



Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Hearing

Witness: The Chief Minister

Tuesday, 12th April 2022

Panel:

Senator K.L. Moore (Chair)

Deputy S.M. Ahier of St. Helier

Senator S.W. Pallet

Senator T.A. Vallois

Witnesses:

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré, The Chief Minister

Ms. S. Wylie, Chief Executive Officer

Mr. T. Walker, Director, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance

Mr. M. Grimley, Group Director, People and Corporate Services

Ms. H. Cunningham, Group Director, Finance Business Partnering and Analytics

[10:29]

Senator K.L. Moore (Chair):

Good morning, everyone and welcome to this final quarterly hearing with the Chief Minister of this term. We shall with our introductions. I am the Chair of the pane, Senator Kristina Moore.

Deputy S. M. Ahier of St. Helier:

Deputy Steve Ahier, Vice-Chair.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Senator Steve Pallett, member.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

Senator Tracey Vallois, member.

The Chief Minister:

Senator John Le Fondré, Chief Minister.

Group Director for People and Corporate Services:

Mark Grimley, Group Director for People and Corporate Services.

Chief Executive Officer:

Suzanne Wylie, C.E.O. (Chief Executive Officer) and head of the public service.

Director General, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

Tom Walker, Director General.

Group Director, Finance Business Partnering and Analytics:

Hazel Cunningham, Group Director, Finance Business Partnering and Analytics.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you. Of course we should offer a welcome - it may be our final quarterly hearing with the Chief Minister but it is the first time that we have had the new Chief Executive before us at the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel. Welcome to you. We are very pleased to have you here today.

[10:30]

Looking back at the first transcript of our first quarterly hearing, the Chief Executive at the time, although invited, did not choose to attend our hearing. It is very good that you are here today.

Chief Executive Officer:

Glad to be here.

Senator K.L. Moore:

As it is our final hearing, we thought we would start first off by asking the Chief Minister, COVID aside if you could, looking back over the term, the last 4 years, to tell us what his highlight would be and what he thinks has made the greatest difference to the public of Jersey?

The Chief Minister:

Thank you. I see that on the questionnaire. I do not think we can ignore COVID ...

Senator K.L. Moore:

We will talk about that later.

The Chief Minister:

I am sure, but we have to remember as a whole, very obviously, it was not on the agenda when we first started, it has taken 2 years plus out of the programme. I think we have protected lives very well and I think we have protected livelihoods very well. By that I mean we do not have excess deaths for 2020, in fact we have less deaths in 2020 than normal, and the results of 2021, although not yet finalised, are looking to be in about the same sort of territory, certainly within the bounds of normality, if that is the right expression. There has been some very difficult decisions, things like ethical framework, the level 4 lockdown, but we have also done some really good stuff, which has been innovative. Things like Spend Local card, working with Microsoft, working with Mastercard. Let us move away from COVID. I will break it down to certain areas: finances, taxes and the organisation. I think where we are now, particularly after the last 2 years, we are in a very, very good position going forward. We are back into surplus of around just under £60 million and very good reserves. Hopefully in the next 3 to 4 weeks, looking at Hazel to my left here, we will be doing the first tranche and that will be the refinancing. If that works and comes to where we think it should be, it will be in the order of £300 million of savings in the next 30 years and 3.6 billion over a longer term. That for me is quite a major tick. That is about long-term thinking and decision ...

Senator K.L. Moore:

We will be looking at the finances later but really I asked you about the man on the street and or woman ...

The Chief Minister:

We are working our way down the structures.

Senator K.L. Moore:

What do you think will be the highlight for them?

The Chief Minister:

Hang on, let us just go down and we will get there. So things that have invested significantly, which ultimately is about making sure we have security of services or improved services. That is the investment we are seeing in things like the I.T. (information technology) programmes, the independent taxation and the change in the tax systems. The external side of stuff, which has

