



Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Public Hearing

Witness: The Chief Minister

Thursday, 1st October 2020

Panel:

Senator K.L. Moore (Chair)
Connétable R. Vibert of St. Peter
Deputy S.M. Ahier of St. Helier

Witnesses:

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré, The Chief Minister
Mr. C. Parker, Chief Executive
Ms. J. Spybey, Head of Business Support, Chief Operating Office
Mr. G. Charsley, Associate Director, People Services

[10:00]

Senator K.L. Moore (Chair):

Thank you very much for joining us in person. Welcome to this quarterly hearing of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel. If you recall normal hearing standards, they do apply. Sadly, there are not any members of the public as we are restricted by the number of people who are allowed to appear in the room at the same time, of course. We do remind you that this meeting will be recorded and transcribed and we will start, if we could, with introductions. So, I am Senator Kristina Moore and I am the Chair of this panel.

Deputy S.M. Ahier of St. Helier:

Deputy Steve Ahier, Vice-Chair.

Connétable R. Vibert of St. Peter:

Richard Vibert, member of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel.

The Chief Minister:

Senator John Le Fondré, Chief Minister.

Chief Executive:

Charlie Parker, Chief Executive.

Associate Director, People Services:

Graham Charsley, Associate Director, People Services.

Head of Business Support, Chief Operating Office:

Jo Spybey, Head of Business Support, Chief Operating Office.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you all. So, Chief Minister, we will start with COVID, of course. You recently stated that you will be publishing an updated strategy. When will that be published?

The Chief Minister:

So, the pre-emptive measures we have obviously already socialised. The formal strategy is coming back to the Emergencies Council or the framework is coming back I think in 2 weeks and it will be later during the month that we are going to put it out as a document.

Senator K.L. Moore:

So when you say that you have already socialised some of the elements, is that the changes to the safer travel policy?

The Chief Minister:

So that is a combination of the changes in the travel and also the notification about the ramping up of the measures that we are going to be doing, such as the increasing in enforcement, such as again increasing the messaging around wearing of masks and those type of areas, what States Members were briefed on I think earlier this week and what we did the press conference on last week.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Who is the deciding body with relation to those policies? Is that the Emergencies Council?

The Chief Minister:

Well, the structure remains the same. So, essentially, because we are not in a state of emergency it is the Ministers under their individual powers. The speed, which has worked very well during the crisis, essentially competent authorities will deal with ... I will not say routine issues but relatively day to day or week to week issues. It then goes up to Emergencies Council potentially and obviously, depending on the timing, if there is anything significant it will go to the Council of Ministers. But it will depend on what the issue is and the speed and timing. Obviously, part of this is around the pace relative to now, relative to March, has gone to a more routine process at this stage, so Emergencies Council, for example, is not meeting, I do not know, every week, for the sake of argument, but it did meet yesterday.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Right. So would it be the case that each of those 3 bodies are often considering the same issues?

The Chief Minister:

It depends, is the short answer. It depends on the nature of the issue. Often, we will do things at competent authority level. As I said, if they are talking about future strategy, bringing the strands of particular issues together, if you like that is a subgroup of the Emergencies Council but essentially it is the Ministers from the Emergencies Council. The difference between that and the Emergencies Council is the Emergencies Council has the head of the Comité des Connétables, has the Bailiff and has the Governor on it. So that is really from the point of view ... that is the structure that is always stipulated and we have worked with the structure we have. But then, as I said, every significant item has gone up to Council of Ministers once it has been put into its final form for endorsement before they have been implemented. So the democratic ...

Senator K.L. Moore:

Yes, but the majority of those people in that meeting are also in the Council of Ministers and also in the Emergencies Council. For example, it has been pointed out to me that I believe on one day the Council of Ministers met and considered an agenda, the same agenda or very similar was considered by the competent authorities that day, and then the same again by the Emergencies Council. Do you think that is a good use of time?

The Chief Minister:

I think that was the structure we were having to work with. As I say, it has worked. Now, would we want to look at the structures we ...

Chief Executive:

You have asked for that, Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister:

Yes, exactly. Would we want to look at the structure or the law and how we have to operate? Yes. We are not going to do it in the middle of still dealing with the pandemic.

Senator K.L. Moore:

But to spend over 12 hours in one day going over the same information 3 times, is that an effective use of your time as Chief Minister?

The Chief Minister:

At the end of the day, we do what we have to do in the time that we need to do it in. As I said, we have had to work within the law as we have been doing. I think the day in question was, I believe, when we put the Nightingale in place, so it was more from a speed perspective. We wanted to make sure the competent authorities were firstly happy with it, and then it went up to Emergencies Council, which is sometimes an extending of courtesy but is important because obviously the ability to declare a state of emergency lies with the Governor, and then obviously at that point then again the Minister for Health and Social Services, or the relevant Minister, sorry, could have signed off on that, but again from the point of view of making sure that everybody is appraised and involved, that was when we brought C.O.M. (Council of Ministers) in as well because it was a significant spend and it was an urgent decision. But it worked.

Senator K.L. Moore:

So how does the Governor formally propose to you that we remain in a state of emergency and is that revisited with him?

The Chief Minister:

We are not in a state of emergency so ...

Senator K.L. Moore:

But if the Emergencies Council is meeting?

The Chief Minister:

No, the Emergencies Council meets, as I am sure you should know from your former days as well, the Emergencies Council should meet I think 2 or 3 times a year anyway, and obviously with the pandemic it just meets a lot more frequently. So we are not in a state of emergency if ... the Emergencies Council meets from time to time anyway just to keep an eye on what things are happening generally.

Senator K.L. Moore:

So what is the purpose of it meeting more regularly at the present time?

The Chief Minister:

COVID-19.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Why in particular, if already you have 2 other bodies who are considering the policy measures in relation to COVID?

The Chief Minister:

Well, essentially, it is about speed. So if ever you had to go through ... so it makes sure that all the relevant parties are up to speed with the thinking that we have been going through, the learning that we have been going through. So if any members have self-isolated for some reason or are hospitalised or something along those lines, you have a defence in depth there and that allows that all to go through that process. But it is also around what we are governed by under the law and so you do need to make sure that the relevant parties are kept involved, and that worked as well, I would suggest, through, for example, communications done with the Comité - I am looking obviously at your colleague to your left - and so the idea is then that I hope there is a communication that is then going through, and also we get the feedback then as well from not just 6 politicians or officers. There is a challenge in there.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Okay. So the Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell are the body who are advising you on medical matters. How often are they meeting now?

The Chief Minister:

My understanding - Charlie might want to comment on this - is weekly and they continue to meet ... well, I think formally it is weekly and I think communication there ... if something is coming up, I think there are email meetings, if you like, or certainly exchanges very, very regularly even now.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Do you consider it acceptable that following Deputy Pamplin's P.88 proposition only 6 sets of the minutes of that body are published at the moment?

The Chief Minister:

We have asked S.T.A.C. (Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell) to try and expedite getting the minutes up. As I keep making the point, it is difficult. It is clinicians who are doing that and they are

trying to do this extra request around anything (a) to do with COVID and (b) their actual operating lists as well.

Senator K.L. Moore:

But surely, they would have - and this is a question, I guess, for the Chief Executive - the appropriate administrative support and a minute taker would normally provide a contemporaneous minute of every meeting that occurs, so there should not be any time delay.

Chief Executive:

So you know that the Greffier provides the secretarial support for S.T.A.C. Those arrangements were put in place earlier on in the year and those minutes are supported through the Greffier but signed off by the chair of S.T.A.C. The chair of S.T.A.C. is the Medical Director. The Medical Director is a surgeon. We have been trying to catch up on the backlog of lists in the hospital, plus all the other changes and activities that are going on. So I think it is more about trying to balance everything. I do know that there are a number, quite a significant number, of minutes which are about to be put on to the website and should be cleared at the moment, which will bring us reasonably up to date for the purposes of meeting Deputy Pamplin's proposition requirements. I genuinely think in this situation it is no more than trying to balance the pressures of competing demands and if I was really being honest some of these people who are involved both in S.T.A.C., surgeons, et cetera, have not had a break, have been full on for many months, and they are still committed and undertaking all the other catch-up work that they are engaged in. So, it is regrettable. I think we would like those minutes more up to date. We have asked for them, but there is a balance between ensuring that we are not overloading certain people. But I think you will find that the Medical Director is and will have a raft of minutes provided, which will bring us up to date.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Okay. So, essentially, he has not had the time to go back over the minutes and have them formally agreed. But as a chair, it is usually a helpful part of the process to revisit ...

