

2021.12.15

## **The Chief Minister will make a statement regarding Omicron variant of COVID-19**

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

Last night the competent authority Ministers met to discuss the potential emerging risks posed to the Island from the Omicron variant of COVID-19. No case of Omicron has yet been found in Jersey but health officials believe it is likely that the variant is present in the Island and we are continuing with our P.C.R. (polymerase chain reaction) test sequencing and surveillance to ensure it can be identified rapidly. We need to act proportionately to protect our community in the face of rapidly changing scientific knowledge about the level of risk that Omicron poses to our Island. What is clear is that Omicron is more transmissible than other strains and cases are currently doubling every 2 to 3 days in the U.K. If this rate were to be replicated in Jersey, we would reach an infection peak that could be much higher than that experienced last winter. We want to ensure that all Islanders can enjoy the Christmas period safely and we must safeguard the resilience of our healthcare services as there are already other winter pressures on staffing in the General Hospital and other care settings. We are asking Islanders to continue taking sensible precautionary steps to protect themselves and each other over the coming festive period. The most effective measures Islanders can take to reduce the risk of catching Omicron is it to get their third vaccination. From today all Islanders aged 18 and over will be able to book their COVID-19 booster dose and we aim to achieve an 80 per cent booster vaccination uptake by mid-January 2022. We know that vaccine immunity wanes over time and the latest evidence shows that you must have a booster dose to be protected against Omicron. The current estimates are that the booster increases vaccine efficacy against Omicron infection to between 70 and 75 per cent. Vaccination is our best defence against the virus and we need to get as many people vaccinated as possible. I urge any Islander aged 18 and over to come forward as soon as possible to help keep themselves and their loved ones safe. From today Islanders are able to access their COVID status certification Q.R. (quick response) codes to show evidence of a booster dose. Islanders who are already vaccinated with a booster will have started to receive paper certificates demonstrating evidence of their third dose and from later today Q.R. codes will be available for booster doses by calling the coronavirus helpline. Officers are working on the relaunch of the digital COVID status certification portal and an update will be provided soon. From Tuesday, 4th January, the definition of fully vaccinated under Jersey's safer travel policy will also be updated. From this date, passengers will be required to receive the full schedule of doses available to them to meet the definition of fully vaccinated. This means passengers aged 18 and over will need to have received 2 initial doses plus a third booster dose 2 weeks before they travel. Passengers aged 12 to 18 will need to receive 2 doses of the vaccine 2 weeks before they travel. From the same date passengers will no longer be able to use evidence of previous COVID infection to afford the requirement to be tested on arrival in Jersey. Passengers who do not meet the fully-vaccinated status will need to take a free P.C.R. test on arrival and will have to isolate until they receive a negative test result. The turnaround time of P.C.R. test results is currently around 8 hours. Passengers who have travelled outside the Common Travel Area in the 10 days before arriving in Jersey will need to be tested on arrival and then isolate until a negative result or they can provide evidence of a negative pre-departure test regardless of vaccination status. We continue to strongly encourage Islanders to use masks or other protective face coverings when in indoor places, especially in shops or when attending events over the Christmas period. From Tuesday, 4th January 2022, masks will be mandatory in indoor public spaces. We recognise there will be activities where masks cannot be worn, including exercising, eating, drinking, singing and acts