obviously just come to the fore I have seen in the headlines today but between Brexit and global relations there has been a lot of effort there. That is about either securing Jersey's position post-Brexit and/or improving things in terms of relationships internationally. That is about improving and supporting the economy. Things like the New York office for J.F.L. (Jersey Finance Limited), things like ... which is very significant opportunities for financial services, things like diversity in terms of medicinal cannabis and hopefully, and we will see what happens later on, the tech fund and the boost to the digital sector. Obviously on top of that we now have a migration control policy and that will continue to develop. Then we get to the health side. We have done a health access scheme, which is free G.P. (general practitioner) visits for children up to 17 years-old. We have subsidised G.P. fees for up to 12,000 people. We have the Jersey Care Model that is coming out, which is now in year 2. We have done significant mental health improvements, although there is always much more to do. That includes the mental health nursing degree, the Listening Lounge, the mental health law and the significant improvement into the mental facility. We have also obviously made sure that as a government we are a living wage employer and the minimum wage itself has increased by 5.6 per cent.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Okay, so you are really reading your foreword to the annual report and accounts, which is fine. That is publicly available so I will just stop you there in the essence of time, but it is very helpful and illustrative for the public to hear what your highlights and priorities are.

The Chief Minister:

I think I would just make the point that obviously I have done it in a slightly different order because the man on the street is probably not going to worry too much about long-term savings, they might hopefully but they may not be aware of them. But they may also be aware of some of the other pieces of work that we have done. So, for example, getting the Hopper Bus trial coming, which will start imminently. There are various things like Fort Regent starting work so it depends what the man in the street ...

Senator K.L. Moore:

Yes, thank you. As I said, we will about finances later but I was asking for your highlight. What has really made a difference to the man on the street? You have given an illustrative answer and so that interesting and indicative in itself. We will now move on our other questions, which also harks back to our first quarterly hearing with you and Senator Vallois, who was on the other side of the table at that time, will ask the next question.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

Just in terms of your responsibilities around the Control of Housing and Work (Jersey) Law, you have just referred to migration controls. We are due to debate the Domestic Abuse Law at our last sitting and I wonder, Chief Minister, whether there is any consideration for exceptions for people who are victims of domestic abuse in terms of the way that migration controls may or may not work?

The Chief Minister:

I am sorry, do you mean that if somebody is not qualified to live over here effectively should we make an exception because they are suffering from domestic abuse?

Senator T.A. Vallois:

Yes.

The Chief Minister:

To be honest, I think that is going to come out when the detail of that policy is ... the flesh is put on to it. We have made exceptions in the past for particular family circumstances and I would have thought from a humane perspective, if that is the right expression, one would want to make sure that there is the right consideration. I think one also has to make sure that it then does not become a loophole wrongly that is exploited.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

Okay, so on that basis ...

The Chief Minister:

So I would be sympathetic to a ...

Senator T.A. Vallois:

I understand, I just wonder whether there is anything required in terms of guidance when those decisions are being considered at things like the Control of Housing and Work (Jersey) Law if that is in place, so that there is not any abuse of those exceptions?

The Chief Minister:

The idea would be that as the whole principles around those new controls get developed, yes, there would be some guidance that we would put people through. I know Rowland has demonstrated a flow diagram on the centre of the policy and the principles that are put together which ultimately then come up to the Chief Minister for approval and also to check for exceptions. My view would be it would be very much a political decision of making sure that framework is in the right place.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

Thank you.

Deputy S. M. Ahier:

Chief Minister, the fifth Consultant Use by the Government of Jersey report was published in December 2021, what changes, if any, would you like to see in the use of consultants by the Government of Jersey in the future?

The Chief Minister:

The headline comment, the one we would love to hear is of course we would love to see no more consultants being used because the perception is they are a hideously expensive, do not do anything other producing paper work and are a complete waste of time. Obviously I do not agree with that comment, just to make sure that is very clear. I think what we have to look at is one of the reasons we are showing a significant increase ... well, we are showing increases in use of consultants is because of the work programmes we laid out in the various Government Plans, which is therefore bringing the skills that we do not have on Island to then do the work. There will always be a case where you will have a technical skill that is required that is not available here that you will have to bring in, they do the job and then they go, because otherwise you generate that skillset for limited use and then essentially you are paying for them when you do not need them. That is always the balance. I think we need to make the point that obviously with things like the office strategy, which is now happening, Fort Regent, the hospital, all those pieces of work, there has been a need to bring external advisers in who are doing things - for example, including the I.T. programme - and once they have finished their job they will leave. But those people are budgeted for in the Government Plan and on that basis I think we have to accept that there will always been a need for consultants but we want to make sure ultimately that we can the reporting in a far better place, that it is more transparent and obviously that we do not default to using consultants without just cause. The other one in there, which we have seen in some of the programmes, whether it is the I.T. or the office, is that sort of social enterprise side, which is essentially when people do take on significant contracts there a benefit that comes through. Some of it will either be training, which I think we have seen at Highlands, some of it will be people donating laptops into schools, i.e. there is something that comes through leaves some form of legacy to build on going forward. Do you want to add to that, Mark?