Chief Executive:

Is, sorry?

Senator K.L. Moore:

As a chair and undertaking such a role, it is often a helpful part to revisit the minutes when formally agreeing them in order to check the action points and to revisit what was agreed and discussed at each meeting.

Chief Executive:

Yes. So draft minutes are draft minutes. They can be used in that format. I do not attend S.T.A.C. It is medically led. I might hazard a guess it is not what medics tend to be doing in their normal course of events, sitting around having lots and lots of meetings with lots of formal minutes that are formally put into the public domain, so we are probably in some slightly uncharted waters for them. Therefore, I would not suggest that there is anything here than a question of balance of priorities and that is all.

The Chief Minister:

I think also all of us around the room will recognise the whole thing about democratic overlay, et cetera. They as clinicians will be taking the view our fundamental responsibility is making sure as few people die as possible. That is their priority.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Yes, but there is also a matter of good governance and ...

The Chief Minister:

Well ...

Senator K.L. Moore:

For example, if we were to take the dentists, who have patients they would like to treat and they have tried to interact with the S.T.A.C., yet they still have not had a response from the Minister for Health and Social Services to explain to them who is giving specific advice about dentistry, which is different to medicine. It is a simple question that they should really be due an answer to.

Chief Executive:

I am not sure that is quite correct. That is the dentists' view. I think there has been quite a lot of dialogue.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Well, it is a view shared by their governing body in the Island.

Chief Executive:

I think there is quite a lot of dialogue that has been taking place with dentists over the period and I think there is, as far as I am aware and I obviously cannot speak on behalf of the Minister for Health and Social Services, a process that is in train to be able to give people some of that guidance.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Is there a date for that process?

Chief Executive:

It is not a matter for me. That is a matter for the Minister for Health and Social Services and the Director General.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Okay, so does the Chief Minister think that that is appropriate that his Minister for Health and Social Services has failed to respond to a substantial body who have a substantial body of patients in the Island requiring treatment for a number of months? Are you satisfied by his performance?

The Chief Minister:

When was your last update on when the last response was received ...

Senator K.L. Moore:

Yesterday.

The Chief Minister:

Then I am afraid I cannot comment because I do not know. My understanding is that there have been various communications with the dentist side. I am happy to take it up, but as you know we have limited people in today so we cannot give you the responses necessary on that level of detail.

Senator K.L. Moore:

The question was quite simple. Are you satisfied that your Minister had failed to respond to such a body over a period of months?

The Chief Minister:

On the basis I do not know the background from his perspective I am not going to comment on that side, but what I will say is that I know the Minister particularly, along with many other people, not just politicians, have worked every hour under the sun to get to where we are. So I do not know what the position is. I will go away and find it out, and I just make that point.

Senator K.L. Moore:

It is not the first time it has been raised with you so you should be aware.

The Chief Minister:

It was last raised with me I think about 6 to 8 weeks ago. I have not had any correspondence in the last week, I can tell you that absolutely. So, that is why I would have assumed it would have been resolved.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Do you have a list of outstanding things that you need to refer back to and keep up to date with, with the various Ministers and their portfolios? Because it reflects back on you at the end of the day.

The Chief Minister:

Would you like to explain what your thinking is?

Senator K.L. Moore:

So if there is a matter that has been drawn to your attention where people are unhappy, do you maintain a list? It could help you to recall that you need to follow up on certain items that have importance with regard to your various Ministers' portfolios.

The Chief Minister:

I do maintain issues and I make sure also that my team also keep a log of all those issues and usually a lot of them just get resolved. It gets drawn to my attention by exception if there is a running issue that needs to be raised.

[10:15]

Chief Executive:

I think with the dentists there is a difference of opinion and there is a very clear difference of opinion around some of the safeguarding and other arrangements that have been put in place on the guidance. There has been extensive discussions around the different governing bodies and the views, and I think there has been advice and informal discussions that have taken place. Sometimes that happens where 2 professional sets of bodies do not always agree. That does not mean to say that there is, therefore, a weakness in the process. It might just be that there is a difference of opinion.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you, that is helpful. Okay. So, going back to the preparations for the second wave and the changes that are being implemented, the on-Island testing laboratory for incoming travellers and other tests was first raised in April and then for the last couple of months we have been told that the tests would be returned within 12 hours. Why has this lagged and the 12-hour deadline not been met yet?

The Chief Minister:

I think we just go back to first point of principles here. You referred to a second wave. We have not had the first wave yet. So I think we just need to point that out. The second point is I cannot remember the exact date the lab came on to Island. I am going to say August.

Chief Executive:

Yes.

Senator K.L. Moore:

So, it is rather ... okay, so you do not consider that we have had a first wave yet?

Chief Executive:

No.

The Chief Minister:

No.

Senator K.L. Moore:

So what was the purpose of the lockdown, to prevent the first wave?

Chief Executive:

Correct.

The Chief Minister:

Yes, all the actions we took, basically I think we said it flattened the projected curve. We did not get a first wave in terms of what, well, many other jurisdictions saw, and I think we just need to be very clear on that. We should be really pleased as to where we are. We know we have a long way to go. The analogy we are using is it is halftime, but we have had a good first innings or first half of a football match and we are, we believe, well prepared for the second part.

Senator K.L. Moore:

So if we could just focus on the question, which is the 12-hour turnaround time for the on-Island testing, what has caused the delay in achieving that?

The Chief Minister:

No, I think we are, broadly speaking, where we anticipated being. In other words, as we have said all the way through, technology changes and as we have been confident in that technology with data and as the science changes, we have adapted our approach. So we, as you will know, in the very first months of this concentrated on ramping up the off-Island laboratory capacity that we had. We

did that very, very well and we got up to I think it was ... I am trying to think, 3,500 a week or whatever the number was. That served us in very good stead, and then as the technology came through - and we did start briefing Members - we had a choice of 2. The Open Cell lab is the one we chose. We then have to get the contracts in place and then it has to, in practical terms, be delivered. Once it has been delivered, and these are all the practical things that come through with what is always ... this was not on the horizon on ... well, from our point of view on 1st January.

Senator K.L. Moore:

I appreciate that, but the point is ... the point to the question was ...

The Chief Minister:

But the technology keeps changing.

Senator K.L. Moore:

... that this process began in April and it is now 1st October. But the real nub of the question was about the 12-hour turnaround time for those test results.

The Chief Minister:

That is what I was getting to. So the lab has been on-Island. It has been ramping up. It has made sure that it all ties through and then it is ...

Senator K.L. Moore:

Yes, but the public were told it would be ... the 12-hour test turnaround would be in place a week ago last Monday.

The Chief Minister:

Well, see, this is the trouble. I usually, whenever I ...

Senator K.L. Moore:

It has a big impact because of the isolation point.

The Chief Minister:

Whenever I say things, I say we "hope" because with technology things do not always come through exactly when one expects. Now ...

Senator K.L. Moore:

But you will accept that that has an implication for the isolation of incoming passengers ...

The Chief Minister:

No.

Chief Executive:

No.

Senator K.L. Moore:

... which has a big impact on the well-being of the people in the community who are concerned about that?

Chief Executive:

No, no.

The Chief Minister:

Sorry, where are you ... what are you trying to say?

Senator K.L. Moore:

So one of your new measures is that people will isolate until they receive their first test result.

Chief Executive:

But it was always said that that would happen in a time when the science for the lab and the testing and the safety of everything was fully operational. It was not said that it would happen by a set date.

The Chief Minister:

No.

Chief Executive:

It was hoped that the date would happen, but it was also clarified ...

Senator K.L. Moore:

It was certainly an indication that gave people an expectation.

The Chief Minister:

No, I do not think so.

