WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER CENTRAL QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 3rd APRIL 2023 ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON WEDNESDAY 12th APRIL 2023

Ouestion

"Further to her response to Oral Question <u>30/2023</u> where the Minister stated that she was "not in a position to provide further details yet but expected to be able to do so in the very near future," will the Minister –

- (a) confirm her plans for the high-level review of benefits;
- (b) given that her delivery plan states that action will be taken by 28th February, advise what actions, if any, she is taking; and
- (c) if no actions have been taken, explain why not?"

Answer

Following the publication of my ministerial delivery plan for 2023 I have answered previous questions on this subject (WQ.75/2023, OQ.30/2023 and QWON on 21/3/23).

The written response below draws on the information already provided in response to these questions.

(a) The high-level review is looking across the benefit landscape, in particular to identify areas where improvements could be made to address specific issues that currently cause concern. In response to OQ 30/23 I said: "we are trying to look at our current benefits to look for gaps, to look for areas where we know there are shortfalls, to look at the areas where people perhaps just fall outside."

My overall delivery plan sets out an ambitious review programme for 2023. The section relating to the high-level review is not designed to duplicate work that is already underway in other areas and its timing is designed to ensure that work is carefully co-ordinated to use resources effectively. Review work that will be co-ordinated with the high-level benefit review includes:

- The actuarial reviews of the 3 ring fenced funds are near completion and due for publication during quarter 2.
- A separate and detailed review of incapacity benefits is underway with actions planned for later this year.
- A range of aspects of the long-term care scheme are also under active review.
- A separate project is considering the replacement for the current Community Costs Bonus regulations which have expired.
- Finally, the IT systems that support all benefit payments are currently being completely overhauled.

The high-level review has been completed and I am now considering the outcomes to determine where changes should be made and to develop a work plan for those changes. Some of those changes will require detailed consideration and discussion with stakeholders.

(b) and (c) As a consequence of the review, we have identified the need for further detailed work in respect of:

- the impact of relevant quarter rules on local residents with short gaps in contribution record.
- the impact of relevant quarter rules on parents seeking to claim parental benefit for a second child.
- provision of death grant for still born babies.
- Home carers allowance rules for parent with more than one child with a long-term health condition.
- Income Support rules in respect of critical skills courses and part time work requirements, asset limits across all benefits.
- The level of special payments for funeral costs.

Further areas for detailed review may be added. Where it is possible to make changes quickly then I intend to do that and I hope to be able to update the Assembly on specific amendments very soon.