

3.8 Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier of the Chief Minister regarding the impact of the United Kingdom’s decision to leave the European Union on the development of a new population policy by the Council of Ministers: [1(267)]

Has the decision of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union changed the direction of the development of a new population policy by the Council of Ministers; and can the Chief Minister give a date on which the policy will come to the Assembly for debate?

Senator I.J. Gorst (The Chief Minister):

Our ability to manage people moving to the Island is affected by the relationship of the United Kingdom with the European Union. This relationship will change and, naturally, this matters for population policy. However, I would like to have a debate in this Assembly on these issues in July. Realistically, of course, factoring in Scrutiny, it may not be until after summer. I will, however, undertake to lodge a population policy prior to the summer recess.

3.8.1 Deputy J.A. Martin:

It slightly concerns me that we have the Chief Minister saying “rush” where I am all for having a population policy, but, surely, what the U.K. do and what the U.K. can do when they leave the European Union will determine what we can do, because we follow them. We can have a really much tightened population policy, so what is the Minister saying that we could be discussing by July? It is the unknown, is it not?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

It is a very good question. What I am currently envisaging is how we would continue to manage population in that intervening period and then consider what our policy aims might be during the Brexit negotiation. I think from the workshops that we have had, that there could be a large amount of consensus about what it is that we would like to achieve during that process, albeit it will be for negotiation.

3.8.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Can the Chief Minister confirm whether it was collective ministerial policy with which the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture came out on the front page of the *J.E.P. (Jersey Evening Post)* over the weekend?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture has long held the view that he articulated to the media. I am not quite sure when. Of course, that would be a move from current policy, because it would, as I understand the approach, be delivering, in effect, a 2-tier system where you would have a system how you currently manage licences and over the top of that for some sectors of the economy you would be proposing that you could have a short-term work permit. Do not forget the current law does allow for named licences, so it may be that there could be a coming together, but I would just remind the questioner that some of this is what, I think, Deputy Martin was trying to highlight in her supplementary question.

3.8.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

Just for clarification, the policy position which the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture came out with is divergent from that of the Chief Minister’s current views and does not represent the policy of his ministerial team?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

The Minister is quite clear that it was his view that those areas should be explored and he has been quite clear with the Ministers that they are his views. That is not what the current policy is and it is not what the current law quite allows for.

3.8.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Point of clarification from the Chief Minister, if I may? The Chief Minister seemed to suggest that we did not already have the powers to limit permissions to work on the Island to a specific time, 3 or 5 years. Has the practice of making that restriction ceased among the Control of Housing and Work officers?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I did say that there was the ability to put a name on a licence and a time limit on a licence is generally used for a much shorter time period, rather than a 3 or 5-year time period, as it currently sits.

3.8.5 Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville:

The Chief Minister has suggested that the population policy that he intends to bring out in July, or the autumn, is going to be another interim policy, because we cannot have any firm proposals until the Brexit negotiations ... until we know the results of those. If this is going to be another interim policy is there going to be anything in it, for example the introduction of work permits, that we can introduce before we know the outcome of the Brexit negotiations?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I think I tried to allude to that in regard to the comments of the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture. It is, and I think it is right, that it would be a 2-stage approach. I do not think that we currently want to radically change what we are proposing, but we do want to have some policy aims that we wish to deliver throughout this negotiation and that is, I think, what our medium and long-term focus should be on.

3.8.6 Deputy J.A. Martin:

I am slightly confused, because the Minister said we would have a debate in July, but I really do not know what on. Can the Chief Minister confirm that to have a population policy, that we can enforce, we must wait and see what the United Kingdom are doing with Europe, or can we step out on our own?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

There is more than one timescale here. We currently have our own Control of Housing and Work Law, which is on top of any requirement that the Common Travel Area, or free movement of people delivered by the Common Travel Area, place upon us, as long as we do it in a non-discriminatory manner. So, that will need to continue in the short term but, I think, it would be extremely useful in developing that policy and then approving that, for this Assembly also to have its say on what the policy priorities ought to be as we negotiate and talk to the British Government through the Brexit negotiations. The Deputy is right on the one hand that there is still a short term, as well as a medium and longer term, that we can, I think, well debate and agree in this Assembly.