Chief Executive:

I do not think so because I think there has been a recognition that we are managing a process which has been clearly laid out from a scientific basis.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Right, so when can people expect passengers to be asked to isolate until their first test result returns?

The Chief Minister:

Well, the indication I gave in the press conference last week - and I think we have said it to States Members as well that obviously did not hear it - is sometime within the next 2 weeks, we believe. It could be mid-October but it is a case of when we are confident that the lab is coping with the capacity, it is stabilised and it is reliable. Now, that is not saying the results coming out are not reliable. We are seeing people who are being put through the system are getting good turnaround, but we want to make sure that we have it in the right place and that we can do it. Do not forget, this is all about proportionality, balance of risk, risk of health with COVID-19, risk of the other health issues, risk overall of livelihoods and general well-being. That is what we, me as Chief Minister, Charlie as Chief Executive, what the team have to consider when we are dealing with this issue. It is not about one sector or social media warriors. We base it on the medical advice that we get and all the other advice, and we bring that together. The advice to date, which we have been following - and we had all that debate in the Assembly so I do think we need to move on from that - we are in a good position from following that advice. That advice has not got any worse in quality. Therefore, why should we challenge it? We do always question. We ask around the edges and we make sure we are satisfied with the robustness, so that is fine. But the position is that when we can get it down to around and just under 12 hours, that is when we think it is appropriate, given everything we are facing today, circumstances can change, that is when we will bring in that self-isolation for that first test.

Senator K.L. Moore:

No matter what the prevalence of the coronavirus is in other jurisdictions?

The Chief Minister:

That is what I just said about given the advice and the position we are in today. If things start changing, we will react. That is what we did in March and April and May.

Senator K.L. Moore:

So the decision to move from 25 in 100,000 to 50 in 100,000 is ... what is the basis of that?

The Chief Minister:

Well, as Dr. Muscat has said both publicly and to States Members yet again around proportionality, so the proportionality is consistent with the proposed guidance coming out from the European Commission. It is slightly lower, I believe, than the E.C.D.C. (European Centre for Disease

Prevention and Control) levels at present, so it is consistent. Because we are going down to greater granularity, because we are going down to the lower tier local authorities, it gives us again a better risk analysis rather than an averaging being done because of the higher tiers. Also, as the proportion of travellers decreases, even if your risk fractionally goes up, the absolute risk to the Island remains around the same. Provided that remains the case, that is why we are satisfied to wait until we get the tests down to that kind of averaging. You have to bear in mind what we have also said is that the wider well-being of Islanders, and that includes any risks of connectivity and things like that, is taken into account in the round. It is not just one aspect.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you. Do you envisage that there will be any further measures and changes to the track and trace programme other than the additional test for people visiting the Island from a green region?

The Chief Minister:

Sorry, did you say the track and trace programme or the testing programme?

Senator K.L. Moore:

Well, the test track and trace programme.

The Chief Minister:

So the technology changes all the time, so on the testing regimes it depends. As things come through, it will depend. As we evolve through until Christmas - if you ask me to look into a crystal ball - if we need to change things we will do so.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Okay, but at this moment in time you have not started any further plans?

Chief Executive:

So we have announced that there will be some further surveys of households, which if you recall was in the debate and discussion. We have also said that there will be additional arrangements made about testing, once the on-Island facility is fully up and running, key workers more regularly. We have staffed up to an extended test and trace capability, which combined with enforcement provides us with the safety nets that give us the confidence. I think it is fair to say, Chair, that we are safe. We have 20 cases. We have no one in hospital. We are not just reliant on one form of mitigation. There is a whole panoply of activity and we have been praised for that internationally. So I do not think we are in a bad place and I think the policies have been well delivered and the staff who have undertaken that are incredibly hard working and also have managed to ensure that

whenever we have had small breakouts we have been able to deal with that very, very quickly and effectively.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you, Chief Minister. In your opening statement you mentioned there would be increases in enforcement. Does that imply that there may be a clampdown on transgressors of the current legislation?

The Chief Minister:

We have already done that to an extent because we have fined ... I am trying to think when the first one came through, but I am going to say August, which was 2 people were fined I think £800 each, who had come in from Luxembourg and had not self-isolated for the requisite time, they broke their isolation.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Do you have the staff capacity?

The Chief Minister:

So that was one of the things as we were saying. Sorry, because I was obviously ... on the basis of the measures we had previously announced, that is what we have been talking about, that is why we have been improving measures all the way through. There is still further recruitment going on around making sure we do get that staff resilience in place for the winter months.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you. When were the changes to the safer travel policy, which were announced on 24th September, first discussed and why was there a delay in informing States Members and the general public?

The Chief Minister:

There was not a delay in informing States Members. States Members were updated when the measures had been agreed.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

The general public, there was a delay of a few days?

The Chief Minister:

That was done through a press conference I thought ...

Chief Executive:

The following day.

The Chief Minister:

Yes, I was going to say it was within ... I thought it was the same day, but within 24 hours anyway of States Members. As you know, we try and update States Members wherever possible in advance of doing a press release or a press conference.

Chief Executive:

Deputy, the other thing is the Chief Minister on 28th August laid out very early the direction of travel. So there was a discussion had with the Island about the sorts of measures that we were looking at and considering for the winter. Because I think one of the things that you have to do is not be reactive but be proactive. So this process has been ongoing. We have never not stopped understanding and looking ahead as to what the consequences will be when the winter comes.

The Chief Minister:

So, if you like, we started ... the point was some people had summer breaks and all the rest of it, so that was why end of August, before the bank holiday, we started just again bringing the press conferences in, putting the information out there, and then you will see there has been a steady increase. We are going to continue to steadily increase the messaging as measures are then going to be starting. But enforcement, let us call it gentle enforcement, is one of those measures. That will start increasing or has started increasing, resource is going in. At some point masks, all that type of stuff, is what is coming through and that is what obviously we put out in the announcements over the last few weeks.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Of course, the masks will be brought to the Assembly for a vote?

The Chief Minister:

The advice on masks is obviously advisory, if that makes sense, and strongly advised. When it gets to a mask law, yes, that obviously has to come to the Assembly. I believe we are aiming for November but I need an update on that.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

How will local suppliers of medical equipment engage when sourcing P.P.E. (personal protective equipment) for local healthcare professionals and was P.P.E. purchased via local suppliers?

The Chief Minister:

I think the detail is one for the Chief Executive and it also depends at what point in time you are dealing with. Obviously, in February, March, April time, there was an awful lot of basically trying to find any line of supply to get P.P.E. into the Island as well as relying on the normal ones. Overall, I think we did well, but in terms of where we are today, I know I have seen some decisions which are saying that certain types of P.P.E. will need to be referred back to the private suppliers. There is a view, I know, within Health that obviously while we are still in the pandemic certain types of P.P.E. which ordinarily would have been charged for should remain free of charge because of the nature of the potential issues we might be facing and whether it was right with potential significant increase in P.P.E., whether that should be a burden on those particular users. But there is a balance depending on which sector you are talking about.

[10:30]

Chief Executive:

Just to give you a bit more detail, Deputy, the position on P.P.E., for those people who wish to use their private local suppliers, that is perfectly fine. The question for us is whether they are able to meet our requirements, which is for a 90-day stock level if we were in an extreme pandemic situation. That is where the Emergencies Council and the competent authorities agree that we should retain our stock levels at. As part of that, we obviously have a series of supply chains that we have been using and working with through the first phase of the COVID-19 position. During the summer, though, we have had further discussions with U.K. (United Kingdom) N.H.S. (National Health Service) supply chains, which have been significantly improved in order to be able to get, in effect, a call-off arrangement for urgent supplies to come in as soon as is practically possible, normally within a time limit of around 48 hours, if a bit more depending entirely on what the item is. We have maintained our stock levels for the highest level of demand throughout the summer and there are inevitably 2 or 3 areas, most notably around masks, where you get much more regular turnover than you would for a hazmat suit, by way of example. So we have certain stock levels that are still at the 90-day level, but we have some that we call off the contract arrangements on an ongoing basis. We have secured that because clearly what the U.K. has been doing is not wanting to stockpile, but they recognise that we are in a unique situation. We have challenges about weather and getting stock in and we are an Island and we do not and cannot go to another place to borrow stock at any stage if we find ourselves in a peak situation. So, we have a specific arrangement which has been put in place, which now gives us the assurance that we can call off those numbers as and when we desire. We have made it very clear through the Minister for Health and Social Services in his statement that

we will provide that still to key workers, to nursing homes and also care facilities, to schools, nurseries, et cetera, in the right way that we have been doing since the pandemic started. But we have also said if local suppliers can be used, we will use them. However, they cannot get the volumes and, indeed, their pricing structures are slightly different so, therefore, in the context of the quantum we tend to rely on third-party suppliers rather than local suppliers.

