



## Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel

### Quarterly Public Hearing

### Witness: The Chief Minister

Tuesday, 8th December 2020

**Panel:**

Senator K.L. Moore (Chair)  
Deputy S.M. Ahier of St. Helier (Vice-Chair)  
Connétable K. Shenton-Stone of St. Martin  
Connétable R. Vibert of St. Peter

**Witnesses:**

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré, The Chief Minister  
Mr. C. Parker, Chief Executive  
Mr. J. Quinn, Chief Operating Officer  
Mr. J. Blazeby, Director General, Justice and Home Affairs  
Mr. J. Sykes, Assistant Private Secretary for the Chief Minister  
Mr. R. Bell, Treasurer of the States  
Mr. N. Stocks, Policy Principal, Immigration and Migration Policy  
Mr. D. Danino-Forsyth, Director of Communications  
Mr. S. Perez, Project Portfolio Manager, Office of the Chief Executive  
Mr. M. Grimley, Group Director, People and Corporate Services

[10:02]

**Senator K.L. Moore (Chair):**

If we could make a start, it is just after 10.00 a.m. and I would like to welcome everybody to this quarterly hearing of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel. Thank you for joining us this morning. Usual practices apply. If I could ask that, when speaking, any contributor puts their camera on so

that we can see them, which is particularly helpful for those who are hard of hearing. We do have a lot to get through this morning so if we could also ask that answers are concise and to the point because, if they take up too much time, we will not get through all of our questions and I may have to mute the participant if they are going off track. So, without taking up any more time, we just need to do the introductions. I am Senator Kristina Moore. I am the chair of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel. We have with us today the vice-chair, Deputy Steve Ahier, and then Constable Karen Shenton-Stone and Constable of St. Peter, Richard Vibert. Chief Minister, would you like to make your introductions?

**The Chief Minister:**

Senator John Le Fondré, Chief Minister. I will call on everybody.

**Chief Executive:**

Charlie Parker, Chief Executive.

**Director General, Justice and Home Affairs:**

Good morning. Julian Blazeby, Director General.

**Treasurer of the States:**

Morning. Richard Bell, States Treasurer.

**Group Director, People and Corporate Services:**

Mark Grimley, Group Director, People and Corporate Services.

**Policy Principal, Immigration and Migration Policy:**

Good morning. Neil Stocks, Immigration and Migration Policy Officer.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Is that everybody? So I take it that is everybody who is present, thank you. So if we could start with some questions about COVID and the strategy being implemented by the Government.

**Group Director, People and Corporate Services:**

The Chief Minister has just dropped out and he will be back in. Seb, could you introduce yourself?

**Project Portfolio Manager, Office of the Chief Executive:**

Sebastien Perez, Office of the Chief Executive.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Thank you. So is that everybody now, we have made our introductions, if the Chief Minister could confirm that?

**The Chief Minister:**

Yes, I believe that is. I thought we had Dirk with us from Comms but he seemed to have dropped out. Yes, I believe that is the entire team.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

So if anybody does join us that has not previously been introduced, if they could perhaps introduce themselves when they start talking that would be helpful. I remind everybody again that if they could remain in vision when answering questions that would be helpful. So the strategy states, Chief Minister, that you aim to maintain public confidence. How do you measure public confidence in the strategy in relation to the tackling of the COVID-19 situation?

**The Chief Minister:**

That is where we could do with the Director of Comms with us. The whole point in terms of measurement, the Comms Department do take metrics, as I understand it, of how messaging and things are being delivered, is my understanding. But from our point of view we do know that, in terms of public confidence, it is somewhat of an intangible issue of trying to measure it. We certainly do not run surveys and things at this stage. But we do keep a measure of sometimes public feedback. So, for example, I would say from last night the measure that we have had of messaging today has been one that people have felt reassured.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

How have you drawn that conclusion from feedback from the press conference last night?

**The Chief Minister:**

We had approximately 10,500, I think it was, who were watching. The overall reach was something like 50,000. As I say, that is some of the assessments purely from comments that we have been receiving, which are usually coming from what I will call informed individuals who do not ordinarily get in touch with us.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Fortunately, although the Government has not been conducting surveys about public confidence, another body has, called Island Global Research. They have twice particularly looked at public confidence in this respect and most recently their survey found that people in Jersey were half as

likely as their Guernsey or Isle of Man brothers and sisters to agree that their Island's COVID-19 strategy was the right one. Why do you believe that many Islanders still maintain that Jersey is taking the wrong strategic approach?

**The Chief Minister:**

I think it might be helpful, I understand Dirk is now with us. Apologies, for some bizarre reason on the link we are in I cannot see all the people that are on the list. So it is just a technical issue, which seems to define States links rather than anything to do with Teams. But I believe Dirk is with us so perhaps I can just get him to introduce himself first and then we will go back to the strategy question. It is relevant because I believe he can respond to the issue we are dealing with and then I will go back to the high-level one.

**Director of Communications:**

Thank you, Chief Minister. My apologies, my wi-fi cut out so I was left trying to refresh for the last few minutes. Dirk Danino-Forsyth, I am the director of Communications for the Government of Jersey.

**The Chief Minister:**

Dirk, I thought it might be helpful, and then I can go back to the high-level, which is how we assess essentially public confidence, public mood, from the various communications that have been going on over the last few months.

**Director of Communications:**

We have a morning meeting for all the heads of comms with the marketing, digital and design team. What we do in that morning meeting is we wash up the day before and then we go on to what is on the grid for the rest of the day. In that meeting we will look at press notices we put out the previous day, how that has landed in the media in the evening bulletins and in the morning newspaper. So we will look at sentiment, anything from the length of the article or the length of the piece that was given. If the journalist had a positive take on it, a neutral take or a negative take. If it contained our key messages. If it moved on the debate or the dialogue, so if it is a long-term project like Our Hospital or the care model or the Government Plan. How are we moving strategically to enable Islanders to better understand what the Government is doing? So that is how we look at traditional media, we get a readout ...

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

If I could just stop you there, we need to press on. If I could ask everybody who is speaking to appear in vision please as well, it would be very helpful. But the question really for the Chief Minister

was: when the public are making it very clear that they do not have confidence in the strategy that is being used by the Government, what is the Chief Minister intending to do to give public reassurance or to adapt the strategy so that the public can have greater reassurance in the strategy that is being implemented?

**The Chief Minister:**

Senator, you made an assertion that said: "When the public do not have confidence in." Can you give your evidence for that please?

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Yes. As I explained earlier, the Island Global Research survey, it has been conducted twice, in particular looking at the issue of public confidence in relation to the COVID situation. On both occasions it has found that those surveyed had very low levels of public confidence. In fact half the level of confidence that is found in Guernsey, for example. Where it is approximately 80 per cent of people feel happy with the strategy of Government. Whereas here it is about 42 per cent of people.

**The Chief Minister:**

Sorry to ask a further question, because I have not looked at the most recent survey, but I did look briefly at the one in April. Could you remind me, perhaps, Senator, as to how many people were involved from Jersey and whether that is proportional to what the proportion was to the rest of the Islands?