Group Director for People and Corporate Services:

Deputy, I think one of the early criticisms around the use of the consultants was the heavy use of interims, particularly when we had a new Target Operating Model coming through. That was symptomatic of the lack of planning ahead. We now have workforce plans being developed for every single department with succession plans, the new technology system will allow us to see what skills are needed coming through and you will note at the back end of last year we had 2 internal temporary promotions to the director general positions rather than going out into the interim market.

We have changed the opportunities internally for people on Island who understand how government works to step up. That will probably be one of the biggest changes that you will see over the coming years.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

Can I just ask? I think there are positive uses for consultants, especially when you have issues being a small Island and having specialist experience, however one of the important parts is how do you assure the public that their funds, when you are hiring consultants, is creating an effective and good outcome for the public? Do we make those assessments and how do we assure people that that is the case?

The Chief Minister:

My high level point will be ultimately it is about the delivery of the project and does that project, which should in some shape or form be designed to either directly improve things for the public, i.e. in relation to the services they receive, or is designed to create something more efficient or whatever it is, nonetheless is a tangible outcome that comes through. Sometimes the public will not necessarily see that directly because frankly if there is a computer system down here and you are dealing with it here, you are not going to know what is going on down here. That I think then is through reporting, through demonstrating things like the mid-year reports and things like that, and also through the oversight functions of P.A.C. (Public Accounts Committee) and Scrutiny. Suzanne?

Chief Executive Officer:

I agree, consultants are necessary on an Island of this size because we cannot employ all of the expertise, it ebbs and flows in terms of what we will need at certain points of time to carry out certain reviews or certain projects. Particularly when it comes to big regeneration design and build projects, that is very common clearly to look at consultancy teams to do that. I do think that, of course, we may be able to be ... from the Chief Minister is saying around its delivery of the projects and its when a review is carried out, the implementation of those reviews and that we probably could be better at explaining to the public how we implement it, what has changed and link them back to these consultants. I think we are on a journey to do that. I think we can get better at doing that from a communication perspective, linking it back to what the consultant was brought in to do in the first place. I also think in terms of contract management of consultants and the oversight of that as well, we are looking at how we really are tightening that up and how we tie that down.

Senator K.L. Moore:

If we could just use an example, which is obviously illustrated on the front page of the newspaper today, it is an answer given to the Constable of St. John to a written question about the use of consultants on a particular project, which of course is one of the issues where you cite that

sometimes it is needed. I think what perhaps the public want to know is where the cost control is on that. This answer indicates that one post, which I believe is a part-time role of about 1.25 days a week for the clinical director, has a budget of £75,000 to £100,000 for a less than 3 month period. As does the interim project director for the same period, who has a band of £100,000 to £125,000. On a project that last year we can see in the annual report and accounts cost over £50 million and still is yet to be agreed. It is very much up in the air as whether it will and it has no plan B. How are those costs justified to the people who are essentially paying the wages for these projects?

The Chief Minister:

Just to be clear, I have not seen the headlines in respect of that today. Is this the hospital project we are talking about or is it this individual?

[10:45]

Senator K.L. Moore:

It is the hospital project, yes, the clinical director and the interim director.

The Chief Minister:

At the end of the day it has always been the case, and you remember it from your time on the Council of Ministers as well, that the hospital project is the biggest capital project ever and the preparation costs on a scheme like this are expensive, there is no question. In essence ...

Senator K.L. Moore:

Do you consider that £75,000 to £100,000 for a 1.25 day a week input on a 3-month basis is good value for money for this project?

The Chief Minister:

I am going to ask ... I am a bit cautious about commenting on individuals, I have to say, but I am ...

Senator K.L. Moore:

It is in public view.