of worship. We will provide detailed guidance for that date. We also recommend that Islanders and businesses utilise the option to work from home as part of keeping staff safe from Tuesday, 4th January. We recognise that there are circumstances where work in offices or other workplaces can continue safely and where that can be achieved we encourage physical distancing, testing, masks and good ventilation to be used wherever practical. These are temporary measures which aim to reduce the spread of transmission allowing for people to stay well, to maximise booster uptake. The measures will remain under continual review ahead of and during implementation and will be fully reassessed by mid-January. We are also asking the hospitality sector to continue with strict monitoring of their customers, collecting their contact details and enabling easy contact tracing for the authorities. We do not want to stop people from enjoying themselves but this is a sensible precaution that will help us to control any spread of Omicron when it does reach our shores. So we must ask the sector to apply a renewed effort, particularly over the festive period, as it is better to act now to reduce the impact later. Additional business support measures for industries most severely affected by these measures are being developed and the Deputy Chief Minister, Senator Lyndon Farnham, will make an announcement on these as soon as possible. Islanders should also continue to take advantage of lateral flow testing. More than 3,500 new registrations have been received across the home, school and workplace L.F.T. (lateral flow testing) programmes in the last week, which is fantastic. In total approximately 50,000 registrations have been received for these programmes. Please can I directly ask Islanders to use these tests before leaving home when attending a public event or a Christmas party. Our healthcare services remain in a resilient position and we are able to treat those who are present in hospital with or because of COVID. We are acutely aware of the pressures being placed on care and nursing homes as well as homecare services and C.A.M. (Competent Authorities Ministers) have instructed officers to work closely with the sector to ensure that they have the resources and processes to support residents who are returning to their care after a stay in hospital. By ensuring they can return home safely we will maintain the important capacity in hospital for new admissions. We will also work with this sector to explore all options for expanding their capacity in order to support those patients leaving hospital and applying additional care for the first time. I would like to repeat my thanks to all Islanders for their continued diligence and co-operation. By taking these steps we can continue to minimise the spread of COVID-19 in Jersey while allowing Islanders the freedom to celebrate without disproportionate restrictions on their lives. As I have said, we will keep all of these measures under constant review to ensure that they are proportionate to the potential risk we face as a community and we will step them up or step them down as appropriate. If I can address Islanders directly, please continue to act responsibly and with kindness to ensure that your family, your friends and colleagues will all enjoy this Christmas safely. That concludes the statement.

**The Bailiff:**

Thank you very much, Chief Minister. There is now a period of 15 minutes for questions.

**3.1.1 Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

Thank you for your help in these last 24 hours and the Chief Minister for his statement today, and echo every word. In the light of the good position that Jersey finds itself in terms of its vaccination status and the things he did mention, is it not more essential to take advantage of our position to ensure these things could be introduced a lot sooner to ensure that as we safely vaccinate those vulnerable people as quickly as possible that those mandatory things could be brought in sooner?

**Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

It is a very simple question but it is a very complicated answer unfortunately. We are in a good position and certainly as of yesterday - I have not yet seen the results for today - our numbers were falling. That is why there is always on these quite difficult decisions this issue around balance of risks of assessing the health concerns arising from COVID, the wider health concerns from the impact of the measures we have put in place and the damage to livelihoods as well, because that in itself can lead to, for example, mental health concerns and issues like that. We are taking what we consider to be, at this stage as of today, a proportionate approach. We believe it is signalling the direction of travel and strengthening the messaging that we have been putting out. We started putting in measures last week to increase the capacity of the ability to give vaccinations to Islanders. That was about increasing capacity to do so. Now, what we are doing is facilitating more Islanders to use that capacity and to bring that forward. That is the most urgent point. We have always taken a layered set of defences in relation to how we defend the Island and how we look after Islanders so therefore there are levels of defence. The very successful lateral flow testing that has been referenced already in my statement is a considerable level of support, provided Islanders, before they go out and mix, do do lateral flows; that is a very effective level of protection. That is why, taking all of those into the round, bearing in mind it is a long answer, we do feel at this stage it is proportionate. We are in a different place to the United Kingdom and to date the advice is that the challenges we will face are likely to be in January and February and that is why we are giving advance warning of what we want to do. There are logistics, as some Members who are on the briefing at lunch time know, practical logistics that if we can overcome them we will bring certain measures forward if we can.

### **3.1.2 Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

I again thank the Chief Minister for his statement. When is he looking to provide a public statement in the form of a conference with Dr. Muscat so more Islanders can hear the evidence, science and his reassuring words about the whole situation?

### **Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

In terms of today I have just recorded a video statement, a shortened version, to put out to Islanders. I believe there has also been some messaging that I am doing a statement to the Assembly now. Then we will, obviously, be doing the relevant media engagement as we go through. When we schedule a press conference will be having to work around the fact that we are all in the Assembly doing the Government Plan this week but we will try and incorporate something within the next few days. It might be Monday or Tuesday of next week but, as I say, there is messaging going out. If things change, bearing in mind these are precautionary steps then obviously that answer will change and we will bring things forward sooner.