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Chief Minister, I think as a professional survey it is a credible one. They would not publish it if it had not met the criteria of their profession. I cannot see the exact numbers but, if I recall correctly, it is at least 1,000 people surveyed. Therefore it will be a matter of a sample, a proportion that those figures were revealed. Indeed, we have seen in a number of polls, the Channel 103 poll I think, 2,000 or 3,000 people responded to recently, saying 70 per cent of them wanted to see change in Government. So there are other indicators if we wish to go there, and samples of varying sizes give rather similar responses. So if you could just answer the question I will be grateful.

**The Chief Minister:**

The reason I was trying to get there, because it is about facts ultimately. Certainly going back to the survey you are referring to, the one I looked at in April, by far the majority of people were based in Guernsey. It was then a proportion in the Isle of Man and then it was less in Jersey. Whereas obviously the populations are the other way around. So the point I would say is it is not a statistically representative sample. Potentially, from what I recall, it was around 300 and I have no idea if it is

statistically represented across the Island. The only people who do those type of surveys, as far as I am aware, are people like MORI. As I said, the other point with surveys is that they are always based at a point in time. On the basis that, for example, you were quoting the April survey, I think even in October, we have moved on somewhat since then. So I am afraid, while we try to ensure that we get the messaging out to people and, as we said, the general feedback I have had to date, for example from yesterday, was about reassurance and people felt they understood the picture and where we were trying to do a lot better. Obviously, Dirk, with what he was outlining, the processes they follow in trying to get measured feedback and understand public sentiment, I rely on the medical advice at the end of the day and the professional advice that we receive. I do not change my mind because of a survey that, by the time we get it, is a couple of months out of date. Because otherwise that would be playing to political populism rather than getting on and doing the job.

[10:15]

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

With respect, Chief Minister, taking a proper survey professionally conducted would be helpful. It is something that one would expect you to take very seriously because it gives a professional indication of the views and sentiments of the public. Whereas the process that the director of Communications has outlined this morning does not appear to be at all well researched. It is simply that they are gauging comments that they have seen on social media. So I do struggle somewhat to understand your perspective on that. But if we could continue with the same survey; 72 per cent of Guernsey participants felt very comfortable meeting their family and friends compared to only 32 per cent of Jersey residents. So why do you believe that might be?

**The Chief Minister:**

Frankly, I have not looked at the survey or analysed it, because, as I understand from what you are suggesting, it was several weeks or months out of date. As I said, you might wish to allow the director of Comms to carry on indicating how we assess overall Island sentiment based on the Island rather than a survey, which I have no idea what the basis is. I am sorry, I cannot really help you much more on that.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Okay, so if the director of Communications has any further information to explain the basis for their research that would be helpful, thank you.

**Director of Communications:**

Sure. So, the problem with those surveys is you have a lot of bias in people's responses to the survey that you do not have necessarily on social media when Islanders use their real names or their real identities. So people can be biased firstly when the survey is taken, the time of day, the day in the week, what has initially happened in that news cycle. It is only taking a snapshot in time and then comparing to other Islands without any reasoning of what has happened in their news cycle. When you look at any jurisdiction with different populations, and so obviously we have almost double the population of what Guernsey have - and I have not seen the mechanism behind what Island Global Research have done - but data can be incredibly skewed from that. While what we do is we look at Islanders who have their known accounts and we look at the sentiment over a period of time. So we can day-by-day gauge how things are landing. It is not just on social media. We speak to forums, so the heads of communications speak to the groups, whether it is unions, individual practitioners, let us say teachers or doctors or people out in the Island. But they may also speak to influencers, people who have worked in politics before, people who have worked in industry. From collating all that information from real people, from real sources who are willing to put their name behind it, and doing that day-by-day, you get a much richer impression of what is going on rather than an anonymous snapshot survey; the whole purpose of which is just to compare you with other jurisdictions. When doing that, you are comparing your response to their response. If someone naturally disagrees with the different strategies that have been agreed by the Government, people are naturally just going to say: "I do not agree with that. I wish we had done it the other way." While when you are asking people: "How are you going with what we are doing here in Jersey now?" you can get a much better feel of, okay, people think that this is either too restrictive or people do not understand that. You can tweak it for them. What the Island ...

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Sorry, if I could just stop you there. Firstly, if I could remind you to turn your camera on while speaking please. If also you could perhaps give an example of an area where policy has changed and moved to respond to some of the feedback and public sentiment that you have gauged as a unit?

**Director of Communications:**

Sure. So when in the beginning we understood that people were very concerned and worried about how we were communicating around vulnerability versus high risk. So we looked at our language and how we were communicating to people who were at high risk. So that they could better understand what their risk of contracting COVID was versus other underlying vulnerabilities, which we know when you go into any form of lockdown scenario can include people's vulnerabilities because they are living at home with an abusive partner or because they have other health concerns that need looking after. Our response to COVID could have been detrimental to those. So we fed

that back and health officials, S.T.A.C. (Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell) and Ministers, looked over that and said; “Okay, here is firstly how we communicate with people to make it clear that they are high risk to contracting COVID. Here is how we mitigate the underlying health concerns, the co-morbidities as concerned to COVID. Here is how we support them through Connect Me, through work with the Parishes, for their other vulnerabilities to make sure that they are not suffering from other things unrelated to COVID because of something that Government would implement.” That is one example where we have done it from a health perspective. But also we are ...

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

That is very helpful. I do think we need to move on now. So I am going to hand over to Deputy Ahier who will ask the next question.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier of St. Helier (Vice-Chair):**

Thank you, Chair. Chief Minister, the strategy in relation to Christmas gatherings was initially due last week and then yesterday. But it still has not been announced. Why has there been a delay?

**The Chief Minister:**

As I said at the press conference last night, it is a combination of 2 things: one was our priority was put into the vaccination and the care homes changes, which is absolutely the priority and was the most urgent. The draft strategy in terms of Christmas came to us in competent authorities yesterday. We asked for it to be a little bit clearer and a little bit tighter. So on that basis I am expecting to be announcing it probably by Thursday. That is the intention. So it is still in time for Christmas. But what we have said, and what I said publicly last night, is that it is going to be consistent with existing guidance. It is going to be tighter but essentially everybody needs to expect a quieter Christmas, which we all want to spend with essentially family and close friends. Then I also made some references to New Year and also how people should hopefully think about conducting themselves. But obviously that will all be on the YouTube video under the Government of Jersey account.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

You mentioned the restrictions on access to care homes. The notice of closure of hospitality was given 36 hours before the event. Yet care home closures was only 24 hours before people were allowed to visit their loved ones. Do you think that was reasonable?

**The Chief Minister:**

Sorry, I did not quite catch the last ten words.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**



Obviously, hospitality was 36 hours in advance but care homes was only 24 hours. Do you think that was fair to the people who want to see their loved ones the last time before Christmas?