Group Director for People and Corporate Services:

If we take the role of the clinical director for the hospital project, they are responsible for bringing together the clinical specification for what is a significant investment on the Island. It also includes working with the consultants and clinical body to work out the adjacencies, the care pathways, so it is not just about the design of the building but actually how clinical care is provided within that building. The individual who is providing that has significant expertise in doing that. He is eminent

in his profession and I think there are certain professions where you will see that those rates may be seem to be high to the person on the street but it is the going rate for that type of work. It is a very rare piece of work and very rare skillset.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Chief Minister, you championed this project, along with the former Constable of St. John and I think together you both produced P.59/2019, which was your report describing how you are going to deliver this project in a quicker timeframe. As we see in the annual report and accounts, £50 million was spent on it last year and it has now come to light that in August of last year you received the report from planning giving their view on the pitfalls of the planning application as it was progressing. They very clearly gave their advice. What efforts have you made to deliver a plan B for the public, given that you have spent £100 million, or thereabouts, on this project to date without obviously beginning or even having planning permission as yet. What is the plan B and what has been done since you were given that indication from planning about the concerns that they had very clearly set out?

The Chief Minister:

I think we need to step back and say one of the issues around cost has always been the concern around delay. As we made the point every day of delay, whether it is from a Back-Bencher's proposition, a panel proposition, a proposition from anybody, each day of delay is £100,000. So when we can talk about cost and the impact on the project anybody who has caused a delay on that project shares an element of that responsibility. In terms of the particular issues around planning, I am again slightly leery about commenting given that the planning inquiry has just closed. I think we now have to see how that ... that ultimately is going to be the deciding point.

Senator K.L. Moore:

I think perhaps the public would like to know that you are getting good value for money out of the fees you are paying on their behalf.

The Chief Minister:

At the end of the day, prior to our time coming in, I think £40 million had been spent and the planning application got rejected twice. That is why we went to the Assembly, the Assembly has agreed a site, the Assembly has agreed the funding and now we have to see what happens with the planning application.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Yes, and £100 million has now been spent and the first planning application is just reaching the end of its process. What the public want to know is that you received advice warning that it had serious

issues in August of last year, therefore how have you delivered value for money in terms of this input that you are receiving from consultants in order to prepare for other options if this is to fail?

The Chief Minister:

In essence, what are the other options? There are not too many, frankly, because going back to a decaying building which is in an exceptionally poor state and is going to continue requiring a lot of costs spent on it and bear in mind - I believe you were a proponent of the earlier scheme or a great fan of it - if it had gone through you would have had a development happening in the middle of a pandemic, which none of us could have forecast, (b) you would have people - as I have always said, being born, living, being treated and dying in the middle of a building site and (c) the new clinical adviser basically said we were very lucky that we did not go with that scheme because it would have been out of date within 5 years. On that basis we have to go for an alternative approach. We have gone with an alternative approach, some people do not like it but, as far as I was concerned, there was no political involvement or manipulation or anything along those lines in the selection of the site. It was endorsed absolutely by the Assembly and, as I said, the Assembly have agreed the funding. I think we just have to go with the process and see what the outcomes are. The planning inquiry on my feedback has been fairly balanced, there have obviously been people who have not been in favour but I think we have heard very clearly from the clinicians and the staff as to the merits of the hospital and why it is so desperately needed.

Senator K.L. Moore:

We knew that in 2011, Chief Minister. We will go back to the consultant's issue. Vice-Chair.

Deputy S. M. Ahier:

Chief Minister, P.76 is proposing that the Council of Ministers do not use compromise agreements or non-disclosure agreements which are not in the public interest and give greater powers to the Comptroller and Auditor General to review these before issuance. Why are compromise agreements or non-disclosure agreements used by the States Employment Board?

The Chief Minister:

I am just trying to find our responses to P.76. But in essence there are times when such ... and I have actually said this publicly previously, when such agreements are required. It is accepted ... put it this way, I cannot envisage a time when you will not be able to say ... when you will be able to say rather that we will never use either a compromise agreement or a non-disclosure agreement, because in some shape or form there will usually be some situation that will arise where there will be a parting of ways and there will be a confidentiality arrangement attached. Mark could possibly give the detail on where we use them.

Group Director for People and Corporate Services:

