

2018.10.09

16 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Chief Minister regarding measures to improve productivity: [OQ.151/2018]

What measures is the Chief Minister considering to improve productivity in order to reduce population pressures, as stated in the proposed Common Strategic Policy 2018 to 2022, P.110/2018?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré (The Chief Minister):

There are 2 aspects to the question, I suspect. First, as we heard earlier, Senator Farnham is tasked with developing the new economic framework that we have touched on. That is intended to deliver productivity growth in the medium and long term. Secondly, there is a working group in the process of being created - I believe its first meeting is next week - which is to focus particularly on productivity. Given that the Minister for Social Security is one of the invitees, and as the Deputy is her Assistant Minister, I am sure she will keep him well apprised of the progress of that.

3.16.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Given the results demonstrated in figure 7 - G.D.P. per head of population in real terms, Jersey, Guernsey and the U.K. - which shows economic growth and productivity growing in both the U.K. and in Guernsey, whereas productivity is reducing in Jersey, does the Chief Minister accept that the difference between Jersey and Guernsey is that Guernsey is managing its population growth and we are not? Will that consideration, in comparison with Guernsey, go into the discussions on productivity and population?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

I think I have lost the flow of the question there. The short answer is that any work, whether it is productivity or the separate workstream on population, there will be overlaps on both. In other words, as has been identified already, productivity is impacted, as far as we can see, by changes in population as well. It is a little bit of be careful of what one wishes for, because if we want maximum productivity you will have an Island full of hedge fund managers and that would not be what we want as a society.

The Bailiff:

Deputy Southern, did you have a further supplementary? If you are not ready, I will ask Deputy Higgins.

3.16.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

In his answer, the Chief Minister mentioned how the meeting is going to take place, I think it is next week, which will involve the Minister for Social Security. With no disrespect to her, Deputy Southern, who is the Assistant Minister, knows more about economics than she does. Would it not be better either to invite Deputy Southern ... I said "with no disrespect." I know from experience that Deputy Southern knows a great deal more knowledge of this subject. Would it not be better to invite him to come along to the meeting as well as the Minister for Social Security? I may have made an enemy there, I think.

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

The only response I will give to that is if Deputy Higgins would look to his right and about the end of the middle row and the expression on the Minister's face, I think that will answer the question for him. The point I was making, in slight levity, was that obviously there will be communication between the Minister and the Assistant Minister, Deputy Southern. I would expect that exchange to

be taking place. As to who arranged the group, it has been arranged, I believe, by the Minister for Economic Development and I am sure he will take your comments on board.

3.16.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Avoiding controversy altogether, can I just ask when we are likely to see a paper from the Chief Minister on future population policy in order for a debate to take place in here? Because it is completely missing from the Strategic Plan.

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

The short answer is that on population, we have said we will come back within 12 months to produce a paper. The terms of reference are being drafted for the policy development board that are going to look at this and a piece of work has already been requested from the Stats Department, which will feed into that piece of work. It was implemented probably about 4 to 6 weeks ago. I have to go and speak to them at some point to get a catch-up on what it looks like, but I am told that finalising that piece was going to take 3 to 4 months. That is the time frame to get some basic data in place.