

20.09.22

4 Deputy I. Gardiner of the Chief Minister regarding the 2021 census (OQ.251/2020):

Will the Chief Minister update Members on the preparations for undertaking a census in 2021?

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

Statistics Jersey has been working on the 2021 census since the beginning of this year. They do remain on track to conduct the census on the preferred date of 21st March 2021. This of course remains contingent on the States Assembly passing an Appointed Day Act, to confirm this date as census day, and the Appointed Day Act is in the process of being lodged and we envisage it coming before the States Assembly in November. Preparations are including at the moment, finalisation of the questionnaire, any legal issues, method of census delivery and return, verification of the sample frame, i.e. households of the Island, and data-handling preparations. They are all in progress and are on schedule.

4.4.1 Deputy I. Gardiner:

It is good that preparations are under way. Would the Chief Minister consider to bring the census forward, which will allow to incorporate updated population information in the Island Plan, migration policy, and any post-COVID economic recovery strategy?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

If I understood the question correctly, that was what I consider bringing it forward. I think the issue is that there is a lot of work involved in the preparation of the census and obviously it is done by Statistics Jersey who, as we know, are also independent. I rather suspect that bringing it forward would cause a lot of difficulties because I suspect that the volume of work that is required to get everything in place - I believe there is training required of the various volunteers that help, et cetera - would be exceptionally difficult, particularly at a time of COVID.

4.4.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier:

Has the question plan for the census been determined or is it still capable of being amended?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

Again, I am not entirely sighted on that. I have seen some indications that the question plan is in the process of being finalised. Once again, that is being put together. I believe there has been some consultation, et cetera. I am very happy to get an update for the Deputy and come back to him. I might also ask if he would let me know ... not necessarily as part of this question, if he has got any specific references in mind I can obviously then investigate. I suspect, because things have been planned for quite a long time, that it is very much in the final stages of finalisation.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

I will speak with him offline just to see if there is a possibility of some additional questions.

4.4.3 Deputy K.F. Morel:

This follows obviously from Deputy Gardiner's question but would the Chief Minister confirm that the census is not in danger of being deferred or pushed back due to cuts related to needing to rebalance finances and COVID-19, and that it will go ahead in March as planned?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

As of today there is no indication that the census is going to be delayed, certainly not because of cuts. It is in the funding that Members will obviously see fairly shortly in relation to the Government Plan. Obviously there are other events that overtake us, which would be COVID-related, I would suspect. That would be something in the future. But at the moment it is on track and scheduled for the date I have given.

4.4.4 Deputy I. Gardiner:

I apologise if I missed it in the first answer. What considerations have been given and preparations have been made to perform the coming census in digital form and not the paper one?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

This is obviously quite a technical area but I rather suspect that the nature of the census is very much dependent on making sure that households are present and therefore I suspect that this time round it is digital. There is a point that I believe it is going to be used to correlate the existing numbers that we have, for example, on the population calculations, and therefore will facilitate moving to an e-census in the future. But at the moment I believe that this is going to be a manual census. What I will do is when the Appointed Day Act is ready to go I will arrange for a briefing for Members so they know the whole mechanism behind the census. I am sure the chief statistician will be delighted to provide that.