### **3.1.3 The Connétable of St. John:**

The Chief Minister spoke about levels of defence and the success of L.F.T.s, which I would support. What consideration has been given to introducing lateral flow tests for arriving passengers who have not had a booster? If they have not been considered, is that something he would consider introducing as a precautionary measure sooner than 4th January?

### **Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

Again this is about voluntary. At the moment if somebody comes into the Island the default position is they have to isolate for either 10 or 14 days. By taking part in the testing programme they then have a simplified way of coming into the Island and, depending on the circumstances, either do not need to take a test or do need to take a test and wait until the results come through. Therefore what we are asking them to do is effectively what we are already asking Islanders to do, which is to use the lateral flow testing on a voluntary basis.

[14:30]

In practical terms I have no issue with it. What I was going to say is I am not entirely sure the level of difference it will make, however, let us be really clear, no later than 4th January, and if we can bring it in sooner that is purely down to operational issues and logistics, but no later than 4th January people travelling to Jersey who are not fully vaccinated - and this applies for adults, that is the 2 initial vaccines plus the booster - will have to have a test according to the rules that we have laid down.

#### **3.1.4 The Connétable of St. John:**

I will ask the same question I asked on Monday in terms of satellite boosters being available in the community and the use of Parish Halls if required?

#### **Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

I relayed that question to the C.A.M. meeting that we had yesterday evening. The team will take it away. What I will say is that at the moment it is very much a case of using the resources one has to vaccinate the maximum number of people, so that is about efficiency. At present the most effective method is to get the volume of people through the Fort over the next few weeks. Once that volume starts to change I suspect the answer will be to then go to the Parish Halls but we have asked the team to look at it and see what the benefits are in terms of access because I fully agree.

#### **3.1.5 Deputy S.G. Luce St. Martin:**

More than ever with Omicron we have a good idea of what is coming down the line at us. We know we probably have it on Island, we know it takes 2 or 3 days to double, we know we are currently on a 100-plus cases a day but, by the estimates I have done, by the end of the first or second week of January we could have 1,000 cases a day of Omicron. The Chief Minister says he is acting now but apart from introducing voluntary vaccinations and making them available to all adults he is not really acting now. Why does he not act now and make masks mandatory because that alone could buy us the time to get more adults vaccinated by the time Omicron really takes hold?

#### **Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

In relation to masks I will be as clear as I can be, I absolutely have no problem on the issue around masks and even the mandation of masks. What I do accept is that there is a legal test which has to be passed for it to be acceptable to bring in mandation under law. Ironically, we have been having a debate just before the Assembly finished around governance. On the one side there was very much concern - we hope we have addressed that - around governance of a proposal on the Technology Fund which certain Members were very focused on and on the other side there have been suggestions that we almost tell everybody it is mandatory before the law is there to enforce it, which is quite a contradictory stance. There is a legal process. We have had the risk of challenges in the past when the directions or instructions have been given without the legal backing. One could do it once or twice at the very beginning of this pandemic but you will see that there will always be a sector of the population who will not agree with what one is trying to do and therefore that legal bar, that legal test, has to be met and has to be met in an appropriate way. Therefore, again, it is about getting the legal order drafted and obviously giving people the relevant notice to put the systems in place. From a proportionality point of view, as of today, 4th January is acceptable and the public health teams who have advised us are not seeing that increase that the Deputy is suggesting, we are seeing potentially a challenge in January and February.

### **3.1.6 Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade:**

I am going to emphasise a point made by the last speaker. Does the Chief Minister consider a delay in implementation of the proposed regulations is wise in the light of previous experiences? I wonder if we have operational difficulties in implementing the proposals put forward.

