

2020.09.08

3 Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier of the Chief Minister regarding 3 priorities from the Common Strategic Policy: (OQ.210//2020)

Will the Chief Minister identify the 3 most important priorities from the Common Strategic Policy 2018-2022 that will be carried forward into the new Government Plan, in light of the COVID-19 outbreak?

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

As Chief Minister, obviously one of 12 Ministers, each and all of whom have individual priorities and goals to deliver during our term of office. It is that combination of those priorities that led to the publication of the C.S.P. (Common Strategic Policy) in 2018, which set out our collective priorities. So as such, while we are in the middle of a very difficult time due to COVID and very, very clearly money needs to be saved from a variety of areas, the 5 strategic priorities as a Government have not changed and none have been cut or removed.

4.3.1 Deputy R.J. Ward:

How does the Chief Minister expect Islanders, via the survey that was sent out, to make those sort of priorities when it is clear that they will not be made by himself or his Council of Ministers in a public forum?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

I am not entirely sure. I think the Deputy has got himself slightly confused. The point of the Government Plan is to try to continue to deliver the priorities as set down in the Common Strategic Policy (C.S.P.) The feedback from Islanders who took part in that survey is that those priorities remain as important, and in certain cases even more important.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Shall I clarify?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

It is effectively a reinforcement but I hope that answers the Deputy's question.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

It does not because the survey itself was asking Islanders to prioritise.

The Deputy Bailiff:

You will have a final supplementary question. I am very conscious of the time pressures on us for a very full question list.

4.3.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

I would like to focus the Chief Minister's attention on page 15 of the C.S.P. where it says under "Improving equality": "Where we need to focus our efforts ... through meaningful increases on the minimum wage, together with supporting mechanisms to increase productivity in specific affected sectors." Can I draw his attention to those particular words and say how is he going to transfer that into action, especially in the light of P.100 for debate later today or tomorrow?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

In terms of the pages he has referred to on the C.S.P., we do have to recognise that while we all do still retain the objective, for example, of the standard of living and the living wage, *et cetera*, as I think has been referred to in a written question, or certainly something I have seen in writing, it is very clear that the economic circumstances caused by COVID have had an impact and therefore we have had to react accordingly. But equally we have taken measures all the way through the COVID-19 crisis and, do not forget we are not out of it yet, to support Islanders in work, to stimulate the economy, and that includes the vouchers, with the proposal that the Assembly is being asked to vote on later on the 2 per cent reduction in employee rates. There are proposals being put together as part of the economic recovery package, which will be focusing on productivity. That is very much under the remit of the Deputy Chief Minister, but it is one that we are all very keen on seeing an improvement in.

4.3.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

I think what I would like the Chief Minister to answer as clearly as possible is, when Islanders were asked to prioritise whether putting children first, climate emergency, for example, are still their priorities, how the Chief Minister can say that we still have the same common strategic priorities? I am going to ask him again to ensure that he gives leadership on what these priorities are as we come out of recovery.

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

I have to say I am struggling to understand the thrust of the question. Is the Deputy saying we should revise the C.S.P. and introduce new priorities? But the priorities that we identify at that point still exist. We still know that we have to improve or make further improvement on things like mental health. All those areas that we identified still remain relevant. The difficulty we have had is the impact of COVID-19 has delayed a whole number of programmes and obviously created financial tension in how we have to balance the books. Members will obviously be briefed on that, as with Scrutiny, in the coming weeks once those plans have been finalised. But he seems to be suggesting that we should be revising the C.S.P., that is not something ...

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I am not doing that.

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

If we are introducing a new strategic priority, we are.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I clarify what I am actually asking?

The Bailiff:

It seems to me the point of the question is to prioritise those things which are in the Common Strategic Policy in the first 3, is that not correct, Deputy?

Deputy R.J. Ward:

That is correct, Sir. As Islanders were asked to prioritise I would just like to know what the Chief Minister's priorities are in the same way. Imagine he was filling in the survey, for example.

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

As I said, I am not putting any one of the 5 strategic priorities ahead of any others. They remain the policy of the Council of Ministers and we are going to try and continue to implement them through the Government Plan. If you want me to go into further detail down the line, which is below the level of strategic priorities, there are some obviously fairly big ticket physical items, such as the hospital, such as the office strategy and such as change in the culture of the organisation, which will, provided we can deliver or partially deliver all of those, have benefits both to employees, both to Islanders and to the taxpayer. But overall, I do not rate any 3 of the 5 strategic priorities ahead of the other 2.