

23.05.02

7 Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South of the Chief Minister regarding alcohol consumption in Jersey (OQ.84/2023)

Given that when ranked against O.E.C.D. (Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development) countries in relation to alcohol consumption Jersey came second, will the Chief Minister advise what the Government's assessment is of why Islanders consume so much alcohol?

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

Firstly, it should be said that, of course, the Council of Ministers is concerned by this position in the O.E.C.D. table. Public health are currently doing research with Islanders to understand more about their health and well-being. One of the themes in this research is attitudes to alcohol. We are specifically holding focus groups to understand more about the impact of alcohol on Islanders' health and well-being. As part of that research, we will look to understand what drives consumption and what opportunities there might be to reduce consumption. I would, therefore, not want to prejudge the findings of that research.

4.7.1 Deputy T.A. Coles:

Does the new substance use strategy brought forward by the Minister for Home Affairs fall under an area of relentless focus, given its impact on our society?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

The new substance strategy has recently come to the Council of Ministers. We had a very interesting conversation about it. It is subject to some further refinements and it will be brought and published shortly.

4.7.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Minister believe that the policy about minimum pricing for alcohol and also a ban on happy hours and promotions, et cetera, has had any impact at all? Is it a policy that she supports?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

I am not cited on and certainly cannot recall at the moment the result of that work. What I am aware of is that pricing and affordability is one of the factors that does determine alcohol consumption. We can see that in lower income households there is less alcohol consumption. I can give the exact details: 22 per cent of households with income less than £40,000 show the lowest level of hazardous drinking.

4.7.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

Specifically on those policies about minimum pricing and promotions being banned, does she think that those kind of policies should be made by politicians?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Ultimately, I would imagine that that is a political judgment and it has been in the past. I do believe that the Economic Development team have the licensing laws on their list of work to be done.

4.7.4 Deputy R.J. Ward:

May I ask the Chief Minister for a timeline on when the substance abuse strategy will be produced and delivered?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

As I said in my earlier answer, the strategy is due to be published shortly and then I presume it will move to delivery at a later date.

4.7.5 Deputy R.J. Ward:

I did ask for a timeline, but okay. The substance abuse strategy is based around it being a health issue rather than it being a punitive issue, so does the Minister believe there is enough support for organisations that support those who misuse alcohol and are wanting to change their behaviours?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

We have a number of organisations in the Island who do work with people who misuse substances and alcohol. Whether that is enough is not something that I could give a proper answer to because I do not have with me any of the figures or indeed the number of people that are treated or supported by those groups. I am sure I could ask Health and Community Services if they might have that information to share with the Deputy.

4.7.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is the Minister aware of the current public health initiatives to reduce unhealthy activity in our community? Is she prepared to back that with the right level of funding?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

This Council of Ministers has already agreed to support more of an approach to public health and preventative measures. We are committed to ensuring that there is a greater level of funding to direct our activities at the earliest stages of health and well-being.

4.7.7 Deputy G.P. Southern:

When the Minister talks of extra funding, what sort of levels are we talking about: doubling of the price that we need to exact from our community or otherwise?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

I do not have any specific figures to hand at the moment in terms of the level of funding that we are providing to public health colleagues at the moment, but I can say that it is a priority. Also, the Deputy was suggesting that we might be looking to draw more money out of the general public's purses to fund such measures. As I said, we are embarking on that work in relation to licensing laws, so I certainly would not be able to give any reasonable indication of that at this time.

4.7.8 Deputy T.A. Coles:

I am going to steal a question that was put from a Jersey Youth Assembly member, who sat in my seat and was very good. What does a successful substance youth strategy look like to the Chief Minister?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Things start at the beginning, do they not? If people are leading a happy and fulfilling life and enjoying a good quality of life then they have less cause to seek to ease any pain that they might feel by abusing substances or alcohol. I take the hope that people will enjoy a good quality of life in the

Island and that our community will be one where everyone can thrive and therefore they shall not seek to misuse substances.