#### **Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

In terms of the travel side, I have been as clear as I can with Members, including my answer today, I would like to see those brought in as soon as we can. That is purely a logistical exercise on 2 sides, one is ramping up the teams to make sure that testing is done appropriately in the airport, making sure the systems do work and making sure that the technology can be updated. As I say, I am expecting an update on that. We have been very clear with the operational teams, we need an update as to can they do it sooner, which I would expect to get in the next 24 hours. If they say they can do it, for the sake of argument, in a week's time I would very much want to see it done in a week's time. But I will accept there are practical issues around that. In terms of masks, as I said, we have been putting advice out for people to wear masks, particularly for example in shops, for a number of weeks. It is quite interesting to note the number of particularly large retailers who do not have a sign on the door saying: "Please wear a mask when you come in." So that tends to reinforce this point about the necessity to achieve that legal bar to then justify the mandation side. Again, we keep it under review. If we felt as of today or as of tomorrow that this needs to be accelerated I am sure that the competent authority Ministers would be supportive of that. As of today, proportionately we do not think this is necessary as of now. What I do say, bearing in mind that we talk about the balance of harms and lives and livelihoods, is we have to remember that by sometimes reacting too quickly that can generate a pressure on a different cohort of Islanders and we need to take that into account. Also, as we have said, it has always been a balance with lives and with livelihoods. There are consequences, for example, of making working from home strongly advised from today in the run-up to the beginning of the Christmas period. Taking all those into the round, that is why I think it is proportionate to do, as of today, 4th January.

#### **The Bailiff:**

Do you wish a supplemental? The questions and answers are taking significant time.

### **3.1.7 The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

Just very quickly. The Chief Minister will probably anticipate this question but would he say that the experience of the last 2 years has helped informed the decisions of today?

#### **Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

The short answer is yes. I do not know if it is helpful, I do not know if there is scope to extend the question time or not.

#### **The Bailiff:**

That is a matter for the Assembly. I am assuming there is a substantial number of questions to come and so therefore I am assuming no one is against extending the question period and it will be going for an extra 15 minutes in that case.

### **3.1.8 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Is the Chief Minister confident - and I think this is the key - that what we have in place now is strongly advised mask wearing given what we are seeing elsewhere with Omicron and the borders we have now are good enough to stop significant increases in infection on the Island?

Or are we simply waiting for that happen and hoping it is not at Christmas time? I am not playing any party games here, it is a genuine because people want to know: are you confident that what we have in place is enough?

**The Bailiff:**

Could questions please be addressed through the Chair.

**Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

With the information we have to hand, yes. I make the point that information changes very, very frequently and, in fact, if one remembers it was only on 26th November it became a variant of concern. It was 3 days before a Member said in the Assembly: “We are not in an emergency currently, it is about business as usual.” I actually challenged that and said every time people think we have relaxed and we are back into business as usual something new comes around the corner. I think something new came round the corner that Friday. The point I am making is with the information we have, bearing in mind these are obviously very initial responses, we have been pushing the 3-pronged statement of vaccination, lateral flow and masks for a number of weeks. The fact that we are at 50,000 lateral flow registrations is fantastic and that is a strong defence. That is roughly 50 per cent of the Island. I doubt there are many jurisdictions that have that level of testing provided individuals are using those tests, which we believe they are.

**3.1.9 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Would the Chief Minister commit to making another statement like this, even though we may be busy this week I do not think anyone would object to having statements over this week because we are all going to be here? May I ask the Chief Minister to answer the question that we are inevitably going to get from people that effectively we are waiting until 4th January because we want to keep people out shopping for Christmas? Because we are going to get those questions.

**Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

It is not an unreasonable question. Let us go back to last year - and apologies this is going to be a slightly longer answer again - at Christmastime, if you will recall, we basically had no vaccination, we had ... numbers were just starting to fall at Christmas Eve or 2 days before and at that point we put in measures where you could only meet for Christmas Day and Boxing Day and there was some pressure from various parts of the Island saying for whatever reasons we should be able to meet on Christmas Eve or other iterations around that. The point is, all the actions we have which may be absolutely logical and sensible to an individual in the Assembly or a proportion of the Assembly, there will be a proportion of the community out there who fundamentally do not agree with it. It is taking those balance of risks together. It is always the balance of risks. Christmas is a special time. It will be the second Christmas of living with COVID and therefore it is about families coming together in as easy and unpressurised way as possible. It is ultimately about the well-being of the community, and I talked about mental health and things like that in general terms. Therefore the least I think complexity we have around that is important. If we closed St. Helier down today there would be an economic impact and that in itself then adds to stress to people in employment, who own small businesses in town and things like that. I will just finish by saying to bear in mind the stages we are going through, the schools will be breaking up on Friday and the numbers have been coming down in the schools, it is likely then there is going to be less mixing other than in the party type of territory starting from next week and that is where we keep urging people to use lateral flow tests. So over the Christmas period there is an expectation that things, other

than the celebratory side, should dampen down in terms of mixing. That is why I still think at this stage 4th January is proportionate. We will keep monitoring this very, very closely.