In an organisation of this size the number of compromise agreements we issue is comparatively low. We had 21 last year, I think 34 the previous year. We have tightened up on those. There are always areas where there are potential liabilities for an employer, whether the relationship breaks down and you have to take a decision around what is the most appropriate way for ending that contract. In the compromise agreements there will always be no fault, no blame, no admission on both sides. It is not always the employer who is at fault, sometimes the employee is but the employer has not handled it well. They do allow to limit some liabilities. I am very conscious that we had a case in the Royal Court where had we gone to quantum without a settlement it is an uncapped liability and you have to take a decision around what that looks like. The majority of the compromise agreements we do are for contractual notice pay only. Very few of them are special payments or additional payments or compensatory payments. Not least because the way that we structure the tribunals over here, there are caps on our liabilities if we go to tribunal. We have very few of those that go that way. I think the J.E.T. (Jersey Employment Trust) annual report recently set out the different cases that are likely to succeed or not. Non-disclosure agreements are very different beasts, so within compromise agreements you may well have a confidentiality clause that some people refer to as non-disclosure or gagging clauses but in the commercial world, and particularly in some of the world that we work in, non-disclosure agreements are absolutely essential. If we take, for example, the cyber programme that the Government is putting in place, it protects the Island. We will require consultants to have a confidentiality agreement around how we have our architectural security. We would do the same in commercial negotiations. So non-disclosure agreements actually protect an organisation from either exposing itself, increasing its risk, or protecting itself during commercial negotiations. If we separate out the 2 compromise agreements, it is about limiting the liability and they are used in very rare circumstances. Non-disclosure agreements are about making sure that the organisation protects itself from either a commercial advantage or a risk outside.

Chief Executive Officer:

They are commonly used across the U.K. (United Kingdom). They are certainly not unusual to Jersey and, of course, compromise agreements in particular are the decision to go down that route, we make a choice is it going to be more costly to go through a legal route, through courts or to have a compromise agreement put in place. Of course, when the accounts refer to any of those packages that have been paid, the Comptroller and Auditor General has reviewed accounts over many years and that has not been seen as anything which is out of scope.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

Can I just check, though, C. and A.G. (Comptroller and Auditor General) or the external auditors will have a materiality clause when they are looking at what accounts, will they specifically look at something like this unless they do a random check?

Group Director for People and Corporate Services:

They do. Sorry ...

Group Director, Finance Business Partnering and Analytics:

Compromise agreements would not necessarily come under materiality because they are exceptional payments so in most cases they will look at each case to ensure that it is appropriate and it is compliant with the Public Finance (Jersey) Law.

Group Director for People and Corporate Services:

I was going to add to that, in terms of the materiality that is where the special payments come in. That was tightened up in the public finance manual last year following a recommendation from the C. and A.G. In terms of the review, the C. and A.G. already has unfettered access to review any compromise agreement, any contractual arrangement, the governance around that and the decision-making. I would not expect her to comment necessarily on the actual decision unless she felt it was irregular but she certainly has unfettered access to any of the documentation at any time.

Deputy S. M. Ahier:

Thank you, we will move on to Senator Pallett.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Could I just follow on from that? How can we be assured that non-disclosure agreements are not being used merely to gag employees where bad practice has taken place so that we can learn from the bad practice? How can you ensure that?

Group Director for People and Corporate Services:

I think in previous years they have been used for that and that is why I think they have such a poor reputation for their use now. I cannot say in the past we have not. We have put in place new agreements. I oversee all the compromise agreements going through. I can absolutely, categorically say that if someone is a whistleblower, while we do not have statutory protection in this jurisdiction, we have put in place a new whistleblowing procedure which gives them protection within the public service. We guarantee them that. It was not always the case. People who were speaking up were often moved and that has changed now. So when we have whistleblowing that comes to me, it is handled through my office, it is not handled through any local H.R. (human resources) team.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

So there is an opportunity to learn from the ...

Group Director for People and Corporate Services:

Absolutely. Whistleblowers often have public interest at heart. Occasionally they do it because they are annoyed about something. I understand that but very often they have public interest at heart and we must absolutely listen to them because it could be patient safety, it could be the use of public funds, it could be contracting anything and all of that is in the public interest.

Senator K.L. Moore:

That is really good to hear. How is that being transmitted and communicated to everybody in the States of Jersey team?

Group Director for People and Corporate Services:

We have a number of mechanisms. The new standards in public service, which is replacing the code of conduct, places specific duties on people.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Yes, sorry, how it is being communicated that there is an alternative. Although there is still the lack of statutory procedure and protection for them, that there is a point of contact, how has that been communicated?

Chief Executive Officer:

So this is for whistleblowers, who they go to, what was the point of contact.

Group Director for People and Corporate Services:

So we still the old process in place across most of the organisation, I have put in place in health a new process, we have communicated that with the chairs of the L.N.C. (Local Negotiating Commission) and the Committee, and the Medical Staffing Committee, so I have set out to them that they should be coming directly to me at the moment. We have put in place a new reporting line and that is going to be enhanced. In terms of the communication, we need to do a lot more of that but we need to get the back end sorted first. At the moment, though, all whistleblowing comes directly into me and my team now. They do not go into a local H.R. team.