**The Chief Minister:**

What we did also say is that, within the Christmas guidance, there will be an allowance for visiting around Christmas, so potentially Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day, which is also what has just been written up. But the crucial thing is that we are intending, provided all the dates stay as we have been informed as of yesterday, to be starting to vaccinate from Monday. Therefore it was important to move very swiftly. Again it was about minimising the risk to all those in care homes prior to the vaccine coming in. Because we cannot vaccinate someone if they are ill and that is the overriding thing. I will say, I asked exactly the same question you have just asked. That was very clearly the medical advice, that we needed to do it quickly. It is a horrible thing to have to be dealing with. We would rather not. But at the end of the day, and again, as I said last night, it is around we are on that home straight hopefully for people who are in care homes, for example. It is hang in there for 6 weeks, in other words the first vaccination should be next week, hopefully starting from Monday. We then have to have this pause of around 3 weeks to then have the second vaccination. Then basically we will be into essentially mid-January is the rough timetable and at that point they should all have been vaccinated appropriately. So, for people in care homes, we are on that last leg hopefully and that is why we have taken ... it is a horrible measure to have to deal with, but it is in the long-term interests and it is literally around 6 weeks to just hold on there.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

Do you think you should have managed the strategy, which was to reduce numbers early, to support Christmas gatherings so that families and friends could have met up at Christmas?

**The Chief Minister:**

Apologies, what?

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

Should you in retrospect have considered a lockdown for one or 2 weeks at the end of November to ensure that people could meet up for Christmas?

**The Chief Minister:**

Again we addressed that publicly in the press conference last night. I think 2 things come out of that. There are obviously other jurisdictions who have gone into, it has either been called a lockdown or circuit-breaker. What the experience has been is that as soon as they have come out of it unfortunately they have then had to go back into lockdown and it is just going to carry on. We also

know that overall the impact of lockdown in terms of mental health, depression, all those type of things, particularly at this time of year, does have consequences. That is one of the reasons why we are really trying to avoid lockdown if we can possibly avoid it. So that is why we have just focused on what we call the hospitality circuit-breaker and particularly as well, based on the evidence, that was where the majority of the increase in cases seemed to be originating from on the basis of the data we had, which obviously we shared with States Members previously.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

Lastly, has the COVID taskforce been disbanded or is it still constituted?

**The Chief Minister:**

Essentially all the structures are back up and running as we had. I will let Julian Blazeby just refer to that in a bit more detail as to what the structures are that are running at the moment. Julian, let me just mute and I will hand over to you.

**Director General, Justice and Home Affairs:**

We have been monitoring the situation over the last number of months. We have stood up again the One Government COVID response team. That is co-ordinating all the activity through a strategic co-ordinating group and ensuring we have good oversight and co-ordination with activity in relation to things like P.P.E. (personal protective equipment), in relation to community taskforce, and a variety of other areas of activity to ensure the Government response is co-ordinated.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

I will pass over now to the Constable of St. Martin.

**Connétable K. Shenton-Stone of St. Martin:**

Good morning, Chief Minister. Your strategy to suppress and contain, but at the current rate the virus is neither suppressed nor contained in the Island. Why did you not take action sooner when it was identified to you that community transmission was taking place in October?

**The Chief Minister:**

The short answer is we did. We have been putting in all sorts of measures that we have been announcing, not only the general advice, advice before half-term, and then measures coming through, which have been done since October. States Members have been briefed, as have the public, on all the various measures that have been put in place. Let me refer to the notes in terms of what we put in during or just before the increase, which was the masks came in, the advice on gatherings, the slowdown or the early closure reducing times from 1.00 a.m. in the morning for all

establishments back down to 10.30 p.m./11.00 p.m. and further measures coming through. So a number of these are still to bite and we will see if those measures have been sufficient over the next couple of weeks essentially. But we did take action and do not forget that the jump that we saw on around 25th November, essentially that was on the Wednesday, on the Sunday the competent authorities met and we put the next set of measures in place on the Monday.

**The Connétable of St. Martin:**

Action 7 of the winter strategy states that you aim to cause least overall harm. How is that target being achieved?

[10:30]

**The Chief Minister:**

In terms of how is that target being achieved, overall we act on the professional advice we get, which is predominantly medical advice, but obviously looks at the overall well-being inside the Island as well. So the least overall harm, certainly in the way Dr. Muscat looks at it, is what it says on the tin. So it is not just focused on the impact of COVID-19, it is looking at the impact across the Island community and the damage that is done by either doing something or not doing something. In essence, there will be a variety of measures that the medical professionals take into account for example. They will look at it from what they see in terms of delays in normal surgeries and procedures versus the spread of COVID. At the end of the day it will be a professional judgement to which they then feed into us to make the decisions on. That is the high-level position.

**The Connétable of St. Martin:**

On reflection, do you think that we should have adopted the elimination strategy as originally proposed by Deputy Perchard?

**The Chief Minister:**

Short answer is no. The longer answer is, for all the reasons that were espoused at that time, and that is when we come to Islanders' lives and livelihoods. We have had that debate.

**The Connétable of St. Martin:**

I will just pass you on to Constable Richard Vibert.

**Connétable R. Vibert of St. Peter:**

Good morning, Chief Minister. Currently there are 536 known active cases and 3,618 direct contacts are self-isolating. The average daily increase recently has been 60. Why were cases able to

increase to these levels prior to action being taken? What impact or concerns will the self-isolation requirement have on Islanders and the community as a whole?

**The Chief Minister:**

I will go with the high-level point and then I will hand over to Julian, if that is okay. As we have said in the past, and again I said it last night, every action we take usually takes around 2 weeks for us to see any impact. It can be plus or minus a few days depending on the circumstances. As I was alluding to, the new increase, for example, that we saw the rise to 60 was from Wednesday, 25th November, the numbers started going up. Obviously, we have been putting various measures in, for example restrictions on travel. On 2nd November we published the winter strategy. We were then talking about the masks being strongly recommended. Again, 16th November, new measures came in. On 20th November was when we went to 10.30 p.m. for closing for hospitality and gatherings reduced. On 30th November was finally when the law came in, the order being signed for masks to be mandatory. Guidance issued for working from home. Then obviously on 2nd December we put in a hospitality circuit-breaker. So we did move and, just to be clear, it would seem that the increases that we saw came from a cluster of events possibly that came through from half-term. But also as we explained last night, part of the increase does also correlate, as was shown to States Members yesterday, with the increase in testing we are seeing. So there are a variety of metrics that we are keeping an eye on. One is where we are in terms of positivity rates and one is cases as they are coming into hospital, the overall assessment of spread, but also the volume of testing we are doing. As we said, the very simple analogy I am using - and it is really simple - is that in about 3 weeks in March and April time at the peak, we tested about 1,400 people and we had around 200 positive cases. Whereas in the last week we tested around 10,000 people and had about 200 positive cases. So, although numbers are increasing, part of that increase is due to the significant increase in testing that we are doing, particularly relative to the early parts of March/April when we were in this position previously. So it is not the same analogy.

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

If I can just ask, you mentioned those events that caused a spike. I just wondered what investigation has taken place to establish the extent to which attendees at those events adhered to the COVID regulations and advice?

**The Chief Minister:**

I will let Julian answer that question.

**Director General, Justice and Home Affairs:**

Those events you are referring to have been extensively investigated, both through our contact tracing team and enforcement colleagues, whether that is Health and Safety Inspectorate, Environmental Health, or indeed States of Jersey Police. It is fair to say, where there has been evidence proven and a prosecution could be pursued, there has been. We know there has been one case in the public domain in Havre des Pas where there was a prosecution. But there has been a lot of rumour and speculation across the Island around some particular clusters. I would try to reassure members of the panel that where there are opportunities and evidence to prosecute, we will do. The contact tracing team particularly are very adept at investigating, asking the right questions, and exploring, to get to the bottom of the truth in relation to things like numbers, adherence to the public health guidance, at these sort of events.

