

23.05.23

9 Deputy S.G. Luce of the Chief Minister regarding the strengthening of Jersey's resilience to unforeseen events (OQ.92/103)

Will the Chief Minister advise whether any consideration has been given by Government to requiring Ministers and senior civil servants to consider their responsibilities in relation to resilience with a view to strengthening Jersey's resilience to unforeseen events, especially in light of the U.K. Government's resilience framework published in December 2022?

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

Ministers are aware of their responsibilities in respect to resilience and take these responsibilities extremely seriously. To that end, the Government is undertaking work to strengthen the Island's resilience in a changing global context. The focus of the U.K. framework is to enhance and empower local resilience forums. The Jersey Resilience Forum is constituted of an executive group and a delivery group and is supported by various working groups focusing on areas of risk, identified through the community risk register or emerging issues that may pose a threat to Jersey, which if materialised may lead to a crisis, major incident or emergency. As Ministers and legislators, we also recognise that the Emergency Powers and Planning Law is outdated. Our emergency planning team is working to develop new civil contingencies legislation based on the themes in the U.K. Government's resilience framework building on whole of society resilience and prevention of chronic issues or risks becoming acute.

3.9.1 Deputy S.G. Luce:

I am grateful to the Chief Minister. I made a very quick list of things that I was beginning to think about: floods, droughts, technical and I.T. (information technology) hacking, connectivity and our food security, energy security, health and disease, global pandemics, global downturn of financial services, prolonged recessions and then security risks to Ukraine and further afield in Taiwan. Can the Chief Minister assure the Assembly that she is being proactive and not reactive to all these threats?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

The Deputy is quite right, there are indeed many risks in the global context and the Island context at the moment. The Council of Ministers, as part of its duties, has surpassed itself with our risk register. It is something that we consider is an important thing, to maintain an overview and an eye on that and ensure that it is properly updated. There are many different work streams. I do not think I can respond to each of the risks that the Deputy outlined. However, for example, the Rural Support Scheme that the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture has found funding for and pursued with great energy is starting to deliver on our aspiration of having greater local food supplies. Indeed, as a result of that scheme, we are expecting to see a further 20 farms created annually in the next few years.

3.9.2 Deputy M.R. Scott:

Given that the civil contingency also should be looking at supply chain and in view of the fact that the Comptroller and Auditor General has already highlighted Government's failure to address right-sizing in terms of the size of this Island's population, will the Chief Minister and the committee be considering the extent to which the supply chains have the capacity for competition that seems to be contemplated by the Jersey Competition Authority?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

I thank the Deputy for the question. As I sat down, trying to keep my previous answer relatively brief and concise, I was immediately going to go to supply chain and supply lines. As Members will be quite aware, I am sure, the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture is also fully focused on developing new supply routes. That is something that is an active aim of Government at the moment and we look forward to delivering upon it.

3.9.3 Deputy M.R. Scott:

Will that include regarding the extent to which the Jersey Competition Authority has been adequately briefed to consider the actual extent to which this Island can sustain competition in order to maintain secure supply chains?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

I have to say, I am not cited on whether that discussion has or has not taken place. I am sure that regular discussion with the competition authority would be a matter of course. Naturally, we all have to maintain some sort of balance in terms of recognising our size and the scale of our Island economy versus the need to maintain competition and enable, particularly in these times, that prices are the best prices available to Islanders.

3.9.4 Deputy S.G. Luce:

I am grateful to the Chief Minister. I am sure, like me, she has looked at the U.K. Government's framework which talks about the ability to anticipate, assess, prevent, mitigate and respond to known and direct risks. However, I would like an assurance from her, if she can, to say that she is also thinking about unknown and indirect risks into the future?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

I thank the Deputy for the question. It is very difficult to commit to being aware of all of the unknown unknowns, so I guess I need to temper my answer relatively carefully. However, as I think I outlined in the initial answer, we are engaging with experts in this field who are assisting us in updating our legislation. I look forward to seeing the next phase of that and bringing it to the Assembly.