Chief Executive Officer:

I would like to see the ... it does not have to be formal whistleblowing either, I would like to see that the culture would allow for people to come forward just to raise issues that they do not feel are encompassed under whistleblowing as such and that will be raised right up through the system, talked about at the Executive Leadership Team and addressed. You asked about lessons learned from some of those as well. Obviously confidentiality has to be maintained but in terms of the

generalities of lesson learned, Mark will bring that into E.L.T. (Executive Leadership Team) for discussion.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Thank you. We will move on to the annual accounts. Chief Minister, in your foreword to the annual report and accounts you state that recurring savings have been found. The staff count is nearly 800 - I repeat 800 - more than in 2017 and net revenue expenditure has increased under your government. Is this really the success that you proclaim OneGov has been?

The Chief Minister:

There are about 3 questions in there. First, the savings, what are referred to as efficiencies and labelled rebalancing, have achieved a significant amount to date and the pressure needs to continue on that. We have always said 2023 will be a tough year.

[11:00]

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Have you met your targets this year?

The Chief Minister:

For this year obviously we are not yet through it, but at the moment we will achieve by far the majority of them on a recurring basis.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Do you know what you are short?

The Chief Minister:

Not at this stage.

Group Director, Finance, Business Partnering and Analytics:

On a recurring basis we have secured £55 million out of the £60 million target over the 2 years for 2020 and 2021. There was an element in 2021 that was on a non-recurring basis so those will be carried forward, so we were closer to the target. It was more like £57 million but some of that was on a one-off basis.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

That is a £3 million deficit that has been reported.

Group Director, Finance, Business Partnering and Analytics:

Yes, that will be added to the target for 2022.

The Chief Minister:

The reason I take confidence from that is if you go to the first year when everybody said we will never achieve it, and the target was 40 and we achieved 27 in that year, the balance was carried forward into the following year. Essentially, that 40 went up to 60, but instead of being £13 million adrift, in total we have £5 million adrift over a much bigger target. In other words, as long as the direction of travel is that we are achieving recurrent savings, which we are doing, to a significant level, then if they do not make it in year 2, that gets carried forward to year 3 and the pressure keeps going, and I am comfortable with that. Bear in mind we know that measures we have taken will be adding further savings in for future programmes already. The office block is being built. That will generate savings. That is not banked in any of the figures we have talked about yet, and the refinancing will generate savings as well.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

When you refer to savings, you are saying we have achieved so much savings but we are increasing expenditure year on year.

The Chief Minister:

You are right. That is part 2 of the comment. What we have basically been doing, we are taking costs out of the organisation at one point but it has basically funded some of the significant growth that has gone through. I will use your example, you specifically because I think we all supported it, which was the extra spend, which is growth in education of about £40 million, £10 million a year roughly. That will have added to that bottom line. We all agreed we felt that was investment into the right services the public are expecting improvements to see. In all that growth, quite a significant part of that growth has been funded by taking costs out of other parts of the organisation.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

There was also a requirement on that department to make savings as well, or efficiencies. I have to use the right word there.

The Chief Minister:

The public understands savings and efficiencies, rebalancing they may not, but the reason we went to rebalancing is that saving sometimes suggests a cost that has gone from a figure to a lower figure, but also some that can be, if you use income tax, for example, without increasing taxation we have taken up more revenue because we have been more thorough on compliance and things like that. That in itself is an efficiency, if you like, but it is generating income rather than reducing costs.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

Can you see the potential concern that the man or woman on the street might have? We talk about so many savings and the touch and feel services like education and health, they know it, they understand it, they probably use most of it, and it is their taxpayer money. That money may go on to areas they cannot see, like I.T. and H.R., which are legitimate arguments, or consultants. Being able to communicate and understand how that money is being taken out of one area and put into another are potential outcomes for the man in the street.

