

**4.12 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Chief Minister regarding the resource implications of the population projections produced by the Statistics Unit:**

Will the Chief Minister advise Members what interdepartmental meetings, if any, have been held this year on the resource implications of the population projections produced by the Statistics Unit, and in particular on housing demand over the period of the Housing Transformation Plan, and if none, when will these be held and when will he come to the States with the results of such resource discussions to inform future debates?

**The Bailiff:**

You managed to get 4 questions in there Deputy. Deputy Chief Minister?

**Senator B.I. Le Marquand (Deputy Chief Minister):**

In this case, I am seeking to defer to Senator Routier's greater knowledge.

**Senator P.F. Routier (Assistant Chief Minister - rapporteur):**

Yes, we have noted it was 4 questions in one here. The population model developed by the Statistics Unit is an invaluable tool in developing long term policies. It is being used as part of a detailed piece of work bringing together all departments in assessing the impact of different population scenarios on our resources, including housing and our economy over the longer term. Naturally, officers have met on a sizable number of occasions to progress this work, which was commissioned by the Council of Ministers earlier this year and will be considered again by them in the autumn. Following this it will be presented to the Assembly later this year. The Scrutiny Panel have already expressed a clear interest in reviewing this work.

**4.12.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

The question was: when will he be coming to the States with a report outlining the options for population for future debate? When will he produce such a report?

**Senator P.F. Routier:**

That will be coming later towards the end of this year.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Will that be a report or a proposition?

**Senator P.F. Routier:**

Developing the Population Policy going forward we think that it is a 2-stage process. There needs to be a lot of consultation carried out with our community and we need to ensure that we are going to reflect what the community wants. It is envisaged that we need to have a very short-term policy for which probably, with unemployment being so high at the present time, we need to keep going the way we are going at the present time with restricting permissions with regard to employment of non-local people. But then there is a bigger piece of work which we need to consult with the whole of the Island with regard to the Population Policy. We hope to be coming with a policy statement ready for discussion with the Assembly towards the end of this year.

**4.12.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

For the sake of clarity, can he just clarify whether the previous policy is still in place and whether that has been amended in the light of current high unemployment numbers to reduce the actual target for migration?

**Senator P.F. Routier:**

The policy which the Migration Advisory Group are working to currently is hopefully reflecting the need to ensure that we reduce the local unemployment. That is our main task at the present time. We also do need to reflect that there is a need, on occasion, to allow new migrants into the

Island if they are providing high value employment. There is a balance to be struck between getting local people already in the Island into work, but also encouraging new businesses to establish themselves to create new employment for local people as well.

**4.12.3 Deputy M.R. Higgins:**

Can the Minister tell us what the current target is for the population growth of this Island? There must be one at the present time. I think, if I remember correctly, when we were discussing the hospital, 115,000 was the projection they were basing the hospital on. What exactly is the figure currently and what are you considering about going beyond that, because I think you are?

**Senator P.F. Routier:**

As Members I think are generally aware, there is no current target. The last time we developed a policy 250 households per year were going to be allowed. That has been tightened-up considerably under the current circumstances of high unemployment.

**4.12.4 Deputy M.R. Higgins:**

Supplementary? Could you just tell us then on the basis of the figures you are using at the moment, what are your projections for 5 years' time or even 10 years' time or whatever dates you have in mind?

**The Bailiff:**

Through the chair, please, Deputy.

**Senator P.F. Routier:**

The population statistics are being worked on by the Statistics Unit and their modelling is happening at this present time. I think Members, if they could be patient to allow the work to continue, we will be coming back to the Assembly after the summer break.

**4.12.5 Deputy M.R. Higgins:**

The Minister is not answering the question. The Statistics Unit must have been given some guidance by the Ministers as to the population they are looking at for the modelling to take place. They are not doing it on their own. If they are then the Minister is being negligent.

**Senator P.F. Routier:**

The whole of the department, including the Statistics Unit and the Economic Department are all working to 3 scenarios. They have been asked to look at 3 scenarios. They are net nil immigration, plus 300 and also plus 700, which has been the actual experience. They are the scenarios which they are being asked to look at. That is just to help us form policy for the future. It is not saying that those are the targets by any means. What we are currently doing, as I hope Members appreciate, is under the current situation with high unemployment, we are being as restrictive as we possibly can, but also allowing new businesses to establish and create new employment.

**4.12.6 Deputy T.M. Pitman:**

Deputy Southern's question probably takes us to the matter that is probably the most fundamental issue to establishing or ensuring quality of life over the coming years. So, could the Assistant Minister just repeat his answer? Did I correctly hear him when he said there are no targets? We just seem to be making this up, 300 or 700. What are we doing now? That just seems to me a deeply worrying scenario.

**Senator P.F. Routier:**

I hope I am not giving the impression - to some Members it may be the case - that there is no policy currently in place. There is a policy in place that is a lot tighter than what it has been in

the past. Going forward, there is a piece of work which is being carried out by the various departments, including the Economic Department and the Central Policy Unit, to those various scenarios, just to see what would happen to our population and the resources that would be required for this Island to cover that. I have nothing else to add to that.

**4.12.7 The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Could the Assistant Minister confirm that the current policy sets a maximum level at 100,000 as a target and that indeed the Chief Minister has publicly committed to maintaining the population levels within that particular policy?

**Senator P.F. Routier:**

My recollection, with regard to the Chief Minister's comment, was during the last election time when he hoped that the figure of 100,000 would not be achieved. I think that was when the comment was made. The policy that we currently have is to tighten-up on permissions and that is what we are working to. I hope that gives sufficient comfort to people to ensure that the record we have had over the last couple of years of controlling immigration has been successful.

**4.12.8 The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Is it still the Chief Minister's aim to maintain population levels at below the 100,000 figure?

**Senator P.F. Routier:**

That is very difficult to commit to. Because until we have a full understanding of what the population currently is and what the effects of recent immigration has been it is very difficult to commit to that.

**4.12.9 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Again, just for clarification among all those words, is the Assistant Minister saying that the 250 heads of households' previous target has now been abandoned and has not come to the House with a change in policy ... which has not come to this House? Because I believe 250 heads of household did come to this House and was accepted by this House. Has the policy changed? What is the policy? What is the target for inward migration?

**Senator P.F. Routier:**

The Deputy is quite right. We need to bring a new policy to this House. We have been working on the current policy that has been in place. Informally, I know that among the Ministerial Oversight Group, who are dealing with the population matters, we are tightening-up on that figure. There is no doubt about it. We are trying to constrain things even tighten than that.

**4.12.10 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Will the Assistant Minister assure Members that he will come to the House with a figure that is our policy currently now? What is it? Will he come to the House?

**Senator P.F. Routier:**

We are developing a policy. As I said in my opening answer, there will be a policy brought to this House after the summer, once it has been discussed by the Council of Ministers.