

23.11.07

2 Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North of the Chief Minister regarding growth bids in the Government Plan (OQ.212/2023)

Will the Chief Minister explain the rationale behind the number of growth bids exceeding £47 million in the Government Plan, given that the Government is seeking to secure £10 million in efficiency savings?

Deputy K.L. Moore (The Chief Minister):

The Council of Ministers carefully considered a large number of growth requests once again this year as part of our preparation for the Government Plan. This included additional funding only where there was a need to mitigate a key risk or where investment was needed to deliver the Government's priorities. For example, £21 million of the £47 million is to address the well-documented challenges in health. The need to fund these priorities does not in any way preclude the need for Government to continue to review how it operates and to deliver the operational efficiency savings, as recommended by the F.P.P. (Fiscal Policy Panel)

2.2.1 Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Of course, there is a great risk when we see £47 million in growth bids because there potentially are plenty of inefficiencies in the first place, and hence why we need to make sure there are efficiency savings being made. So is there the potential for dysfunction to be part of the growth bids that are being proposed in the Government Plan?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

As I outlined, the growth bids are directed in areas of priority to meet the needs of the services that are delivered by the public sector in the Island, and also to meet the Government's priorities. We are, in tandem, conducting efficiency work. There are 3 phases to that approach - 3 prongs - those are cashable savings for which targets have already been agreed and set; continuous improvement, which is establishing a culture across the public service throughout departmental teams for continuing improvement in service delivery; and then thematic reviews and best value reviews. We see that currently in Health and Community Services where the financial recovery programme is well-advanced and has identified £25 million worth of savings that can be made within the next 3 years.

2.2.2 Deputy M.R. Scott of St. Brelade:

Could the Chief Minister just outline what exactly is being done to achieve efficiencies through government organisational improvement and give some details of the strategic workforce plan?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

That is a matter that is underway with the guidance and leadership of our interim chief executive. But, as I outlined in the previous answer, continuous improvement is a model for all public servants to ensure that we are delivering the best possible services for the best value for public money.

Deputy M.R. Scott:

I do not feel that answered my question about details of the strategic workforce plan, nor really answered the question about organisational improvement, other than to say that the chief executive was looking at it.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Do you want to ask your question again, so the Chief Minister knows precisely what it is you ...?

Deputy M.R. Scott:

I would like my question answered actually, Sir, please.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Can you repeat it so that it is in the ...?

2.2.3 Deputy M.R. Scott:

Accepting that the chief executive seems to be looking at organisational planning and we have seen something yet, would the Chief Minister care to give details of exactly what the strategic workforce plan is and what it is going to achieve and how?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

It is rather difficult to provide a detailed answer when concision and brevity is required when answering oral questions, but there is plenty of information provided to States Members on these programmes. I can talk to the value-for-money programme, which was introduced at the Government Plan last year. It continues this year. It is identified work that drives through all departments to help and provide leadership to ensure that public servants can identify and tackle value-for-money work that delivers the best possible public services for the best value for money for taxpayers.

Deputy M.R. Scott:

I am sorry, I asked: what is the strategic workforce plan?

The Deputy Bailiff:

You have had an answer from the Chief Minister.

2.2.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Could I be more specific than the previous questioner and ask for one example where value for money has been the driving force behind a reduction in spend?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

I can identify perhaps the reduction in medical locums and the conversion to permanent staff, particularly in our health services. That is a recurring theme and it speaks to our priority of recruitment and retention, and it brings down the cost. Because, as everybody will be aware, the cost of locum provision and bank staff is significantly more expensive than that of permanent staff. It also has an impact on the delivery of public services to our public. If I have the time to go into further detail, I can explain how, through the financial recovery programme, we can look at radiology and radiography, where that team has been particularly successful in bringing down waiting times through this work.

2.2.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Surely, it seems to me, that this value for money is part of business as usual. We do not set out to employ locums where we can get people at the normal rate. Surely is that not business as usual?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

You will be surprised. I think speaking to the financial recovery programme leads, it has been quite a challenge and a task, and we should all be grateful to them for their knowledge, experience and

professionalism that is helping to deliver better value services and better quality services for Islanders.