

2.2 Deputy D.J.A. Wimberley of St. Mary of the Chief Minister regarding the maximum figure for the Island's population:

Given that the Chief Minister at the last sitting told the Assembly that the figure of 100,000 as the maximum for the Island's population arose from consultation and that the consultation he was referring to was Imagine Jersey 2035, can he refer Members to where in reports of Imagine Jersey 2035 consultation findings this figure can be found? If not, can he explain to Members which consultation this was?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur (The Chief Minister):

The clear message that arose from the extensive consultation undertaken both as part of Imagine Jersey 2035 and the consultation on the Strategic Plan has been the public's overwhelming desire to protect Jersey's countryside and to prevent development on greenfield sites. This is clearly documented in both the Imagine Jersey reports and is also set out in part 4 of the Population Policy that accompanies the Strategic Plan. This is why officers have done a huge amount of work to establish the level of population that could be sustained without building on greenfields. It is this work that has identified that higher levels of population than 100,000 would be more difficult to accommodate without building on greenfields and thereby not protecting the countryside. In addition, the Council of Ministers believe that in the long term this maximum figure is also sustainable in terms of government services, infrastructure and the environment. The figure of 100,000 has, therefore, been set as a maximum in response to consistent messages from consultation rather than the consultation itself specifically identifying this as a figure.

2.2.1 The Deputy of St. Mary:

Does the Chief Minister agree that by saying that the figure of 100,000 arose out of consultation when, in fact, it arose out of officer work following consultation... the consultation said: "We need to protect our greenfields." The officers then went away and discovered or found that if you go over 100,000 then there is a likelihood of not being able to protect the greenfields, but does the Chief Minister agree that the 100,000 did not arise out of consultation? Nobody mentioned it and, therefore, there is some kind of difficulty in the House about how one should read what the Chief Minister is telling us.

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

No. While I accept that the 100,000 arose out of the implications which that consultation generated, I do not see that it causes us any difficulty whatsoever. The evidence has been presented to Members in respect of the availability of sites and the requirements for housing demand over the coming years and that figure of 100,000 - which is not a target but a maximum - is one which is consistent with those figures.

2.2.2 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier:

Will the Chief Minister not admit to the House that the figure of 100,000 has, in fact, never been consulted on?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

The Deputy is quite right. The figure of 100,000 has not in itself been consulted on. What has been consulted on is the overall requirements of the Island in terms of its social and environmental policies for the future and what we can do in order to maintain Jersey as a pleasant place to live.

2.2.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Furthermore, will the Chief Minister explain why the original Imagine Jersey 2035 came up with a figure of 250 inward migrant heads of household and he is now playing with the figure of 150? What is the justification for this reduction?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

The justification is more and better up-to-date evidence. What we have seen recently is that people are living longer but the life expectation has increased at a greater level than was previously indicated. If we were to maintain a population policy of 250 heads of household per annum, that would result in a continuing increasing level of population over and above 100,000 people. For various reasons, including the environment and the potential pressure on services, the Council of Ministers felt that that was not a policy which could be sustained and, therefore, took the decision to reduce the figure to 150 for the time being in order to achieve our objective of not exceeding the 100,000 figure.

2.2.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

The Chief Minister will be aware of the recent Association Parliamantaire de la Francophonie conference which took place in Jersey - and which I must say was very well organised by the Deputy Greffier [**Approbation**] - at which the theme for discussion was the ageing population. We were told by the French delegates from various European countries that the solution to the ageing population cannot be solved or achieved by simply importing labour or general net inward migration. Why does the Chief Minister think he knows better?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I do not know better. I think the policy that the Council of Ministers is proposing is identical to that which was discussed at the A.P.F. (Association Parliamantaire de la Francophonie). Inward migration by itself will not solve the ageing population policy. I have made it quite clear in the Strategic Plan - and I will refer to that later in the course of the debate - that the solution or the way of addressing the ageing population is a variety of means including inward migration as well as working longer, as well as improving productivity, as well as raising taxes. There are a whole variety of means which are required in order to satisfactorily address the problems which will arise in the future as a result of that ageing society.

2.2.5 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Would the Chief Minister put our minds at rest about what appears to have been a rather odd statement that all people who were above the 100,000 mark on the Island - according to a statement he has alleged to have issued - would be invited to leave? Could he clarify that statement?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I think I may have been misquoted in the media. I certainly do not expect the population to exceed 100,000 people and if it did I am not sure how one could encourage them to leave. What we need to do is to make sure we set policies which do not result in that sort of situation arising. I believe that the policies which are being proposed are consistent with that, and just as I do not want to see the population rise above 100,000, equally I do not want to see it fall in the future too low because that would be unsustainable for our ageing population.

2.2.6 Senator S. Syvret:

The Chief Minister comes to us and stands here and offers the prospect of a population of 100,000 as some kind of a green and environmentally positive measure because it is less than 120,000 or 150,000. Does he take the public for idiots? Does he not recognise that people out there will see this for the preposterous spin and Orwellian newspeak that it is?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

The Senator tries to suggest things which I am not saying. I am not saying that because 100,000 is less than 120,000, therefore the policy works. What I am saying is that a population policy in terms of sustainability needs to balance environmental, social and economic issues. We believe this policy does and one of the consequences of that is that at no time does the population exceed 100,000, nor does it fall to significantly low levels either.

2.2.7 Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

Just going back to the question from my colleague Deputy Southern, is it not really the fact that because so many Islanders have stressed their concern about the proposed number of the increase of heads per household that the Minister has now gone back on the original figure?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

No, I made it quite clear that the reason we have changed our figure is based on the more up-to-date information we have, information provided by actuarial and demographic sources outside the Island, reviewed by the Corporate Services Sub-Panel on population, and I believe that those figures are consistent with the policy that we are now proposing, which in the short term is for a maximum of 150 heads of household over the next 3 years.