

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CHIEF MINISTER
BY DEPUTY K.F. MOREL OF ST. LAWRENCE
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 18th JANUARY 2021
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 25th JANUARY 2021**

Question

Will the Chief Minister provide the Assembly with copies of any risk management plans created with a view to the management of a Winter outbreak of Covid-19, including any information regarding the actions to be taken to mitigate individual risks and the dates, if any, on which these actions were taken or commenced?

Answer

As a first step, I would be pleased to arrange an initial briefing for the Deputy on the approach to risk management and planning adopted during the pandemic, which can then inform the production of a briefing to States members on this important area.

Indeed, additional winter pressures were identified in the corporate risk register in September, and appropriate actions and mitigations were introduced, including developing and delivering the Winter Strategy, and the Department of Health and Community Services Winter and COVID Preparedness Plan 2020/21.

I would however emphasise that I do want to ensure that our overall focus remains on delivering the vaccine to as many Islanders as possible, with the continued objective of having all those of 50 and over (and other high risk individuals) having received their first jab by the end of March which is approximately 9 weeks away.

There are also a number of important policies that need to be finalised in preparation for the time when a significant proportion of Islanders will have been vaccinated, and when it will no longer be necessary to restrict their civil liberties to the extent that we presently do.

In the meantime further details are provided below.

As with the first phase of COVID-19, the Government continued to deploy the governance framework and risks management response as it had during March – July. This was never fully stood down on the basis that the risk of a second wave was identified on the corporate risk register from September onwards. The risk management response was essentially in two interrelated parts; Health and Non-Health matters. The risks and issues arising were joined through the various co-ordinating groups within the governance structure.

The health element of the planning for a Winter outbreak of COVID-19 was contained within the Department of Health and Community Services Winter and COVID Preparedness Plan 2020/21. The risks are highlighted in this document and are reviewed on a regular basis by the Departmental Management Team and through the Departmental Quality Performance and Risk Committee. This plan was discussed and shared with all partners.

A range of areas were identified as high risk. Each risk has been subject to regular review and actions taken as appropriate. The risks identified related to recruitment of essential capacity; the potential for the number of cases to exceed the available capacity; workforce resilience and well-being; community capacity to support the health services; the reliability of the hospital estate due to additional pressures; and additional capacity to support the track and trace capability. Action has been reviewed on an on-going basis by the HCS management team.

The non-health risks were considered as part of a coordinated risk managed cross government response to the pandemic. The recognised emergency response measures in dealing with a critical, emerging or ongoing incident or event were set up through a Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) and Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG). It was agreed that this would be overseen by the SCG, as the group comprises of all government dept's and other agencies or stakeholders that are engaged depending on the scale, complexity and type of challenge to be dealt with.

One of the main risks arising from the pandemic was the business continuity of public services to continue to deliver to the island and keep critical and essential services going. This risk remained under review as part of the preparation for the winter pressures. The SCG coordinated the business continuity response through departmental plans and this was overseen by the Business Continuity lead. These plans have been constantly kept under review by the SCG and Departmental Management Teams.

During the Autumn the SCG added the additional risk of winter pressures and Brexit (No Further Negotiated Outcome) to its agenda to again provide a coordinated response to the risk of disruption to the supply chain of all essential goods such as medicines, food, fuel etc when considering the combined risk of COVID, winter pressures and Brexit.

These risks have been subject to regular review and action. For example, the Brexit Ministerial Group reviewed the potential risks of the combined risk (described as D20) of a second wave of COVID infections, the normal winter pressures on health and the potential of No Further Negotiated Outcome from Brexit.