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

When implementing recent restrictions, why was 36 hours' notice given to the public that hospitality was closing, causing a super-spreader Thursday?

**The Chief Minister:**

I have heard one or 2 anecdotal remarks, but equally we do not have that much evidence that it was "a super-spreader Thursday" or not. There is always this balance between making sure that people do have advance warning where we can do, and that was the difference between what we had to do on the care homes, because of the nature and the fact that hopefully vaccinations are starting on Monday, versus the hospitality warning where we did try to give more notice. It was quite categorically designed to avoid Friday and the weekend for exactly those reasons. I do not know the level to which a spread activity ... there are some anecdotal remarks but there are also others that suggest that in the main a number of the establishments behaved responsibly. Again, I can hand over the Julian if you want some more information on that.

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

No, I think that is fine. Do you consider that perhaps we are shortly going to need more stringent measures such as a stricter lockdown?

**The Chief Minister:**

That is the million-dollar question at the end of the day, or 64,000-dollar question. The fundamental is that we put a variety of measures in place, including the hospitality lockdown. The implementation of that was on last Friday. That will take a couple of weeks to work through the system and we will see the impact of that at that point. We are obviously monitoring daily. The competent authorities will be meeting again later in the week and we are very, very much monitoring very carefully. If the advice changes, we will act according to that advice. At the moment, the advice is that lockdown, if

you like a complete lockdown, really does have seriously-negative impacts on the overall well-being of the community. As we have said, and I did allude to it last night, it is all very well for many of us who have relatively quite nice houses, can have a room where we can set up and work from, hopefully might have a garden or whatever. But if one is in a more built-up area, potentially a one-bedroom flat with a family, lockdown for 2 weeks has an awful lot of consequences for families who are not as fortunate as us, or anybody, not just families. That is the point about the balance of harm. Lockdown is not a panacea; it has consequences in itself. Those also include economic consequences. That is why we keep saying it is this balance between lives and livelihoods. It is a balance between the COVID-19 health impact and the overall well-being, mental health and other health impacts that come from doing or not doing certain things. Then the economic impact. That is what we keep taking into account every time we take these type of decisions. To date, the strategy is trying to avoid a lockdown if we possibly can. Let us be very clear, if a lockdown is required because we feel that the spread of the virus is not behaving as we hope, then we will do it. But that is very much also dependent upon, if people follow the measures that we have put in place and the advice we have put it and the working from home advice, which again started this week, then with luck we have put the right measures in place at the right time. But we will be able to assess that over the next couple of weeks. Apologies for a long answer. It is also worth making the point, which again I said last night, if we were to go into lockdown today or tomorrow, there will be no change in the numbers from that for at least 2 weeks. So, in other words, all the results we are seeing at the moment have been in the pipeline for around 2 weeks. They have to work their way out, and that is when I said we will see the measures that we have put in place, some of which will start to bite in the next few days, some of which will take longer because they were put in later. But there have been measures put in place before the recent increase and we have to see if those have any result as well. The final comment, and then I will stop, which I have not said and I will say publicly again on Thursday, is the other thing that can skew the numbers potentially over the next couple of weeks is the return of Islanders to Jersey, particularly, for example, students. But not necessarily just them. The nature of the testing may mean that, if somebody is coming back having had COVID in the relatively-recent past, but now not transmitting it essentially, the P.C.R. (polymerase chain reaction) test may initially show them as positive. We then, as I understand it, assess the circumstances of that test and you will see in the daily stats we produce, I think it is called "old infections", and so they would then be transferred into that category. But there is, as I understand it, an initial 24 hours where you may see a spike, which is due to people coming in who have previously had COVID and the way the P.C.R. test will pick it up. So it is not, again, a threat from that perspective in terms of a sign of massive increase of infection. It is purely the way the stats are going to be recorded initially and then that will be corrected.

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

I will now hand back to Senator Moore.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Chief Minister, you mentioned there the importance of maintaining lives and livelihoods. Could you explain then the rationale behind closing all hospitality businesses given that many have been implementing very strict measures and observing the rules and seeing a very small number of their visitors being contact-traced. So, in effect, the majority having to pay for the consequences of actions of a minority who have not been implementing the measures correctly at what is one of the very busiest times and most profitable times of the year.

**The Chief Minister:**

Where it comes down to that is unfortunately the actions of a minority have caused problems for many people. The other comment I would make is that, in the data, which I think was certainly referred to and presented to States Members, it was very clear that, of the large clusters ... I am speaking from memory here so the numbers may not be 100 per cent right, but the principle is right. In the large clusters we saw about 212 positive cases from those clusters and by far the majority of them were hospitality-related. So the evidence was there that indicated that essentially it was within hospitality and gyms that the increase seemed to be coming from. That is why we took the action we had. What we cannot ...

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

They were in fact a very small number of premises. So, could you describe to us what enforcement measures have been in place and whether enforcement officers have visited all hospitality venues to assess the effectiveness of their measures? Also whether they have been graded in any way so there has been perhaps a watchlist of those who they are concerned about and those who they feel are conducting themselves very well?

[10:45]

**The Chief Minister:**

In terms of the detail I will hand over to Julian again who can talk to that. I will also say we have to go for consistency of approach. The nature of the question illustrates the dilemmas we face. Because, from the questioning within the panel, which is fine, we have had one side suggesting: "Why have you not gone into a lockdown?" and now we have another side suggesting: "Why did you pick on all of hospitality?" which obviously is not a lockdown. That is the balance of issues that we have in terms of dealing with ...

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Sorry, Chief Minister, could I just remind you, and you will be well aware from your years in Scrutiny, our role is to ask questions. We are not, in asking those questions, suggesting any measure at all. But our job is simply to ask questions that the public would like to have answered. So that we can gain evidence from you and your officers in order to formulate our reports and our work.

**The Chief Minister:**

Yes, I was using that as the illustration of the difficulties we have in terms of balance of approach. But, anyway, to deal with the enforcement issues, I will hand over to Julian.

**Director General, Justice and Home Affairs:**

Thank you, Chief Minister. There has been a lot of activity across the Island in relation to enforcement, both with States of Jersey Police, with great support from the Parish police forces, and indeed our own enforcement officers through Environmental Health and the Health and Safety Inspectorate. A huge amount of premises were visited about 2 weeks ago and they were graded into high, medium and low risk. There was, in the main, good compliance in relation to contact tracing and awareness of the public health guidance. Those ones that were high risk were then subject to further targeting and we saw improved behaviour. But of course the whole thing about the hospitality sector is not just the behaviour inside the premises. It includes staff in greater-enclosed areas, for example in kitchens, but also the behaviour of people who attend the hospitality venues and then move out of those and whether they are in taxi ranks, whether they are milling around in the streets, and that has increased the risk. So there is an unintended consequence by people visiting the hospitality sector. As challenging as it is to shut that sector, there are many good reasons, as the Chief Minister mentioned.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Was any consideration given to targeting the premises there were concerns around in the first instance, prior to implementing a complete shutdown of the hospitality sector at this important time of year?