The Chief Minister:

Let us use health as the example, where we know, certainly in year 1, they signed up to achieving savings, but equally health has got growth. In essence, the net impact of that is it is a re-prioritisation of taking waste out of part of the system and applying it to growth they need somewhere else. That is what we have to do everywhere and that is where the pressure has to be. However, I think with COVID-19 it will take another 18 months, and that is a finger in the air job, of everybody to stabilise down and understand that new functions we brought in for contact tracing and things like that, how that will change, whether there will be a requirement, for example, for that to remain in any shape or form or whether those very talented individuals are going to fulfil alternative roles. We have to understand, we have to bring that stability, allow the organisation just to stabilise and recover from what has been a huge, beyond generations impact of what has gone on in the last 2½ years. The pressure still needs to be there, that we need to saying if we have waste in any area we should be clamping down on that as far as possible, which allows then alternative services to be improved without increasing the costs too much. That should be the principle.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

You have previously said you thought the Chief Executive has done an excellent job. I am reminding you again about the 800 more staff. Is that a success? Can we really say the job the Chief Executive has done has been successful?

The Chief Minister:

That is 2 points, and both Mark and Suzanne may want to agree with me or correct me, but first, that is absolute numbers, F.T.E. (full-time equivalent) is more important, which is 600-odd, I think, which is a difference. The numbers you are citing could mean that somebody works for 8 hours a week, whatever the number is, versus a full-time post and there is a distinction. Equally, at the peak, I am not sure what the numbers are now, 250 of that increase were due to contact tracing. At some point, probably not in those numbers, every G.P. on the Island would have been included in those numbers because it brought them in to assist with the COVID response, that was obviously 2020. I am saying, to an extent, we have to allow the organisation now to stabilise and get back to where it

needs to be. Also bear in mind, we have said we have more to do. We have more improvements to do, things like social workers and more nurses will add to those numbers and that is frontline. I do not think anybody would challenge the fact that we have not had enough resources, certainly in 2018 when we started, or 2017 when the previous C.E. (Chief Executive) started, we know there was not adequate resource there. You have to be slightly careful in that the Government Plan laid out investment and improvement in services and that will lead to increased head count. Some of it is that one of the plans as well, which I believe did happen, is where we have had certain expensive individuals who then either retired or moved on, we have taken the opportunity to take on less expensive individuals and slightly change the role. That was also part of the strategy and was made very clear at the time.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Going back on COVID, are we seeing any indication of staff numbers coming down from what most people would say is quite an excessive increase? It is expensive to employ staff. Are we seeing staff numbers come down?

The Chief Minister:

Your contact tracing again, bear in mind ...

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Was important, absolutely, but not all 800 were COVID.

The Chief Minister:

I accept that but I am trying to give an indication as to what headline you go for. That is why we should be cautious on those numbers.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Is there any indication it is reducing?

Group Director, People and Corporate Services:

For the next 2 or 3 years, given the major programmes we have going on, it will not see an immediate reduction because we have significant infrastructure investments. So in I.T. we need a larger team to manage those programmes as we bring that in. In my team, I am planning it will shrink down in a couple of years, once I have some of those heavy infrastructure projects in place. As an illustration of why that is important, in previous years departments used to commission their own campaigns, so social workers would have their own campaign, nurses would have their own campaign. Assuming each campaign costs around £80,000, I have a pipeline at the moment that could potentially cost us £450,000 just in recruitment. By centralising that in a team, by having a

resourcing team, we can do that for £250,000. There are economies of scale that we introduce. We also have workforce plans being developed so we can plan the numbers over a longer period of time, aligned to the activities in the Government Plan. We have not been able to do that before. Everyone is well aware of the argument around the quality of the data. We are getting better. It will never be perfect. To answer when it will reduce, I cannot quite say. Will it reduce? Yes, and the interim Chief Executive has previously said the public service may need to be smaller but better skilled and better paid, and that has to be planned as well.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

I can understand civil service grades, if you looked at a managerial level or a middle manager, roughly what would that sit at in terms of a public sector civil service grade?

Group Director, People and Corporate Services:

That is a big question because it depends on the level of responsibility, but you would expect a managerial role to start at about £40,000 and go up to £60,000 for middle management. Some of those would be very technical roles. For administrative roles they are lower, about mid-30s.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

There was workforce modernisation and then it transformed into something else, that was a little bit hostile at the beginning of the term, as you remember, Chief Minister. I certainly do. When I look at, for example, a grade 12 that has gone from 133.6 F.T.E. to 288.3 from January 2017 to December 2021, does that raise concerns whether we are hiring in the right areas? If not, then why?

Chief Executive Officer:

I think all posts are evaluated in accordance with their responsibilities and the depth of expertise that is needed in those particular posts. That evaluation scheme is a set-out, agreed scheme and the assurance is that those posts are taken through that process and there is governance around that. In terms of what goes into States Employment Board, et cetera, that is the advice they are given on what those posts are graded at.

