

WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CHIEF MINISTER BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 1st APRIL 2008

Question

- (a) Does the Chief Minister stand by the statement on page 4 of the report *“Imagine Jersey 2035 – preparing for the future”* he issued in co-operation with the “Involve” organisation on the 13th March 2008 -

“The survey and initial conference votes indicated a strong opposition to any increase in taxes and contributions.”?

If so, how does he reconcile this with the information given on page 27 of the report, covering the conference, and with the following statement from page 75 on the wider survey:

“The vast majority of submissions were in favour of encouraging the resident population to pay more”?

- (b) What justification can the Chief Minister offer to States members and to the public for the following statements -

“Young people and those in full-time education were most likely to oppose this option (paying more) – three fifths of those in full-time education voted against”

“100% in the 19-24 age group voted against raising taxes.” “Half of the 0-18 group voted against.”

Answer

- (a) The wording to which the Deputy refers was written by Involve, an independent not for profit organisation which specialises in public participation. The Council of Ministers has received the report from Involve and published it without making any changes to its content.

As part of the executive summary, the sentence identified by the Deputy clearly refers to the survey and initial conference responses. The executive summary goes on to make clear that this position was modified during the day, in particular when citizens were asked to come up with their own answers to addressing the issue of the ageing population.

The information given on page 27 demonstrates that, having had the opportunity to consider and discuss the issue, participants at the conference were in favour of some increase in taxes/contributions to address the issue.

Page 75 is part of a summary of the written responses received by the Chief Minister’s Department and does not relate to the survey. This identifies that one fifth of respondents made comments about tax and the majority of these were in favour of some increase in taxes/contributions to address the issue. Indeed, this is made clear in the executive summary, which states *‘The submissions to the written consultation revealed a level of support for paying more...’*

The Deputy refers to only one part of an executive summary which attempts to bring together a broad range of information and views. When read as a whole, the executive summary makes it absolutely clear that there was a level of support for paying more. In addition, the full report provides a comprehensive analysis of the information that emerged directly from the consultation exercise.

In the press release that accompanied Involve’s report, I summarised the main messages as:

- Broad support for growing the economy.

- Strong support for working longer as part of the solution to the challenges ahead.
- Whilst people do not actively support increases in taxes and contributions, many are willing to accept some level of increase in order to maintain public services.
- Inward migration was the least popular of the four options presented but there was also acceptance that controlled inward migration may be necessary.
- Strong opposition to new buildings on green fields, but acceptance of good quality and affordable development in the built up area.

This is my summary of what has been a comprehensive and complex consultation exercise.

- (b) These are factual statements relating to the voting responses of young people to the option of paying more and have been identified by the demographic information captured at the conference where young people between 0 and 24 made up 11% of the delegates.

The voting responses of young people on this option have been highlighted by Involve as with other options in the report. This is simply part of their analysis of the preferences expressed by those who attended the event.