**Director General, Justice and Home Affairs:**

All the considerations were thought through with colleagues and discussed with Ministers. But, as I say, the behaviour of those in the hospitality sector is one that often is alcohol-fuelled and people get closer together and raised voices because they have to in that environment. Very clear medical advice indicates that the closing of the sector reduces the overall risk and the unintended consequences. We did do quite a bit of work with those premises that were high risk, as I described, and we did see improvement. Indeed, there are good examples, as you have indicated, around



contact tracing. But, overall, the benefit of reducing activity in the hospitality sector, we hope to see an improvement in terms of the positivity of cases.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

But do you understand the frustration of some that there are serious inconsistencies in the approach of simply locking down those with alcohol licences? Given that some coffee shops, for example, might be very small, whereas a hotel is closed completely, whereas it might have in effect some very large spaces in which people could very safely enjoy a cup of coffee.

**Director General, Justice and Home Affairs:**

Yes, we have had some feedback from various parts of the sector and indeed other elected Members in relation to the issue you highlight. It is quite difficult to try to change a small group of people and behaviour in different sectors. It is important we are consistent with our strategy and policy. Where there is alcohol being served, or indeed where there is not but people gather and behave in a way that increases the risk, then it was decided and agreed that we would have a consistent policy across all those premises at the same time. However, these things are kept under review, as the Chief Minister says, on almost a daily basis. If there is a requirement to change then that will be reconsidered.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

With respect of the package of measures to support the industry, they have in the last day been improved. Could the Chief Minister describe the decision-making process that went behind the change in the package of measures to support the industry?

**The Chief Minister:**

When we made the decision of the new measures that were coming through on hospitality, which was done through competent authorities, it did not take rocket science to work out there was going to be an economic impact or hit on the establishments affected. So very clearly Senator Farnham, with the backing of the competent authorities, requested officers to update the scheme, which is what has been done. Although we do not like doing what we are having to do, we are taking what I would call a sensible approach, i.e. if we have caused impacts on establishments, where we can, we will try to support them through this time. That is by way of upgrade to the packages. I also again made that very clear at the press conference we did when we announced the measures.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

What industry do you consider will be targeted next? Will perhaps the beauty industry see measures being imposed?

**The Chief Minister:**

We do not target an industry just for the fun of it. The point is that we base it on evidence and where we see spread occurring or not. That comes through from the information we see in the contact tracing. I think that would be speculation at this point. If people stick to the guidelines and the advice that we have in place, we said we are assessing it daily. But we are going to see what the measures are over the next 2 weeks and a bit, we will then assess as we move along. That is the way we have done it all the way through, is see what the evidence is and then make the decisions based on the advice we receive.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

I am going to hand over now to Deputy Ahier, who will ask the next set of questions.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

There have been reported I.T. (information technology) issues with the testing system. What contingencies are in place should there be further problems?

**The Chief Minister:**

I will hand that over to Julian to deal with the detail.

**Director General, Justice and Home Affairs:**

As you indicate, we had a technical problem with the OpenCell Lab, the on-Island testing facility, over the weekend on Saturday into the early hours of Sunday. The team were very quick in fixing that problem and then working through the backlog. We have contingency plans in place to ensure we can continue to get our swabs analysed. We obviously had the system in place prior to procuring the on-Island testing facility. We still have contracts and good relationships with Public Health England, so we can send swabs to their facilities to be tested, and indeed with Micro Pathology, which was the company that we used throughout March, April, May, June, July. We have those contingency plans in place. We dusted them down. They are ready to go. I am pleased to say the OpenCell facility was fixed and the team worked very hard to deal with the backlog. We are now in the situation where we are fully functioning again.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

Yet pending results are up to 1,678, they have virtually doubled in the last 24 hours. When will these results be processed and when will the system be back up to speed?

**The Chief Minister:**

Just briefly, and then I will hand you to Julian for the detail. Yes, obviously with the delay that did happen in the weekend, there is a slight backlog that is being cleared. But also do not forget it is always a point in time and the lab does quite a lot of its testing overnight, therefore that will have an impact on the results as they were reported over the last day or so. I will let Julian deal with the detail.

**Director General, Justice and Home Affairs:**

As the Chief Minister said, the lab, when it is fully functioning, is processing just over 2,000 swabs a day and the results are coming out on average in 12 hours when it is fully functional. So we should see that pending time drop quite quickly when the various batches of results come in.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

What percentage of tests are repeated on the same individuals, such as healthcare workers and those who are entitled to testing due to their public-facing roles?

**Director General, Justice and Home Affairs:**

We have a programme of activity of testing and approximately about 40,000 workers who have been tested over an 8-week period are now broken down into 3 categories. Category (a), (b) and (c). (a) is every 2 weeks. That has been adjusted, so that is healthcare professionals, those in care home settings and staff in domiciliary care. Then we have group (b) that is tested every 4 weeks. Then we have a group of more broadly-based workers who are tested every 8 weeks. So that is the standard testing programme, which is a huge volume, which is why, as the Chief Minister said, we are testing far more than just about every other jurisdiction in relation to our numbers. Where we need to enhance that testing programme, where there is a cluster of activity, for example, high risk, we then are able to flex our testing programme and test weekly, for example, if we need to.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

Chief Minister, since the amount of tests are knocking on to 200,000, why are not all individuals on Island being tested?

**The Chief Minister:**

The best point, there is still a logistics point there, I have to say. The fact that we did 10,000 last week is pretty impressive. It is also about risk. So what we are trying to do, although the workforce element does give a spread across quite a large element of the population, you are using what is still limited resource, even though it is a lot better than what we had back in March. The fact that we are saying we did 2,000 tests yesterday, that is more than we did in 3 weeks in the peak in March/April. So you are also targeting it to focus on things like the contact tracing. In other words,

to target those where they are either more at risk or you are trying to determine whether they are positive or not, i.e. they have been identified as a direct contact. So that is the balance of risk. If one, for the sake of argument, had another OpenCell or something like that here, you could test the population. You could probably test the entire population on a very regular basis. But the view there is it is about risk. Relative to pretty well every other jurisdiction on the planet, we are doing proportionately more testing than anybody. That shows that we are in a pretty good place.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

How many employees are in the test and trace teams? I understand they have increased in size. Of course what sort of financial implications are there of that expansion?

**The Chief Minister:**

I will let Julian give the detail.

**Director General, Justice and Home Affairs:**

In terms of the funding and resources, a business case was submitted a number of months ago to fund the test and trace programme up until the end of this year, and indeed a business case is in the Government Plan for the first 6 months of 2021. That will more than adequately deal with the challenges of test and trace. In relation to the contact tracing team, for example, 3 weeks ago there were 54 staff, it was modelled on the challenges around positive cases and direct contacts. As of today, we have around about 95, 96, and that number is going up. So a significant increase in 3 weeks to meet the rise in demand. We continue to review resources on a daily basis. We will not sit still in relation to that number. As I say, we are going to be 97 tomorrow. We have also seconded an additional 15 members of staff from across Government who previously worked in the contact tracing team back in March and April who have experience in the system already. They are helping colleagues work through the numbers of direct contacts. So we have the funding in place, we have the resources in place, we have our resourcing model that continues to flex and increase as the demand similarly goes up.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

Are Government employees being redeployed from their usual roles to cover the expansion?

