

22.11.01

8 Deputy M.R. Scott of the Chief Minister regarding establishment of an international culture centre (OQ.102/2022):

In view of the different options open to government in responding to the Diversity Forum: Legacy Report (R.64/2022) in the current economic climate, will the Chief Minister explain why the Government proposes to incur £300,000 in expenditure and additional related running costs for the establishment of an International Cultural Centre?

Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter (The Chief Minister):

I thank Deputy Scott for the question. Jersey has benefited greatly from welcoming different cultures into our community. People moving to the Island have ensured our economic prosperity and brought new cuisines, new traditions and new perspectives in the Island. We are a more vibrant and thriving Island as a consequence. Now the establishment of an International Cultural Centre is an important initiative to formally recognise those contributions, to bring Islanders together, to provide the space for all of our Island cultures to flourish and unite, and to enhance and increase public engagement in the Island and throughout all communities. I have set up a steering group led by the Minister for Children and Education which includes States Members and representatives from across Jersey's communities to develop final proposals for the International Cultural Centre. This funding will enable the group to develop that centre which will provide information about services in Jersey, improve access to those services across the community to celebrate Jersey's cultural identities. It will also bring Islanders together by raising awareness of our different cultures.

4.8.1 Deputy M.R. Scott:

Could the Chief Minister please provide a definition of success, how she proposes to measure success specifically, and whether she has investigated opportunities for private funding in this area?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

So the Better Life Index identified Jersey's civic engagement as being very low, and I think it is exactly that measure that will demonstrate the success of this project or not. I sincerely hope that we will see a significant increase to our position in the Better Life Index, and particularly across the gamut of measures there, but in particular in relation to civic engagement. No, we have not looked at, so far, private investment in this particular project in its early stages.

4.8.2 The Connétable of St. Helier:

A dozen States Members were in the Town Hall on Saturday evening for Diwali, including the questioner. Does the Chief Minister believe that the cultural centre, which I fully support, should be in the Island's capital, and will she take the opportunity to talk to the Parish about whether we could be of assistance in providing such a location?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

It would always be a pleasure to discuss such matters with the Constable and with the Parish of St. Helier, of course, as the home to a third of our Island's population. It is the natural home and, as I am sure the Constable is aware, the current location for the centre, certainly in its initial period, will be in the library which I think is a fantastic site right in the heart of St. Helier.

4.8.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

I hope the Chief Minister will agree with Minister for the Environment with the sentiment of Oscar Wilde who says: "A cynic is somebody who knows the price of everything, but the value of nothing" and that in fact this is good investment here, and it cannot necessarily be valued in economic terms only. But I do have a concern, and it may be that the Chief Minister can respond to this specifically, that there seem to be lots of groups being set up, either the Diversity Forum, we can look at Women in Politics, we can look at the International Cultural Centre. It seems perhaps from an outside point of view that the distinction between what is political and what is civic is not always that clear. Can she assure us that when money is being invested into any groups, especially when there are politicians who seem to be leading it, that it is not simply seen as another area by which pet projects can be pursued, but there is a democratic and civil society direction there?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

So particularly in our small community I think there is often a blend between both political and civic. Of course, the Better Life Index I referred to earlier identifies civic engagement in very much a political sense in terms of Islanders' political engagement through the ballot box. That is one of their key indicators. But this group is in its early phases and just this week I have made a suggestion that a leader of a local arts group might be an excellent person to join the steering group to bring a greater cultural and artistic element to the group and its work as it moves forward and embraces all aspects of our Island's cultures.

4.8.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

There is a risk, I think, that needs to be avoided and obviated is that there is also a risk in setting up these groups which may well be at their heart to promote diversity and creating a new form of elitism where we see certain types of people recurringly taking control of these groups which are also very active on social media and in mainstream media. How will the Chief Minister ensure that that does not happen and that truly these groups ... and I would include groups like Women in Politics in that which I feel in the past have been ...

The Bailiff:

Can we just have a question?

Deputy M. Tadier:

I will leave it there. How will she ensure how those groups are truly diverse and not politically-led but led by the groups they seek to represent?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Thank you for your interest, Deputy. I think really the aspiration of this independent group is to be an umbrella for all of those organisations. We have talked about it in the terms of it being a cultural compass and that is because it is going to be there to point people in that right direction, to bring those groups together, and to help them unite in their various purposes.

4.8.5 Deputy C.S. Alves:

Can the Chief Minister provide us with some feedback on how she feels about the recommendations in the Diversity Forum: Legacy Report, whether she accepts all of them and which ones she would be making her priority?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

So, one of the items that we will identify when we are able to publish our Article 30A report, which will address the issues of political responsibilities in various directions, will I hope identify our acceptance of some of the recommendations in the Diversity Forum's report, that being that we see the need for some political direction in terms of social mobility and equalities. I hope that we will be able to identify a Minister with those responsibilities, also one for disabilities, and equally to value the importance of family-friendly policies and the importance that that has in bringing greater diversity to different spheres of life.

4.8.6 Deputy C.S. Alves:

When will the Chief Minister be publishing this, please?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

I had hoped that that would have taken place last week, so I hope that it will be coming to Assembly Members imminently.

4.8.7 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour:

I just wanted to ask the Chief Minister, as someone who was previously a member of the Diversity Forum and contributed to some of the achievements within the report that is in the question today, does she continue to support the work of the Diversity Forum going forward?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Yes, as a former member I was quite disappointed not to continue as a member of the Diversity Forum and I certainly support its continuing work. Just looking around at this Assembly now, I think we have moved a long way in terms of the diversity of membership here today. Of course, there is always more to do and I look forward to seeing greater achievements in this area as we progress through our 4 years in office.

4.8.8 Deputy M.R. Scott:

Could the Chief Minister please name which or any other jurisdictions she has looked at that have an International Cultural Centre in line with her vision and how their success has been identified?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

This idea came solely from the Legacy Report and I think greater minds than mine helped to contribute to it in the presentation that we have before us. So this has been a locally-generated piece of work, particularly in response to that Better Life Index that I referred to. I think it is an appropriate and inclusive way of addressing the issue and our aspirations for the Island.