**Connétable R.A. Buchanan of St. Ouen:**

I think it is only fair as a Member of the Government that I should step aside and allow others to ask questions.

**3.1.10 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Does the Minister think that people being tested and coming back with a positive result have the right to know what strain of COVID they have and why are they not being told this by the helpline?

**Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

I think the answer on that one is I will go away and find out if there are practical difficulties to that. My understanding from the testing regime, so lateral flow shows you are positive. We give a P.C.R. to verify that you are positive. That P.C.R. test, as I have understood, is then taken away and checked for the type of variant that one has. I believe that testing is done in the United Kingdom and therefore there is a time lag between that test being sent away and coming back to identify the variant. There is obviously no time lag other than the 8 hours that we talk about of determining whether one is positive with COVID or not. So just putting those 2 things together, I cannot see any reason myself, as a layman and as a non-medical practitioner, why a person could not be told what variant it is. However, I very much caveat that by wanting to hear the detail from the technical team. It is certainly something that at the next States Members' briefing, if not before, if the Deputy wanted to ask that of the relevant team, I am sure they would be delighted to give him an answer. Hopefully we can get a direct answer to the Deputy and Members before then.

**3.1.11 Deputy M. Tadier:**

I have experience of somebody who has tested positive and they were followed up by contact tracing and when they asked: "Can you tell me what strain I had?" they said: "No, we cannot tell you that." But when they were pushed on why they could not be told, the person consulted with the manager and said: "It is because we do not keep a note of it and the test is destroyed."

[14:45]

It seems to me that we need to know the numbers of the different strains presumably and it seems to be salient data that any patient should know exactly what kind of strain they have for, I think, just common-sense justice. Does the Minister agree with that point and if it is not being done, will he make sure that people are told?

**Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

All I can say is, from a logistics point of view, I just want to find out the rationale behind it. I am sure there is a rationale.

**3.1.12 Deputy K.F. Morel:**

I am very pleased to hear that the business support schemes will be dusted off and brought back in, that is good news, but I am concerned about staff shortages. With the mask mandate not coming in until 4th January, I am concerned, with my retail hat on, about customers possibly infecting workers in shops. Is there any advice the Chief Minister could give to those shops and would they be within their rights to require people to enter their shops with masks? I know the Chief Minister has spoken about posters outside but are those shops or restaurants, et cetera, able to require masks of customers to help protect their staff?

**Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

That is dragging up some memories when we have been through this a number of times previously on the mandate side. I believe there is absolutely nothing that stops shops these days, right now, requesting customers to wear a mask. I cannot remember the legal position if a customer decides they do not want to. Obviously, we have given the guidance for a number of weeks through the relevant organisations, so Chamber of Commerce, I.o.D. (Institute of Directors) and others in Jersey business advising about wearing masks anyway. My understanding is that the shops would very much prefer us to be mandating it because it then gives them a stronger push to any customers who do not want to wear masks obviously, and it is varied. Mainly because of the hours we do, I do not tend to get to too many different shops but on the very few I have gone into, some have got screens up or have put screens back up. Most of the staff, not all, have been wearing masks so there is protection there, but I agree entirely, again, it is that matter of being responsible, of also respecting the safety of your neighbour and, in this instance, of the shop assistant, if members of the public will wear a mask as we have been advising when going into shops.

**3.1.13 Deputy K.F. Morel:**

Sticking with retail and hospitality, obviously the Christmas season is an incredibly important season for both retail and hospitality and they often do not get to make up any losses over this period until Easter at the earliest, if not the summer. With that in mind, is the Government considering how long those support schemes may be required because they may well be required as late as Easter next year if they miss out on this season?

**Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

We have already done some announcements which schemes carry on to which dates but, as we have already said, and I am sure the Deputy, wearing his official hat, will be having some discussions with the Minister as Senator Farnham will be making those announcements in due course. We do recognise absolutely the consequences of the announcements we are making today.