**Director General, Justice and Home Affairs:**

We have a small number of Government employees who have been repurposed. As I say, those who were supporting colleagues in March, April and May, have come forward again to help us, which is great because they are trained and can hit the ground running. But we are looking at securing,

and indeed have secured, more staff through a range of permanent contracts, fixed-term contracts, and zero-hours contracts, to enable us to have that flexibility.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

Chief Minister, finally, what is being done to identify the more asymptomatic cases? Obviously, they are the hardest to detect.

**The Chief Minister:**

In terms of detail, essentially through, for example, the workforce testing programme is designed to do that. In other words, because you are putting people through a cycle, that will pick up quite a chunk of asymptomatic cases. As you will have seen from the results that we also were showing last night, what we referred to as the light blue curve is the asymptomatic cases that we are detecting. That also comes through potentially from all the other forms of testing in terms of the contact tracing.

[11:00]

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

I will pass over to Constable Stone now, thank you.

**The Connétable of St. Martin:**

What is the average wait time for the coronavirus helpline?

**The Chief Minister:**

I will hand over to Julian.

**Director General, Justice and Home Affairs:**

I do not have the exact figures for the waiting time for the helpline. We do know that the helpline has seen a significant spike in calls. We have responded to that by reviewing the staffing levels and also putting messages out to Islanders that they must use the helpline appropriately. We are getting a lot of people calling the helpline when they do not need to for a variety of reasons, which we understand is because people are concerned and anxious. But at the same time we want to make sure that people use the helpline appropriately. So we are reviewing the staffing, we are reviewing the opening hours to ensure that it does support Islanders' concerns, and we are managing, where we can, the backlogs. We did see, as you know, a significant increase in calls over the last probably 10 days as the result of a variety of different activity.

**The Connétable of St. Martin:**

It is good to hear that you are tackling this because I have heard that individuals are having to wait up to 4 hours to get through. I will just move on to communications. How have you aimed to improve communications internally so that those dealing directly with the public are better informed and do not give the public conflicting information?

**Director of Communications:**

One of the concerns that was raised to us initially was that those members of the public who do not have access to digital or social media either rely on the news media, so television broadcast or the radio, or they rely on the direct services, so face-to-face engagement with the Government or using the helpline. So what we wanted to make sure was that, if a member of the public did call the helpline, they were getting that single source of truth in the same way that they would get from either the website or what we were briefing Ministers for. So in some of the meetings we have, when we have a large-scale announcement, is we bring in people from the policy team. They are the officers who have written the policy and the different options that get submitted to the Ministers. They brief us. So they brief the web team, who deal with the website. They deal with the communications team, the internal team, the marketing team and the press office. Then they also speak to a representative from the call centre. So that very early on we understand what the options are being presented to Ministers and how we will need to communicate or how we will need to explain those to the public. The Ministerial Support Unit then takes us through the process of that decision being ratified or amended by Ministers back and forward with policy officials until we have the signed-off product. So the official Government position on an issue. We then all get together and we look at what the key lines are from that project. What is the most interesting or impactful thing that a member of the public needs to know? So, for example, from yesterday's communication, the main audience group is care home visitors and care home residents. They are the most affected. What they need to know is the timing of the new restriction, how the new restriction will affect them, any exemptions there are to the restriction, and when the restriction will finish. Once we have talked that through in the meeting of all the different representatives, we then have a single document of key lines to take that get shared across the different units so that we are all reporting back on the same thing. When there is a problem, so when the call centre is taking queries that we have not anticipated, that gets quickly fed back to the Ministerial Support Unit, to the communications team and to the policy officers. So we can then look at the policy, make sure that either it is something that we as communicators have not got into the detail of and we need a bit more briefing from the policy officer. Or it is something that we have not anticipated. It is a permutation of the policy or an exemption that we have not thought of. Then we support exactly what the public are thinking about it or asking, how that can be amended or recommended before it then goes up to Ministers and then comes back down so we can quickly get that back to the members of the public. So, if there is a change to their

day-to-day life or how they would usually go about their business, we can make sure that they are doing it as safely as possible.

**The Connétable of St. Martin:**

Moving on to the next question, Chief Minister, do you feel you are fully briefed prior to going into a public announcement? Would you say yes or no to that one?

**The Chief Minister:**

I always believe so. So, yes, I always try to make sure I understand the data underlying what we are doing. Just bear in mind that obviously, if we are doing a briefing, usually, and I cannot think of any instances where it has not been the case, it is coming out of decisions that we have made generally through competent authorities. Therefore we will have had a pretty good understanding, or should have a pretty good understanding, and usually have discussed it quite thoroughly before we make the announcements.

**The Connétable of St. Martin:**

Why would you say that sometimes you are unaware of relevant figures being given by department officers to media prior to briefings?

**The Chief Minister:**

When did I last say that?

**The Connétable of St. Martin:**

This is something that has been commented on.

**The Chief Minister:**

Please can you clarify the question?

**The Connétable of St. Martin:**

On the news conference on 30th November, you were unaware of relevant figures given by department officers prior to that briefing.

**The Chief Minister:**

Was this a question from a journalist essentially to do with the spread of cases?

**The Connétable of St. Martin:**

I do not have the complete detail here.

**The Chief Minister:**

Sorry, I think we are probably not going to have a particularly ...

**The Connétable of St. Martin:**

No, no.

**The Chief Minister:**

I need some clarification on the question.

**The Connétable of St. Martin:**

We will get clarification and I will move to the next question. Has consideration been given to appointing a specific spokesperson for press conferences?

**The Chief Minister:**

Do you mean a civil servant?

**The Connétable of St. Martin:**

Yes, or anyone really. Obviously, a civil servant or one of the Council of Ministers.

**The Chief Minister:**

The whole point is that, number one, in general terms, if it is to do with a policy announcement, that would usually be the politicians that would make that announcement because we have agreed the policy. I would have thought certain non-Executive Members would be not very happy if all they saw was a civil servant acting as the spokesman all the way through. Equally, when there is particular detail or an operational issue, sometimes we have just let officials put that information out. In terms of politicians, it depends on the nature of the announcement that we are dealing with as to who either leads on it or who takes part in the conference. So usually we try to gear them towards the subject matter that we are announcing.

**The Connétable of St. Martin:**

You will be aware, Chief Minister, that there was an article in *Private Eye*, which criticises your handling of Mr. Parker's departure. Do you think such coverage is helpful for the Island?

**The Chief Minister:**



Fairly obviously I do not have any influence on the content of *Private Eye*. I think it was centred in some shape or form and I thought there were at least a couple of inaccuracies in there to say the least. That is all I really want to comment on the matter.

**The Connétable of St. Martin:**

It has also been highlighted that the interim project director of the Island's new hospital project, which is to be managed by construction company Mace, is a former director of Mace. Do you perceive a conflict of interest?

**The Chief Minister:**

I am somewhat disappointed that the question was asked because, although I have relayed that to Senator Farnham, and he was just double-checking a couple of matters, my 2-minute search on Google indicated that it was back in 2006. So on the basis of those dates I rather felt that it was spurious to say the least, and frankly I felt it was pretty shoddy reporting.

**The Connétable of St. Martin:**

But you understand that it is going around at the moment so we just felt that we should bring it to your attention.