The Chief Minister:

I think it is also most important to note that the 90 days is 90 days on peak, worst-case usage. So normal usage we are fine, but what the focus has been, where we still have a couple of bits which are being resolved, and we are hoping to get actual nailed-down updates in the next few days, ie delivery times, is at the peak usage, which obviously we are nowhere near - I keep touching wood on that - and for 90-day stock under peak usage.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

My concern is about local suppliers, though, and I understand that you have received letters from local suppliers raising concerns. Could this policy of importing all P.P.E. lead to the demise of some local suppliers?

Chief Executive:

No. No, because they are still able to supply. They are supplying to others and we are using them where appropriate. The point we are saying is they cannot provide at the level that is required to meet the numbers for the 90 day. They just cannot do that, so therefore we have to have a backup. You would be quite critical of us if we did not.

The Chief Minister:

Yes. You have to go to where we were at the end of February, beginning of March, and we do not want to be in that position ever again.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

No. Can you confirm that the Government has been paying for P.P.E. for all healthcare professionals since the beginning of April and how long is this set to continue?

The Chief Minister:

I know that is a detail matter that the Minister for Health and Social Services has set a policy on. I suspect we were doing it from beginning of April, I do not know.

Chief Executive:

We are continuing to provide for healthcare workers free P.P.E. at the moment. The Minister has been clear about that. He is reviewing the blanket approach because there are certain parties who can get their own and have asked that they are able to use their own supply chains, et cetera. That will be reviewed by the Minister for Health and Social Services accordingly, but at the moment the position has not changed.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you. I will now pass over to the Constable of St. Peter.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Thank you. Moving on to the efficiencies programme, Chief Minister, are departments being asked to consider options to reduce headcount in the wake of COVID-19?

The Chief Minister:

So where we are ... I was going to say I would say that was more Government Plan than efficiencies but anyway, what we have said is that everything has remained on the table, nothing is off. Well, Graham might want to talk more around things like vacancy management and all that type of stuff obviously being focused on, and recruitment is being very, very carefully scrutinised and there is a structure in place to challenge any new posts that are taken on as to whether they are strictly needed or not.

Associate Director, People Services:

So there is a weekly meeting, a resourcing panel. Any proposal to recruit either to a permanent role or to an agency temporary role or any other kind of temporary role is scrutinised by that senior panel, which is led by the Group Director, People and Corporate Services. That, as I say, meets on a weekly basis and I know it has been very robust.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

I suppose we have learnt from COVID-19 that working from home is an option. Is that something you are going to look at to harness for the future? Immediately it may not be an efficiency or cost saving, but in the future, we must be able to harness that from the office space and that type of ...

Chief Executive:

Our expectation is that there will be a mixed approach. It does not work for every individual to work from home all the time and it does not work for their well-being as much as also for their own personal circumstances. So depending on what your living accommodation is, it might not be appropriate all the time. We do think, though, that COVID has shown that some mix between coming into the office and working from home is a good thing. It has highlighted through the technologies that we have

put in place that we can and we have not seen too much of a dip in productivity, albeit that it has had some impact depending on the type of service that you offer. That leads me to the other point, which is not all jobs are suitable for working from home. You cannot clean a street from home. I use it to make the point, Connétable. The other piece we have done, and this fits with the accommodation strategy, is we have looked at the way in which COVID will impact, we think, on our longer-term utilisation of space. By having a mixed and matched package, we think that we will be able to get more people in offices and, therefore, release space but not have them in the office all the time. So you get a better rotation. We have looked at space requirements, et cetera, accordingly.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

A sort of hot-desking, I suppose.

Chief Executive:

We have started to move to that, but it is hot-desking in the sense that you are not there 5 days a week. You can have more churn, which is better in terms of utilisation, but it also allows people to work from home accordingly. It has also reduced the need for people to go and do a lot of face to face meetings because you just do not need to do that. So travel around the Island and going to places has been something that in the past people have felt obligated to do, but you do not necessarily need to. Graham can probably update you. We have also done a piece of work which is looking at a risk assessment of those people who work at home to help them to understand that they have the right conditions, to support them to be able to do their job appropriately, whether that is chairs or I.T. (information technology). We have done that work as well. So we have a different view emerging as a consequence of COVID about how the workforce could be more flexible. I think the other bit for me on that is the approach for how people can work extends to areas where I think we have not been very strong in the past, which is around job shares, about part-time working, and about enabling people who have other responsibilities, caring or whatever, to still be a member of the payroll but also to work in a more flexible way which is better for them, better for the organisation, and gives us more flexibility in our working arrangements and our staff profiles.

Associate Director, People Services:

So, if I may, the risk assessment that Charlie was talking about was conducted some time ago. All staff participated in that process. We have been very keen to understand where people need particular types of kit, either desks or chairs, or where they have other underlying conditions which mean that we need to take certain action, and that has been acted on. I would also like to build on the other point that Charlie was making, which is about moving to a more agile approach. So, clearly flexible working has benefits for the organisation and for the Government, but good and best practice in this space means that if we can adopt a more agile approach, that enables people to have a more

balanced work/life balance. That has a real benefit which we would want to build on over the next few years. It is a long-term strategy. It is underpinned by our increasing use of technology, but that would be a place where best practice employers would want to be.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Thank you. Have there been any changes to the efficiencies programme? Something that might help me, , because I have to admit that I got a bit mixed up here, I had thought rebalancing to some extent was a replacement of efficiencies, but perhaps if you could cover rebalancing and efficiencies and what perhaps the 2 are doing.

The Chief Minister:

In terms of the £40 million originally of efficiencies, we have said I think we have 28 roughly that as of now look like they have been achieved. We have 12 that because of COVID essentially are not necessarily going to be achieved during this year. However, what I keep being reminded is a plan ABC, because I think that is the words I used in one of the meetings some time ago when we were putting the last Government Plan together, is that if the initial efficiencies could not be achieved, the question was either the Ministers then or the departments had to replace it with something equivalent or they had to get across the line if that was a case of ... because there would be some measures they would say: "We have this one-off item here which gets us across the line for 2020 but we can then see if we do this or some of the other works that are going on we have some recurring efficiencies that will then essentially get the measures properly in place for the future." My view is as long as we get to that point where we have the recurring efficiencies occurring in most of these, I am more relaxed around whether it is specifically done by 31st December this year or 31st March next year. But obviously from a balancing the budget perspective they then have to find ... whatever they have shuffled forward, they have to make something that gets to that sum of money in 2020. So that is the £12 million, if you like.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

So there are changes to the efficiencies, in effect. Is the old efficiencies programme not dead but substantially changed so some of the efficiencies will be now different efficiencies?

The Chief Minister:

I think the combination will be there will be some that are unchanged because they were ... some of them were started last year. We had them in play. There will be some where there might be something slightly different and there will be some where the same efficiency will be taking place but it may not have started. It may not start during 2020, it will start in 2021, but the sum of money for 2020 they will have to find.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Okay.

Chief Executive:

So the efficiencies programme still underpins the Government Plan.

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Chief Executive:

Over successive years. The original target was £100 million. The Government Plan will be announced in a couple of weeks' time. There will be an extension of the Government Plan period. The Government Plan will be clear about whether there are expectations about further efficiencies. The question about rebalancing, though, is last year Scrutiny challenged some of the efficiencies around income generation versus efficiencies. The purpose of what we are trying to do at the moment, though, is in the context of the whole of the COVID situation you have had a massive pressure, whether it is income, whether it is additional expenditure, whether it is unforeseen activity that you, therefore, have to take on and deal with, which clearly in the original Government Plan was not envisaged. Bringing those all together to rebalance our finances includes efficiencies. So part of what we are doing is a more comprehensive package now which looks at the overall finances facing the Government.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Can you see - and this is into the future - that the efficiencies programme would reduce the amount of overtime that is currently being worked?

