it were, that concern has been expressed, and I understand they are looking for a delay. I think the matter now sits with the unions, and if they can make an utterly compelling case for delay, which so far has not been made, then I and the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture will give serious consideration to that request.

4.6 Deputy of Grouville:

Would the Chief Minister confirm if he is going to put the issue of phone companies and their masts on the Council of Ministers' agenda so that a joined-up approach to the publicly unacceptable situation with the siting of these phone masts can be looked at thoroughly?

Senator F.H. Walker:

The matter has already been on the Council of Ministers' agenda.

4.7 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

In order not to repeat the phone mast situation, would the Chief Minister not agree that the request by the Housing Minister for 400 sites for sheltered housing has to be looked at? Worthy though this request is, it has to be looked at much more critically, and certainly one of the solutions that should be far, far in the distance is providing green field sites. Would he not agree that this is something the Chief Minister and the Council should be looking at, and that it should be a much more coherent plan to this whole issue of provision for the elderly?

Senator F.H. Walker:

I believe the Housing Minister and Housing Department are doing an absolutely superb job in putting together their policies for the future. We will shortly have a property plan, which covers the housing aspects of States property, which will be coming to the House in the not too distant future. That will be followed in the New Year by a full review of the social housing provision in Jersey. I do not share the Deputy's view that there is no joined-up policy or joined-up thinking here. Exactly the reverse, I believe there is a great deal of joined-up policy, and certainly the relationship and the co-operation that exists between the Planning Minister and the Housing Minister is excellent.

4.7.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I wonder if I can ask a supplementary? Would the Chief Minister then acknowledge that it was scaremongering to suggest that green fields would need to be used in the quantities cited by the Housing Minister, and that he will be applying a much more rigorous analysis, rather than just panicking and saying we need 400 sites?

Senator F.H. Walker:

The Housing Minister himself has every intention of applying an extremely rigorous analysis. Yes, of course, I and my colleagues on the Council of Ministers will ensure that that is the case.

4.8 Deputy G.P. Southern:

In a written answer to a question tabled today on the Population Register and identity cards, the Chief Minister has stated that the issues of identity fraud and theft must be addressed. To do this successfully, it must involve verification of identity to a high level and that he would look to other jurisdictions to adopt the most robust procedures. Is he aware that if he looks to the U.K., he will find very expensive procedures? No matter that they are robust, there will be a cost to the production of identity cards which are robust in this Island. Is he aware of what these costs may be?

Senator F.H. Walker:

First of all, the quote the Deputy has recorded from my answer came from the Data Protection Registrar. Secondly, all the answer said - and I confirm what it said - is that we are looking at measures taken elsewhere, not just the U.K. Of course, before any proposals are brought forward - which will have to be approved by this House - then the full cost will be identified and will be made clear in the report and proposition.

4.8.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

May I have a supplementary, Sir? Does he accept that in order to be robust, there will be a cost and this cost may well be substantial?

Senator F.H. Walker:

There may well be a cost, but that will be a matter for the House at the end of the day whether or not the House decides to accept that cost. The fact is at the moment, the Population Office is working to the instructions of this House in preparing the new migration policy.

4.9 Senator J.L. Perchard:

How will the Chief Minister react to the remarks made by his Health Minister at the last sitting of the States, when he said: "Not allowing exemptions on G.S.T. (Goods and Services Tax) was

a morally bankrupt decision by those who do not understand poverty, from the luxury of their gin palaces?"

Senator F.H. Walker:

I think I reacted at the time. The Health Minister confirmed that he was not necessarily talking about me. **[Laughter]** I think all of us on the Council of Ministers - or most of us, not all of us - most of us certainly have children and/or grandchildren and it is their future that we are interested in. The Health Minister and I have had discussions about his speech; entirely amicable, entirely positive discussions. I am pleased to say that as far as the Council of Ministers is concerned, we continue with business as usual.

4.10 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

In relation to the establishment of a new property company that will take over from W.E.B. (Waterfront Enterprise Board Limited), during the appointment of the recent Chairman, we were given an absolute guarantee - in fact, a pledge - that the issue was primary in the eyes of the Chief Minister. The Chief Minister set a target date for that proposition to come to the States with the detail, setting-up and structure of that company as September of this year. In a recent answer to a question by Deputy Martin, it was pointed out that the issue would be raised again on the Council of Ministers' meeting on 2nd November. Would the Chief Minister please inform Members as to what is happening with the progress in relation to this new company that will be absolving W.E.B?

Senator F.H. Walker:

I have to report, I am sad to say, a lack of progress in this respect. It was indeed, as the Deputy has correctly identified, on the Council of Ministers' agenda for the meeting last Thursday. No decision was taken, because both the Attorney General, who raised concerns about certain aspects of the proposition - I think, from memory, the memorandum and articles of the company - and other Ministers, who raised similar concerns or concerns about other aspects of the proposal. Those concerns were noted. They were not able to be addressed at the meeting. My department and the Property Holdings Office has strict instructions now to come back to the Council of Ministers, hopefully with a proposition that is fully acceptable in the shortest possible timescale. But I do regret the delay in bringing forward this important proposal.

4.11 Deputy G.P. Southern:

In the light of the Assistant Minister for Social Security's apparent ignorance of what consultation had been taking place between his department and the Chief Officer's, is the Chief Minister content that sufficient consultation has been held with Social Security in order to build-up a joint database as is projected for the Population Register?

Senator F.H. Walker:

Yes, Sir.

4.12 Deputy of Grouville:

Mine was a supplementary on my last question, but you did not look this way again. **[Laughter]**

The Bailiff:

I look at you as often as I can, Deputy Labey. **[Laughter]**

Deputy of Grouville:

It is not very often when I am trying to ask a question. Would the Chief Minister like to share with the Assembly the conclusions of the discussion of the phone mast issue on the Council of Ministers' agenda? Thank you.

Senator F.H. Walker:

There was no direct conclusion. It is now legally a matter for the Planning Minister, who is dealing with the issue within his powers and to the best of his ability. It is a tough issue for him to deal with, but it is he who finally has to take a decision of whether consent is granted or not. The Council of Ministers can discuss. The Council of Ministers cannot - nor should it be able to - direct the Planning Minister.

4.13 Deputy J. Gallichan of St. Mary

This morning, as I was woken in the very, very early hours by a chronologically confused cockerel, I thought of the Chief Minister, Sir, and I wondered if I should ask him, has he had any more thoughts about perhaps realigning our time zone, as was discussed earlier in the year? Thank you.

Senator F.H. Walker:

I have had no more personal thoughts, but I can assure the Deputy - because I raised it myself a couple of weeks ago - the matter is being worked on and a proposal will be coming through shortly, hopefully in time or long before we might think of changing the clocks next summer.

4.14 Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

In answer to a question from me in February of this year, the Chief Minister undertook to have discussions with the Treasury Minister on the question of ethical investments. Following that question, the States Treasurer was interviewed on B.B.C. Radio Jersey and made a commitment to review our approach to ethical investments, and indeed, to produce a policy for consideration. Will the Chief Minister please advise the House at what stage the policy has reached?

Senator F.H. Walker:

I cannot this morning, but I will undertake to do so as soon as possible.

The Bailiff:

That, I am afraid, completes the second question period.