**The Chief Minister:**

Can I make the point that is why I try to deal with facts, not anecdote? But I have asked Senator Farnham just to verify it, but certainly on the basis of a very, very quick internet search it is confirmed that the individual had left the company you are referring to back in 2006. Therefore, I would suggest that, if one starts going down that line for conflicts of interest, particularly on a small Island, everybody is going to be conflicted of everything.

**The Connétable of St. Martin:**

I will pass you on to Senator Moore.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

We are just going to spend a little time now asking some questions about the work of the States Employment Board. If you could confirm for us how work is progressing to introduce a disciplinary process for senior officials that had been anticipated in changes to the Employment of States of Jersey Employees Law?

**The Chief Minister:**

Mark Grimley is probably best placed to answer on the detail.

**Group Director, People and Corporate Services:**

We briefed the panel about a month ago on the States of Jersey Employee Law. That is due to come forward in the first quarter of next year. Within there, there is a specific matter that the Comptroller and Auditor General raised around certain officers, including office holders, but also the principal accounting officer. That is due to come in at the beginning of next year, in the first quarter. Following that, the framework will follow with the new processes.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

When would those new processes be in place? I presume that they would be subject to approval by the Assembly as well.

**Group Director, People and Corporate Services:**

The proposition itself will be lodged with the States Assembly. My understanding of the way that it is drafted, and it is the same way that we operate with the Jersey Appointments Commission, it then goes into a framework that is a compliance issue for the States Employment Board to approve.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Could you tell us when the results of the HR Lounge report and review into bullying and harassment will be published now?

**Group Director, People and Corporate Services:**

The fieldwork is being undertaken at the moment. It was delayed by another month. The researcher was due to come and visit and undertake a number of focus groups. That has clearly not been able to happen. So he has now changed his methodology and holding smaller groups at the moment. This includes trade unions, people who have raised complaints, and senior officers and members of the States Employment Board. I expect an early draft of that in mid-January and the final draft by the end of January to be presented to the States Employment Board.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Will the findings of the recent staff survey have been made available to HR Lounge for them to conduct their review?

**Group Director, People and Corporate Services:**

They have had access to the high-level information. We are still processing some of the more detailed stuff. If they have follow-up questions we will answer those.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

When will we receive the findings of the staff survey?

**Group Director, People and Corporate Services:**

Early next year, Senator.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Could you tell us, Mr. Grimley, how many disciplinary processes are active currently?

**Group Director, People and Corporate Services:**

I do not have the exact numbers to hand, Senator. We normally have around a dozen at any one time. Those disciplinary processes may be related to conduct, but they may also be related to absence. I will get those figures for the panel.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Are there any people currently suspended from working for Government of Jersey?

**Group Director, People and Corporate Services:**

We have a small number of people suspended at any one time. Just to point out that a suspension does not mean that we are assuming anything about the investigation. It is often a neutral act.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Unite, the union, has highlighted the concern of S.O.J. (States of Jersey) employees on zero-hours contracts with the lack of security emphasised. Are those contracts being reviewed?

[11:15]

**Group Director, People and Corporate Services:**

Yes, Senator, we review the zero-hours contracts every single month and we do that in 2 ways. One is the length in which the contract has been undertaken and the second is whether or not individuals have secured employment rights. If they have secured employment rights, we make sure that they get an appropriate contract for that. We spent a significant part of the last quarter of last year undertaking a review, particularly in the children, young people and education skills, to make sure that particularly youth workers have the correct contracts. We now do that monthly and we report a dashboard to the States Employment Board about the use of zero-hour contracts.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Has the States Employment Board considered implementing a policy to stop using zero-hours contracts?

**The Chief Minister:**

The short answer is no. Although we keep zero-hours contracts under review, as we heard earlier, sometimes they are used for flexible requirements. We have had to do that under the testing regime. In certain circumstances, in a number of circumstances, people still like them and still use them. The crucial thing, as we know, is to make sure that we do not get what I will call some of the negative issues that sometimes arise out of zero-hours contracts. That is what we try to avoid.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

If we could just move on to the departure of the chief executive now. Is there now a timetable for his departure?

**Group Director, People and Corporate Services:**

Senator, I cannot talk specifically about the chief executive's arrangements. What I can do is set out the timetable for the interim arrangements to come in and then that will trigger the departure. What happens at this stage is that the Jersey Appointments Commission regulates the appointment of the interim chief executive. We have consulted with the Council of Ministers and with the States Employment Board about how that should take place and they are now proceeding with the interim appointment. Once an interim is in place, then the current chief executive will leave.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Could you describe to us why we need an interim and why a substantive case would not be filled?

**Group Director, People and Corporate Services:**

We consulted with the Council of Ministers and with the States Employment Board about the role of the chief executive going forward, what was required and what was needed. We also discussed with the executive team around the support that they need. What is very clear is that the process for recruiting a permanent chief executive will take 6 to 9 months plus the notice period of any permanent person. Having an interregnum period would not be beneficial given some of the major announcements that have been made around projects like the hospital, the estate strategy, the leadership of the civil service, the modernisation and Government Plan. Ministers and members of the States Employment Board felt that the leadership of the public service was important and that one person needed to do that, hence the need for an interim.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Given those large projects, would a fully-fledged, full-time, fully-committed role not be more suitable? Perhaps it is a question for the Chief Minister to answer if he could. Explain what the view was of the Council of Ministers to reach that conclusion?

**The Chief Minister:**

I am just being cautious because I do not want to veer into issues surrounding what I would call an individual matter. Obviously, the Council of Ministers was very clear that we wanted a smooth transition. You do not go out and get a permanent replacement at the drop of a hat. As Mark has just alluded to, it is a process that will take a number of months. That is why we felt that an interim post, again based on the advice we have received, is the most appropriate way forward. Exact timings will be announced in due course.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Does that smooth transition involve the chief executive staying to accompany the new interim in their early months of their role?

**The Chief Minister:**

We are very clear that there needs to be a smooth handover. But obviously what we are limited on is the speed at which we can get the interim in place. I believe S.E.B. (States Employment Board) will give an update in the next day or so.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Why do you think, Chief Minister, this process would take a number of months?

**The Chief Minister:**

By "this process", do you mean for a permanent replacement?

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Yes.

**The Chief Minister:**

From past experience. From memory, the previous C.E.O. (chief executive officer), which was before my time, took 12 months to get into place. Therefore it seems unlikely that one would achieve that in any quick position, certainly not going to do it within a month, for example. That would just be unrealistic.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

What role does the current chief executive have in setting this process?

**The Chief Minister:**

None.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

So could you confirm who will be overseeing the process and the agreement with the Appointments Commission?

**The Chief Minister:**

I will let Mark go through the exact details but it is what we refer to as a regulated process, i.e. it is laid down in law. But, Mark, do you want to give the details?

**Group Director, People and Corporate Services:**

Yes. So it is set out in legislation about the appointment of the chief executive and principal accountable officer. Normally, the Jersey Appointments Commission would regulate all senior roles within the civil service. In the appointment of the chief executive, they become the appointing body. So, on the appointing body, the Jersey Appointments Commission, along with an independent member appointed by the States Employment Board and the Chief Minister, will oversee the appointment. We will be regulated by the U.K. (United Kingdom) Civil Service Commission.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Chief Minister, do you feel that we might find a local replacement for the chief executive or will you be looking to a national or international pool?