Chief Executive:

Yes, there are some significant overtime reviews going on at the moment. I think we have said in the past to previous hearings there is an awful lot of custom and practice which has not been reviewed over many years and we are systematically going through that.

[10:45]

The big areas are obviously in places like Health, which is a particular concern. Some of the social work practice and the fact that we do not have a 24/7 service, we do not have an out of hours service, but we have an overtime bill for activity that takes place is symptomatic of some of the efficiencies that we need to look at about the way in which we spend public money. So overtime is a big area that we are bearing down, not because people should not have overtime where it is appropriate,

because that has always been the case, it is where it is being used as a proxy for custom and practice arrangements which should have been changed as part of any more modern working arrangements. Going back to my point about social workers, if you cannot get a social worker on a rotational basis after 5.30, social work crises do not stop at that time. You have to have some other arrangements. We have callout arrangements, which again are all funded through overtime rather than through what might be your normal contractual arrangements. Because some people can work at different times providing they are doing that, so we have that full review going on and that was part of what S.E.B. (States Employment Board) asked us to do, oh, gosh, 2 years, 18 months ago, I think it was, which we are on with.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Excellent. Very quickly on to consultants, what is being done to improve the centralised procurement records to allow for more accurate detailing of consultants' costs?

The Chief Minister:

That is definitely Jo's area. [Laughter]

Head of Business Support, Chief Operating Office:

So, proposition 59, as you know, we have detailed the real fundamental problem we have in producing some of the detail required within that because we do not hold the centralised procurement records in one place that we can easily pull that data from. That will only be solved in full by the Integrated Technology Solution, which I am sure as you know will begin work at the start of next year. Then hopefully we will be able to then see the output of that in the beginning of 2022. Just to explain, we say "consultants" but that is obviously made up of a lot of very different buckets of people. So there may be interims who come in to do a substantive post in the short term. That is sometimes classed as consultants. We have contractors coming to support programmes individually. That is sometimes called consultants. Then we have bigger consultancy contracts with accountancy firms or ... those are all within the bucket of what we look at. But as a Government, we treat those in very different ways, and rightly so. We will not be following the same process for a very big contract with an accountancy firm, for example, as we would do with an interim, an individual, who would go via the States Employment Board. So, the complexity in this area is quite vast and, therefore, having it in one place at the moment with our current systems and processes just is not there. We do not have the systems and processes and that is why we have invested so much and put so much emphasis on delivering the Integrated Technology Solution to be able to, therefore, report and provide all this centralised recording for you.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

I think that my next question follows on from that technology solution, which includes a requirement for timesheet capability which allows assignment of individuals to projects, which would include consultants' time and which will allow you to report the data from 2023. Is that still your target?

Head of Business Support, Chief Operating Office:

Yes, I think that will come ... obviously I.T.S. (Integrated Technology Solution) is hoping to deliver it at the start of 2022, so I think that will come in during that period. But I think perhaps that date was given to allow the organisation to learn and make sure we are recording, et cetera, properly and then deliver the figures from 2023.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Then from there on you will be able to do comparisons with previous years as you progress?

Head of Business Support, Chief Operating Office:

Absolutely. We are really hoping to be able to get a lot more solid data around this to be able to, as you say, do comparisons and really show how and where we are spending this consultancy and why we have needed to bring that in, in a much more centralised way.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Thank you very much.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Right. So we will move on to other matters relating to the States Employment Board. As we are all aware, yesterday the long-awaited appraisal of the Chief Executive was published. In your accompanying statement, Chief Minister, you praised the Chief Executive for completing another successful year, yet the report does identify quite clearly that there are 2 camps, one which sees Mr. Parker's work in a positive light and another which is less enthusiastic and even concerned by some actions and management. Why do you as the person responsible for holding the Chief Executive to account think that there is such a divide of opinion on this matter?

The Chief Minister:

I think one should ... let us just stand back a moment on 2 or 3 areas. One is, which I think is very important to note, that the appraisal process for the Chief Executive has probably been the most transparent I can think of in my entire time in the States. I am not aware of appraisals having previously been published for the previous C.E.O.s (chief executive officers). I am not even aware, certainly when I was in your role, Senator, that I was ever involved in any appraisal process, which obviously you are. I am not aware that ... in fact, I do not even know if there was an appraisal process in place. So I think the fact that there is one and this is the second year should be taken in

a positive light. It is a warts and all document. We have published the entire document. So you are going to get some people who agree and some people who did not agree, but I think it is fair to say that from the executive summary, which is what I have just turned to, the quote is: "It demonstrates an impressive record of delivery against performance targets in most areas." So that is the appraiser's view, having taken everything in the round. Now, as we have said in ...

Senator K.L. Moore:

So our job is to hold you to account for holding him to account, yes?

The Chief Minister:

Sorry?

Senator K.L. Moore:

You are familiar with this role, having held it yourself, so our job is to hold you to account and to look at how you are holding the Chief Executive to account. So my question ...

The Chief Minister:

Which I was just getting to, yes.

Senator K.L. Moore:

... if I could push the point, is you have taken one approach but when you can see that there is effectively a divide in opinion, how do you justify your approach? Do you see that divide in opinion?

The Chief Minister:

The point I will make is that within there are some comments that are there. There are some that are very positive and you are right, there are some that are less positive. However, I make the point that in the round I think the Chief Executive has done an excellent job. What I will also say, and I will put it on record again, I think the Island owes a debt of gratitude to the Chief Executive and his team for how we have come through COVID. Part of that is because of the restructuring and the measures that were put in place before, so during the last 2 years, because I do not believe the previous structure of government would have coped as well as it did with what we had to face. So, from that perspective, my job is to look at it overarching. No one, any of us in this room, has had a perfect record in anything, but in the round, as I said - and in the round is too low a statement - we should be very, very satisfied with the performance of the Chief Executive in where we are. One of the frustrations I had in politics was the culture of the organisation, the failure in a whole range of areas to deliver all sorts of things. The fact that we were talking about the office strategy, that has been on the boil for at least 10 years. I am hoping to receive the next stage in that probably in the next 3 weeks. So from that perspective, I can see, bearing in mind we have had the delays from

COVID, significant changes in the culture of the organisation. I think the way the organisation has worked during the last few months since COVID kicked off and even before, I think even references to things like diversity, empowerment of women, all that type of stuff, has all come through and the gentleman to my right is one of the main drivers behind that change in the operational level of the culture of the organisation.

Senator K.L. Moore:

We will go on to culture in a moment, but in the conclusions Dr. Nicholson states that the process, which will start again shortly, will be pared back for the 2020 look and it will include fewer expert witnesses. Given the divided opinions, how will those expert witnesses be balanced?

The Chief Minister:

Essentially, I know that is the comment that was made by the independent assessor. That will be something I will be looking at when we get to that point and it will depend as well on where we are in the pandemic, because it depends where we are in January of next year.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Do you feel that it is appropriate that a lighter touch to performance measurement should be implemented for the 2020 performance review?

The Chief Minister:

As I said, let us see where we are, but my take at the moment is that the fundamental things are that the Chief Executive was given a brief - obviously, that was again, in fact, under the previous Council of Ministers as well - to achieve change in the organisation. I think he is delivering that change. Change in an organisation of this size in a local context takes time. One of the things we see as well and which we have just had alluded to is where we as States Members sometimes think surely something can be done at the click of a button, the P.59 report takes how long to produce at the moment?

Head of Business Support, Chief Operating Office:

Months, yes, a couple of months.

The Chief Minister:

Yes, because we do not have the data in the right place. That is the type of thing, and to get that technology in place to be able to do that takes time to do it. Those are the changes. So we are not there yet, but we are in a far better place from where we were 2 years ago.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Okay. So you have informed us previously that a new employee code of conduct is being formed. That will focus on values, behaviours and standards. How will that aim to reduce bullying and harassment throughout the organisation?