**3.1.14 Deputy M.R. Higgins:**

In one of the private briefings we had with Dr. Muscat I was told that only a sample of P.C.R. swabs are tested in the U.K. because we do not have the genomic testing equipment in the Island. Some time ago I asked that we should acquire this because probably Omicron will not be the final variant that is going to drift through before we see the end of this pandemic. What he said was: "You need a specialist to operate it." Now Guernsey has this; would the Chief Minister please look into genomic testing, about having the facility in the Island so we can provide real time rather than delayed action responses?

**Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

Absolutely no problem, I am very happy to take that away and feed it back into the team.

**3.1.15 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Is there a point of the number of infections or is it the number of hospitalisations that have been focused on this time with this difference at which mandatory mask wearing and more mitigations will come in urgently, and they could happen very urgently, perhaps even through the Christmas break? How quick is the mechanism for making that decision?

**Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**



There are about 3 aspects to that question. In terms of the point about, for want of a better expression, the “metrics”, and I am a bit hesitant using that word, we have moved away from focusing just on numbers and very much looking at the impact upon the hospital and general health services and making sure that they do not get overwhelmed. I emphasise absolutely that every message - and in fact the Deputy of St. Ouen, the Minister for Health and Social Services, confirmed that today I think - we receive from the hospital and the health team is that they are in generally a good position. We are not seeing the concerns that, for example, you are seeing in the United Kingdom. However, one of the concerns is that as the number of positive cases increases, there is a potential factor of an increase in projected hospitalisations with a time lag. There are 2 things that we kind of interpose and consider along with a variety of other effectively more subjective measures and information that comes in through the health teams. As I said, we are meeting weekly to assess those. In terms of the speed to implement masks, if a decision was taken that we felt we had reached that legal bar and that legal test and we did need to do it earlier, it is always very much the Minister for Health and Social Services who has to sign the order. It is within, I think, in practical terms to do it quicker, but at the moment, as we have said, proportionately we think it is appropriate to give Islanders advance warning that it is scheduled for 4th January. My view, it would be interesting to see over the next few days, is that by messaging the fact that masks will be mandatory from 4th January that we will start seeing a behavioural change again over the next few days.

**3.1.16 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I hope that the Chief Minister is right in his last comment there about the mask wearing. I ask the Chief Minister, is it still mandatory to isolate for 10 days with infection if you are an active case? There are currently 1,064 people on this Island isolating. As what point do the number of people isolating become a variable in the metric, i.e., the impact on people’s lives?

**Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

One will recall that in June/July of this year we went up to around or just above 3,000 cases and we have to take into account it is also around the information we get around severity. If people are isolating, I do know instances where effectively, particularly in younger individuals, they have felt a bit unwell for a couple of days and then frankly have then got on with the next 8 days, if that makes sense, and then other people have felt quite unwell for almost the entire period. One of the things I would say which we have changed, that the Deputy will be aware, and is again worth re-emphasising is that do not forget, for well-being purposes, we do allow everybody out for 2 hours a day, even if they are positive, obviously not to go to mix, but to at least go out and get some fresh air.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Did you try and call me before, by the way, my internet dropped out?

**The Bailiff:**

No, I think my tone of voice was slightly off, Deputy, but you are entitled to your second question now. There is about 2 minutes to go.

**3.1.17 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Does the Chief Minister agree that the public have been, by and large, very compliant? They have had 2, 3 vaccines where necessary, we are often doing lateral-flow tests several times a week before we go out anywhere. To mandate people who are healthy and who, to the best of their knowledge, certainly do not have COVID to wear a mask has a downside ...

**The Bailiff:**

Deputy Tadier, you are using up the last minute of questions with your question, did you have a question?

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Yes. Does the Chief Minister agree that it is important we give people a break who are trying to do the right thing and that there is a human downside to compulsion when it comes to wearing masks?

**The Bailiff:**

I am sorry, the time limit in which you can answer that question has now expired, Chief Minister. I am afraid Standing Orders are entirely strict, it can be 15 minutes plus 15 minutes, but there is no room to extend it any further, I am afraid.