**The Chief Minister:**

As far as I am concerned, we will be looking at both. So we have been clear we do want to make sure that local candidates are considered. But, equally, we have also been clear that national and international searches will also be performed. Then it will be very much, as ever, the best candidate for the job, but also recognising that Jersey is not a county council; that it is a separate jurisdiction.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Thank you, and I have been grateful for your answers this morning, which have been simple answers to simple questions. However, the *J.E.P. (Jersey Evening Post)* this morning had to describe their frustration that they had asked very similar questions on 26th November and had as yet not received a response. Could you describe for us, Chief Minister, the reasons why the *Jersey Evening Post* may not have received answers to those questions?

**The Chief Minister:**

We have to be very clear that when we are dealing with an employment matter there is a process we have to follow. That process takes account of the Council of Ministers, the States Assembly, the States Employment Board and Employment Law. Therefore there are times when we cannot comment on things publicly until certain decisions have been made.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

So when was that decision made to move forward with this process?

**The Chief Minister:**

The decision to move forward was taken at the last S.E.B. But obviously some of the details are still coming back to the S.E.B. over the next few days.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Forgive me, but when was the S.E.B. meeting?

**The Chief Minister:**

I can check my diary in a couple of minutes, but broadly speaking it was the week before last.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Just one final question before we move on to Deputy Ahier. Will there be a review of the appraisal process that the chief executive has undergone during his time here?

**The Chief Minister:**

I am not quite sure I understand the question. Obviously, it is the first time, as I understand it, that we have had an independent appraisal process in place in the public way it has been done. So I would have said it was far better than what has previously been done.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

We will move on to Deputy Ahier.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

I will move on to the Government Plan. There are 21 amendments to the Government Plan. Why do you feel so many changes are being proposed?

**The Chief Minister:**

I cannot remember the number we had last year, but it is not inconsistent with the numbers that sometimes we see on these type of documents. It is an important document. They do range from people wanting to ensure that certain things are going to take place, they do range from relatively smaller changes, which we try to look at sympathetically if we can, unless the objective is being met in a different way. Then obviously we will get what I would call some structural ones, which some are, when I say politically driven, people who have a different political mindset and therefore will seek to bring their own political agenda to the Government Plan. Others were because the party bringing it will want a debate on what they consider to be an important matter. There can be a spectrum of reasons why people bring the amendments that they do.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

Two amendments propose actions to reduce the requirement to borrow. Why was this not considered in the original plan?

**The Chief Minister:**

I am very happy to hand over to the Treasurer to give the detail. The short answer is the advice from the Fiscal Policy Panel, in terms of do you borrow or do you spend from the reserves, was not to touch the reserves; I am being very simplistic about it, at this present time.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

There are 3 amendments to propose actions to combat environmental issues. Why were these not considered in the original plan?

**The Chief Minister:**

I know for example there is one on biodiesel. In itself it causes some complications. There is one on refunding of G.S.T. (goods and services tax). That in itself, the mechanism is complicated and the timescale is complicated. But we will see if there is an alternative way of seeing if the objective can be achieved.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

Of course the amendment to child-related tax allowance and reliefs was not included and there has not been any change since 2011. Will you be supporting that option?

**The Chief Minister:**

I believe the decisions on the Corporate Services amendments, for example, the final decision is going to be made at Council of Ministers tomorrow morning. No doubt we will be informing you of our view shortly. But what I will say is that the crucial thing is what achieves the most impact. The



other difficulty, and there have been difficult decisions that we have had to deal with, is looking at the context of the borrowing levels. As you have alluded to, there is always this tension between how much one wants to borrow versus what the advice is. Bearing in mind it all has to be repaid. Therefore, anything we add on to the borrowing from decisions of the Assembly next week will take longer to repay, versus the objectives one is trying to achieve. Do not forget, in the context of the next year, we have put already various measures in place to try to help Islanders as a whole to deal with the pandemic. We also took quite a difficult process in moving around £80 million out of the spending essentially to partially fund the COVID expenditure that we have had to do to protect Islanders. Also then to preserve what I will call some of the fundamental measures that have either improved or protected services, and that can range from Children's Services to the I.T. systems that have kept us going through the entire crisis.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

Thank you, Chief Minister. I will pass on to Constable Vibert.

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

Chief Minister, could you tell us how the office strategy is progressing?

[11:30]

**The Chief Minister:**

I believe the panel is going to be receiving an update before the weekend. I will be delighted to be informing the panel there are a firm set of decisions that are going to the Council of Ministers tomorrow. Then the panel will be briefed. Then we will be able to talk publicly about it shortly thereafter I believe.

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

Are you able to tell us whether there are any plans to extend leases on rented properties?

**The Chief Minister:**

At this stage we are on target. That means that at this stage there are no plans to extend leases. I go back to the overall merits, which we believe it represents significant/reasonable savings to the public, depending where you stand on the magnitude of money. But in gross terms it is £7 million a year. There is a payback period, which is good in my view. Obviously, it delivers, not only regeneration but most importantly it delivers a number of brownfield sites that we can then use for housing. So the metrics are still there. They still back up the schemes we are looking at. The Council of Ministers tomorrow will be making I believe a final decision.

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

Are you able to tell us if part of that is any decision on whether we would be leasing or purchasing the new office?

**The Chief Minister:**

All of that we should cover in the briefing on Friday. I believe the panel has had previous briefings on the subject as well.

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

If we just move on to the technology transformation programme. How is that progressing? Is it on course to meet the dates and objectives?

**The Chief Minister:**

That is one for Mark just to give the updates that you require.

**Group Director for People and Corporate Services:**

The technology transformation programme comprises of the integrated technology solution, the cyber programme and Microsoft Foundations. All of these are being delivered. The Foundations are in place now. It is a multi-year programme and while there has been some slippage as a result of diverting resources to COVID responses, the programme is progressing well.

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

Are you able to expand on the slippage, exactly how great a delay?

**Group Director for People and Corporate Services:**

It should be no more than a quarter. A lot of resource has gone into Modernisation and Digital Department. They have been recruiting and filling those. Members received a briefing on the progress of that. We have continued throughout COVID to make sure that the basics are in place. That is why in part our response to COVID and thousands of employees working from home has been able to happen.

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

Finally, because we are just about on time, probably for the Chief Minister, on migration reform. We thank you for delaying the debate on migration control policy. But can you confirm that development of a full population and migration policy is continuing in the meantime?

**The Chief Minister:**

The crucial thing for us is that the controls are in place. We want to see the outcome of the debate. We were concerned that delaying it might have an impact on the decision of the Assembly. But that is also going to be predicated by what happens in the next few months with COVID. But work continues overall. The fundamental one, as we have said, is to get the controls in place because, without those controls, we cannot produce a meaningful population policy because the numbers will have no sensible foundation at all.

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

Are you saying that while the migration control policy work on that continues, work on a full population policy is not progressing at the moment?

**The Chief Minister:**

No, I am saying one is the subset of the other.

**The Connétable of St. Peter:**

Thank you. I will hand back to Senator Moore.

**Senator K.L. Moore:**

Thank you, Constable. It is just left to me to thank everybody for their attendance and for their answers today. We have a few more, which we will send to you in writing. But I am aware that you could not stay for any longer today, which was a shame. But we are grateful and with that I close the hearing.

[11:34]