The Chief Minister:

I think that is definitely at the operational level. I think maybe, Graham, if you want to touch on that.

Associate Director, People Services:

So the code of conduct itself will be a part of our new people strategy. The key elements of that are a whole raft of different strategies that will be developed over the next few months and implemented next year. But it is important that we are clear and explicit about the Government's commitment to mitigate the impact of bullying and harassment and to take it very seriously when cases are raised.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Yes, indeed, there are 16 cases or there have been 16 cases this year. Have they all been completed now and dealt with?

Associate Director, People Services:

Some of them have been. Some of them are still ongoing. But we investigate every allegation of bullying and harassment thoroughly. You might know that our case management approach adopted Acas best practice standards from 2019. We had an external audit of that team at the back end of last year, so we are confident that we are moving in the right direction in that sense. Clearly, there is more work to be done in terms of the way that we analyse the data. Again, the Integrated Technology Solution will give us a better sense of some of the reasons, some of the themes that are coming out from that evidence, and we would want to address those themes as they come through.

Senator K.L. Moore:

How many of the 16 have been resolved now or concluded?

Associate Director, People Services:

I do not have the information but I can get that for you.

Senator K.L. Moore:

It would be helpful, thank you. Okay. So, in your letter to the panel, Chief Minister, of 8th September, you indicated that 1,691 individuals left the organisation or have left the organisation since 2017. What do you think have been the reasons for the considerable turnover of staff in that period of time?

The Chief Minister:

Well, turnover is usually around I think between 10 per cent and 13 per cent, and that has I think been consistently the case through normal practice, as it were. So it is not necessarily inconsistent with what we have seen previously. I am sure there are all sorts of reasons, which Graham can allude to.

Associate Director, People Services:

I think our turnover is around about 12 per cent, so it is about what you would expect in most large, complex organisations. People leave obviously for a number of different reasons. Some of them will leave to move to another job. Some of them will leave in some cases because they move back to the U.K. There are a whole raft of different reasons. We have increasingly again started to work on an analysis to understand more about why people leave and to try to address some of those issues. This is a long road and we are working very hard to address it with our people strategy.

Senator K.L. Moore:

I imagine that exit interviews would form part of that.

Associate Director, People Services:

Yes, absolutely.

Senator K.L. Moore:

The recruitment and retention review of the Education and Home Affairs panel highlighted a lack of exit interviews in that department, and we ourselves have seen only 2 out of the 60 departures in the Income Tax Department. So will you be addressing the issue of exit interviews?

Associate Director, People Services:

We do have now the opportunity for anyone that leaves their post, resigns, to complete a digital exit interview. They come through centrally to the people in the Corporate Services team. They provide the opportunity for the individual, the employee, to provide a lot of rich information about both the post that they were employed in, about their reasons for originally joining the Government, the job that they did and whether they enjoyed it or not, and also a really helpful section which gives a clear sense of why they are leaving and provides an opportunity for us to contact them if that is what they want us to do to follow up on their reasons for leaving. That has been in place for a number of months and it is providing us a rich sense of information. I know that we followed up on a number of those different exit interviews and also, we are starting to produce more data to give us, as I say, a sense of the themes so that we can act on those going forwards.

[11:00]

Senator K.L. Moore:

Could you tell us, please, what the process is if ... you stated the 12 per cent turnover is about average for a large organisation, so if there is a particular department that is highlighted to have a considerably higher level of turnover, what is the process for dealing with that and looking into it?

Associate Director, People Services:

So we would want to look at the data. We would want to have conversations with the senior leadership team to try and understand if there is a particular issue that will have caused that turnover. Sometimes you do get to a place where you get turnover which is simply a function of the fact that people have got to that point in their careers, but we would want to do lots of investigation and exploratory work to understand it. So that work would typically be done by the H.R. (human resources) business partner, who would work with the Director General and with their senior leadership to understand it. As I say, and forgive me for repeating it, our ability to conduct a data analysis to provide the insights is not as good as we want it to be, but we would start to look at the data and in the future we will have a much better sense of the reasons why people are leaving and be able to act on that going forwards.

Senator K.L. Moore:

So how do you test the line that the senior leadership might give you? So, for example, one department says: "Oh, well, all of our staff have left for higher wages elsewhere." How do you test what really lies behind that?

Associate Director, People Services:

It is a good question. So, of course, we would not just be having conversations or meetings with the senior leadership team. Senior H.R. business partners will have really good working relationships with a lot of people in different parts of that department or team. We would want to be looking at the data, looking at the exit interviews, and looking ...

Senator K.L. Moore:

But when there are not any exit interviews or there are only 2 out of 60?

Associate Director, People Services:

No, no, sorry, forgive me, we do have exit interviews and we have an opportunity for people to provide us with that information and we can look at the qualitative evidence or information and quantitative. Over time, because we are analysing that information on a regular basis, we can look at themes and trends. We would also be looking at the case management system. So you referred to bullying and harassment. We would be looking at any evidence or information which suggests

cases in a particular area or theme, so of course that team does not just look at or investigate bullying and harassment cases, there might be other areas as well. In some cases, we would be looking to identify turnover and that turnover would be something that we would not be uncomfortable with. We would want to understand it. We would want to make sure that we are taking action to mitigate any particular issues. If we found some serious concerns, then, of course, we would take that further with a more formal investigation.

Chief Executive:

But can we be clear: we do not have considerable turnover.

Senator K.L. Moore:

But we do in some departments. So we have been through this before ...

Chief Executive:

But that may well ... I do not know what the subliminal questioning is about. We do not have considerable turnover. We have exit interviews. We do have demographic issues in certain parts of our business. We have market forces in others. We know we cannot recruit lots of accountants, albeit we may find as a consequence of COVID that the local economy means that there is some downsizing in the private sector which may improve opportunities.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Okay, so through our questioning this panel has made it quite clear that there is a department that revealed to us in a public hearing that 60, ie half, of the department left in a relatively short period of time, circa 18 months.

Chief Executive:

Which department?

The Chief Minister:

Which department?

Senator K.L. Moore:

So the Income Tax Department. I have raised questions and given feedback. I have asked the Minister for Treasury and Resources whether she feels it is appropriate that the feedback we get was that people were regularly crying at their desks, and she does not seem to think that is a problem, yet there was a 50 per cent turnover of staff in a relatively short of period of time. So what we would just like to do ...

Chief Executive:

So the Tax Office is now recruited fully.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Well, we would like to understand what has been done to look at the underlying causes of that turnover because ...

Chief Executive:

So Revenue Jersey is a very small department. Well, in fact, it is not even a department ...

Senator K.L. Moore:

120.

Chief Executive:

... it is a division of a department. It has a particular set of issues which you know about and you have done that scrutiny, which is welcomed because it has been helpful, but it is not necessarily reflective of the whole of the organisation.

Senator K.L. Moore:

No, but it is important that we ...

Chief Executive:

Of course it is.

Senator K.L. Moore:

My question was very specific. It was about when there are departments who have increased turnover, way above the average, and this is way above the average. Therefore, you would expect that a functioning people management service was looking into that and dealing with the underlying issues.

Chief Executive:

We do. I think the point I am trying to say, though, is you need to be proportionate. If we had a significant turnover issue, I would concur with you. If there was a consistent thematic set of issues that was in the organisation ... and by the way, I do look at this sort of stuff and the Chief Operating Officer is on it big time, because it is an area which is - going back to the Chief Minister's previous point - part of the culture of the organisation. So if you find that there is somewhere where for whatever reason it is an outlier, you go and look at it. I think there were an exceptional set of circumstances behind that division's issues, most notably we had a manual system, we were doing

the transfer, it was extremely stressful for some individuals. There were a whole host of other changes. The move to a new system meant that we had less people required. We had problems about recruitment of set types of skill and we had issues about remuneration, all of which contributed to a higher than normal level of turnover. Is that reflected everywhere? No. Is there an issue about ... so just to give you some assurance, I regularly on a random basis pick out people who have left and go and ask them why. It has proved to be very insightful and I do not do that in an interrogative way, I do it to understand the temperature of the organisation. That is key to where we are. But we are also in a very, very different place at the moment. Our turnover this year is obviously much lower. Job security, concerns about availability of other jobs, all of those contribute to the uniqueness. So we have a turnover of 3 per cent or 4 per cent, but that is not reflective of where we would be longer term. So what we are putting in place here, and Graham has started to identify, is some really long-term changes. Because you have to remember there was not consistency. Departments on their own did their own thing. We did not have all of the data and the intelligence to be able to start to look at policies, and that is where the department is now going in terms of our people policy changes. I am confident, genuinely, that we have more focus on this than we have had in a very, very long time. But it is like a tanker: you cannot change it overnight. The last 10 months have certainly contributed to adding to some of the difficulties when people are not in a face to face environment, not in their normal work environment, and having to, in many cases, be seconded into other areas of work. But the workforce has been brilliant and absolutely risen to the challenge.

The Chief Minister:

I think the fact that you have processes in place around enhanced complaints, around the AXA line and things like that indicates the changes that have been coming through.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Chief Executive, could I ask you how you have communicated your feeling that you have just expressed there to staff members throughout this time?

Chief Executive:

There is a regular set of opportunities. I have normally a big staff event every year. I have a series of sessions with the top 250 managers that take place quarterly. Monthly I meet the top 50 managers, and on the back of that I do a range of visits and also, I have a question and answer session with smaller teams from across the organisation. So I have been doing that since the day I arrived. Clearly, this year we will have had some impact on the direct face to face but we have been doing things online. All of that forms part of my need to ensure that internal communications is improved. It is a big area so, to be fair to the Council of Ministers, they recognised that last year and for 2021 it has been something that in 2020's development of the Government Plan it was seen

as an important part of what we needed to do. Because previously we did not have an internal communication function. It was done on the back or side of a desk and having a more considered, concentrated approach to try and get both the communications improved but also the feedback loop back to our colleagues in People Services has been really important. That is why we have surveys and we will soon have the result. That is due to come out some time at the end of this month, beginning of November.

Senator K.L. Moore:

That is the H.R. Lounge?

Chief Executive:

No, no, this is our staff survey. We have our H.R. Lounge, which Graham can talk about. That is coming back. We also have a range of other initiatives that are in place. So, it is an important set of areas of questioning, I fully understand that, but I would go back to the beginning. We do not have an undue high level of turnover. Although the Revenue Jersey situation is important, it has to be seen in a proportionate way. It is a relatively small division.

Senator K.L. Moore:

But it is a crucial division ...

Chief Executive:

For sure.

Senator K.L. Moore:

... because without Revenue we cannot function.

Chief Executive:

That is why I said we have fully recruited that now.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Well, it is very important that we ask these questions, particularly when members of the public contact us to state their own frustrations and difficulties in dealing with that department ...

Chief Executive:

Yes.

Senator K.L. Moore:

... and the huge discrepancies that they see.

Chief Executive:

But the online tax returns this year are an indication of where we are going and it was in the circumstances a significant number of people have gone online. That will and has made a massive improvement in terms of timing, return of information, and that is the journey that we are on. Inevitably, and I do not wish to in any shape or form denigrate the point you said about the importance, any change programme is always difficult. Taking an organisation, whether it is at division level or whole organisation level, through that means that you are always going to have some people who do not agree with it and you are never going to get a consistent approach to it in all levels. It is a long-term project but we are embarked on it.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you. So, we did briefly touch there on H.R. Lounge. When are we due to see the results of that?

Associate Director, People Services:

So H.R. Lounge are in. They are reviewing our policies and taking a view about whether and how they can be improved. Their report is due to be provided to us by the end of October, early November.

Senator K.L. Moore:

October/November, okay. How do members of the public or people contact H.R. Lounge directly? I have to say I have tried to send them a message via their website and have never received a response.

Associate Director, People Services:

I do not know but I will find out. I have also personally tried to contact them. I managed to get through okay, but I will find out.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you, okay, that would be helpful. So, going back to the letter just very briefly in which the Chief Minister stated that 1,691 individuals had left the organisation, we note also that 2,798 individuals have joined the organisation. Naturally, that is 1,107 more than had left. Would you like to give us some insight, particularly in light of the approach that you have been taking to cutting costs and seeing efficiencies in the organisation?

The Chief Minister:

While I have not particularly looked at the analysis you are making ... I am just looking very quickly. The point I think I would make is that in certain areas we know we have had to resource. We know H.R. We know, for example, social workers, and some have been recruited last year. We also know that in certain areas it has been the mix. If you are looking at the overall costs, I think one of the other reports that came out did show a drop, but if, for example, you had agency staff, who are more expensive, we have brought in people who essentially at a full-time ... the rate that you bring them in on is cheaper; therefore, your headcount might go up but your overall bill will drop. Interestingly enough, the nodding from that side obviously indicates that is what we have been doing, which I believe is what I said some time last year in front of corporate.

Chief Executive:

And in front of the Assembly.

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Chief Executive:

One of the big challenges that we had, which I think you challenged us as a Scrutiny Panel, was you have a lot of temps or you have a lot of interims, I think, picking up on the Connétable's question earlier. Some of these are replacing those because they were constantly being filled on an interim basis and we have permanently filled that. For the reasons the Chief Minister said, it is cheaper and it is also more appropriate. Some areas we have been carrying a lot of vacancies, which we are going through now to understand whether they are needed. So that distorts the figures.

Senator K.L. Moore:

I believe Health is an area where ...

Chief Executive:

Health was a good example. Then, finally, we obviously have some areas where we have grown the organisation because we were, as the C. and A.G. (Comptroller and Auditor General) said, skeletally thin in People Services. We have taken more people on accordingly.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Ministerial Support Unit?

[11:15]

Chief Executive:

There is an interesting point. So the Ministerial Support Unit delivers a really important job if you want to maintain good, strong, democratic governance, in the same way that last year there was additional support put in for Scrutiny and for States Members. It is really important. If you want my professional view, looking from the outside in when I arrived, I was surprised at the paucity of support for Ministers and for States Assembly Members. I personally still think it is not good enough and it should be more. So I think it is a deficit that has had to be dealt with. For other people that may not be seen as a priority, but unless you get your democratic processes working right, then there is a fundamental problem that then ensues in all organisations. That is not to say you should be top heavy, but I think in the context of where jurisdictions are, this is where you have to take some choices. We did not invest enough in our people; we are now investing more in our people. We did not invest in our technology; we have more people doing technology. But that is why there will be some areas that will see growth.

The Chief Minister:

I think the skeletally thin argument or whatever the adjective was is the one that the C. and A.G. definitely commented on.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Well, you yourself, though, Chief Minister, often berated Ministers in the past when you were in this role for not making severe enough cuts and telling them that they should pare them back. You have expressed I think recently that you now see things in a different light.

The Chief Minister:

I think things like vacancy management still remain an issue, which is what we are looking at. I think we have identified other areas which have been sitting there for a long time and have not been addressed, and that is what we are starting to address. So I think there is scope to identify the savings that we were all calling for.

Senator K.L. Moore:

That sounds very convenient. We just touched very briefly on Health. If I may, Chief Executive, are you content now with the level of vacancies in that department?

Chief Executive:

We are still going through quite a lot of the changes that were agreed as part of the Government Plan in 2020 and they are being worked through with Health. We have some specialist areas where we have some vacancies, which I think is unfortunate. So recruiting surgeons, key nursing staff, et cetera, at this time has been more of a challenge because you cannot and will not get people moving

for reasons that are obviously apparent. So, it is something that we are constantly under review, Senator.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you. Shall we move now to migration because we are mindful of the time?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Right, okay, migration. When can the complete migration policy be expected to be lodged?

The Chief Minister:

So, I am expecting it in the next few weeks. We are still working on the commitment that it will be debated before the end of the year. The Council of Ministers met yesterday to go through essentially the components that will make up the proposition, which our officers wanted to take us through. Obviously, there has been a lot of work done during the course of last year which culminated in the Policy Development Board's report in January. Obviously, with COVID there have been some delays but we are now picking those up and also obviously tying it in through some of the Brexit measures that are coming through as well. So, I am expecting that to be coming back to the Council of Ministers within the next 10 days, basically, and then subject to approval by the Council of Ministers it will be lodged and obviously we will be arranging the appropriate briefings.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Have there been any changes to the policy in view of the replacement of Constable Taylor by Deputy Huelin?

The Chief Minister:

In terms of the work that has been going through, no, there has not been a policy change in any shape or form and obviously Deputy Huelin had been on the board previously so he was ...

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Following through from ...

The Chief Minister:

Exactly.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Okay. What is being done to ensure a swift conclusion to the development of the policy?

The Chief Minister:

I have probably just covered that, I think.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

You have just covered that. Yes, I think you have answered all those and we can move on.

The Chief Minister:

There we go, thank you.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you. I will move on to office strategy. How is the office strategy progressing and has the procurement programme for a developer been completed?

The Chief Minister:

Right, I think the office strategy is progressing well, again bearing in mind we have been going through COVID. I do not want to comment too much because we are still in that kind of tender evaluation process, but it is in a good place. I believe we are expecting the next stage before the end of October.

Chief Executive:

That is right.

The Chief Minister:

At that point hopefully we will be able to comment at that point or very shortly thereafter we will be able to give you full briefings.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Previously, you stated that the decision was going to be made by the end of September so why has there been a delay?

Chief Executive:

So we announced to the panel previously that that was going to be delayed because of COVID. So that was announced earlier on. We extended the procurement timelines accordingly and we are only about a month behind schedule, Deputy.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you. You mentioned in your letter to the panel dated 16th July that the strategy was being updated to support agile working. Could you please outline these changes?

Chief Executive:

I think some of that ...

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

A similar question.

Chief Executive:

... was covered earlier in the conversation that we had about the way in which COVID has impacted on staffing. So, 2 elements of the office strategy have always been there. One is about reducing our overheads and our estate, and the second is about getting more investment in the technology to make our workforce more agile, which means that you do not have to have everybody office based. That has, in effect, been speeded up partly by COVID for the reasons that I outlined earlier. I think the other piece, which again we have talked to the panel previously, of observation is lots of people think that they should go to the office and then go to their clients or their customers rather than dealing with it more efficiently. So I used and I will maintain this: if you are a health worker or if you are a social worker you do not need to go into wherever you are based and then go out, you can go on a series of visits. You can do your case management write-ups using the technology and perhaps you do not need to be in the office more than a couple of times a week for supervision sessions and for talking to colleagues about specific cases. It is that sort of agile working which we want to encourage and have in place, combined with now a more I think appropriate approach to home working as well as using technology for other aspects of what colleagues may need or should be doing online rather than necessarily face to face. So where we are is we think in the office context we will be able to reduce even further the amount of space, have a larger number of people who are, in effect, using one facility, but less people in there all the time, 9.00 to 5.00, Monday to Friday. That is part of the overall agile working arrangements.

The Chief Minister:

I think there is a point to make about the benefits. The business case remains robust, significant annual savings coming out of it, some capital receipts that come out of it, and also importantly release of sites for brownfield development. That is the headline points.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Is spending public finances on the new offices for the Government justifiable in light of the COVID-19 expecting to cost approximately £80 million or £90 million?

The Chief Minister:

Well, if you are going to save £7 million a year, even if it were £100 million, which is not what we are anticipating, that would be a 7 per cent return on your investment. That is pretty good in these days

and that is excluding productivity savings. That is excluding the capital receipts and it is excluding the benefits of releasing sites for brownfield development. So, yes.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

So it is the intention of the Government to own the building it operates in or is it intending to rent office accommodation as well?

The Chief Minister:

I would like to go into the details once we have got through the next stage of that, which is towards the end of the month, but we do have a view. We have looked at the various options and there are some options around, obviously some of which were referenced in the Government Plan, which are not yet in the public domain.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

What are you using and planning to use the office space at The Parade for?

The Chief Minister:

The Parade is rented, as we know. That was rented certainly before I came in and I think before Charlie came in. So it is used essentially as decant space for some of the proposed works and also it is used by certain departments, but the intention obviously at some point when that lease finishes is not to renew it.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

From an affordability aspect, is The Parade much cheaper than Broad Street to rent per square metre, for example?

The Chief Minister:

I do not have those details.

Chief Executive:

So I can give you those details. I do not have them to hand, but it is a different type of building. It is predominantly swing space, as the Chief Minister has said. It is not what we would call permanent. So by way of example, in COVID we have put most of our helpline staff in there. Currently, we are about to put our test and trace enhanced facility in there. Both of those were temporary. When and if the hospital development is approved, part of the moving of certain people out of the hospital at certain times, which we have to do because of the state of the current hospital, we can accommodate them in somewhere like The Parade. So we use it not in the same way that Broad Street is.

The Chief Minister:

It is not permanent.

Chief Executive:

It is not a permanent standing facility for a department, apart from those people in I.H.E. (Infrastructure, Housing and Environment) who are in the regulatory service. They are in on one floor and that is the only what I would call permanent standing set of workforce people who are in that building.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

So would it be fair to say that it is more expensive per square metre to rent The Parade and is it also true that there is not a break in the clause for renting The Parade until 7 years' time and that will be after the completion of the Government building? So what will it be used for then?

Chief Executive:

So The Parade was originally secured on the back of the future hospital project. At the time, there was going to be a decant of significant numbers of staff from that department into The Parade while they were doing works on the Gloucester Street site. That was why it was secured for 7 years because it fitted with the development programme for the hospital. We inherited that, as the Chief Minister said. We have not got the same arrangements for the hospital and we have reduced some of our requirement for renting and used that space accordingly in the light of the lease agreement that we have. So, you are right, it is a 7-year lease. I do not have the exact costings. Would I have done it at the beginning? Probably not, but we are where we are.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

So there is no intention of extending the lease?

Chief Executive:

No. If you recall, Deputy, when we brought the outline business case, we went through all the properties, their break clauses and what we were releasing. So there is a schedule all the way through to the back end of this decade where we will have come out of a huge number of properties. Unfortunately, in the past we have not always necessarily negotiated the flexibility that we should have in some of the lease agreements, and that was made clear when we originally put the business case together that there will be one or 2 buildings that will fall away towards the back end of this decade which were, again, a bit like The Parade, long-term agreements that were signed without suitable break clauses.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you. As we have just a couple of minutes before we are due to finish, I would love to ask one additional question that is posed on behalf of a member of the public. When will the One Front Door facility re-open at La Motte Street?

Chief Executive:

So, at the moment we are not proposing to re-open it in the way that we previously did. However, there is no issue about appointments that could be made and will be facilitated, and we are seeing significant numbers of appointments where appropriate in the La Motte Street ground floor. We have a huge number of enquiries coming online, which we are dealing with much more quickly, and we have, where necessary, specific sessions if we need to deal with bulges in activity; so going back to the tax, pinch points of the year where we will do it. At the moment, in the current climate with COVID and with social distancing and all the issues that come as we move into winter, the intention is not to open it as we used to have it on an open basis between 9.00 and 4.00. We think what we are doing at the moment is the right thing in the circumstances, but we will continue to review that on an ongoing basis.

The Chief Minister:

But we are not back to normal, that is the point. You have to remember that.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Yes, we all understand that.

Chief Executive:

Also, everything is in one place still, so the One Front Door principle is still operating through that department. In fact, we are putting more into it now. So the front end for car parks, the front end for health appointments, all of that is going into that department so it is consolidated in the right way.

The Chief Minister:

I believe the experience has been as well that when people have been ringing for an appointment quite a lot of those things have been able to be dealt with on the phone calls. They have not needed to come in for the appointment. It is just that change of behaviour. But the point is at the moment we are not back to normal and that is why we cannot give you a definitive date as well.

[11:30]

Senator K.L. Moore:

But for particularly the older members of the community who appreciated that ability to drop in and pose their questions and resolve issues ...

Chief Executive:

If they want to do that, we will make an appointment for them and we have been doing that. So we have had a number of people that have either been visiting St. Helier who want specific issues dealt with, and that has not been a problem. If your member of the public wants to book an appointment at any time to suit them in the normal working day, we will accommodate that.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Okay, that is helpful to know and understand. Thank you all. Well, we have met our allotted time so I will now close the meeting and thank you all very much for your attendance.

[11:31]