The Chief Minister:

It is worth making the point, as you will be aware, when we all first started, we inherited a variety of issues around the structure. One was equal pay for equal value, which meant that somebody in one part of the organisation doing job A was paid a similar amount to somebody in another part of the organisation doing basically the same job. What was happening, what we found out was they were not, which was unfair. The difference on that from memory was in the order of £50 million to £60 million. In the very difficult time that I was referring to, we removed that difference. There have been some quite important structural issues that we have dealt with. The point that has come

through is it has been a bit like buying a restaurant and suddenly finding you do not have a kitchen. Some of the basics you expect to be in place have not been there and that is where the investment in the I.T. systems, in the H.R. systems, which initially will have some intensive impacts on manpower, there has to be some long-term benefits coming through. My expectation would be, for example, that when all that comes together, the I.T. systems should then generate improvements in productivity that will then mean the ability to challenge on the workforce levels. Bear in mind, we know we have had some deficits in certain areas and there are still some issues to address.

Senator K.L. Moore:

We will move on now to talk about something the public will find interesting.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

In our quarterly hearing of September 2021, the interim Chief Executive highlighted that the drivers of inflation and high prices in the Island are often outside of the Government's control. Do you, Chief Minister, have any levers you are considering to assist Islanders?

The Chief Minister:

Do you mean other than the £2 million that Deputy Martin announced 2 weeks ago?

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Other than the rather trivial £2 million that was announced, yes.

The Chief Minister:

I would love to have your vote. I regard £2 million as reasonably important. The point here is that reference is to things like fuel prices, the cost of food, whatever it is, and with the work that Deputy Martin had started at the end of last year. With the changes in prices driven by a whole variety of factors, including the atrocities going on in the Ukraine at the moment, that it was the right time to act and that has targeted those who tend to be most impacted. I have been having discussions with officers that while in the current period most of us are about to face in terms of elections and a new Council of Ministers and a new Assembly coming together, there will need to be further work done. They will have the time to do it. We have done the emergency side, and I would say quite loudly, whether it is practical or not, I would like to see something, if we needed to, perhaps re-using something like the Spend Local card but using it in a different way to get payments out to individuals if we feel that is appropriate. Then it can be targeted hopefully, but that is a piece of work I have asked officers to have a look at.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Could you confirm that the project team that the Minister for Social Security has agreed to set up will be put in place and has it been put in place yet?

[11:15]

The Chief Minister:

I honestly do not know the answer to that. My expectation is that it is because my expectation is officers are aware that when the new Council of Ministers comes in that will be a factor they will have to build in between now and the start of late autumn, early winter. The new social security payments will be factored in as well, but your argument I presume will be lower/middle Jersey ...

Senator K.L. Moore:

Perhaps the Director General for S.P.P.P. (Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance) can help on that one, the project team being put in place?

Director General, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

Officers from my department, from Statistics Jersey, from the economics unit are all working away on this and I expect they will continue to work away on it throughout the pre-election period in preparation for the new Council and exactly the sort of decisions the Chief Minister is outlining we expect them to have to make.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Going to the independent COVID review, Chief Minister, what input have you had in the formation of the independent COVID-19 review panel?

The Chief Minister:

I was made aware of the individuals that were in the frame for running and chairing it. I made some suggestions. I think they have brought someone in who is connected with the Isle of Man so it was not just mainland U.K. I think Senator Vallois and Senator Moore were involved in the discussions around the terms of reference.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

I will just declare as Vice-Chair of the P.P.C. I did have input.

The Chief Minister:

Yes, the bringer of the proposition was the Connétable of St. Brelade.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Have you had the opportunity to meet Sir Derek Myers yet?

The Chief Minister:

I have spoken to him on a call.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Can you give us some idea of what the discussions were about?

The Chief Minister:

It was just a general introduction, get to know, one of those types of things and he outlined the timeframe. It was a good couple of weeks ago so I cannot recall the full nature of the conversation but also in our diaries we have some slots allocated to have a full and proper meeting with him in due course.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Did you help to form its terms of reference in any way?

The Chief Minister:

The terms of reference were drawn up, I put some comment in like anybody else who has had the opportunity to do so, or any relevant person, and that is essentially it.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Were the terms of reference discussed at the Council of Ministers?

The Chief Minister:

I cannot recall.

Director General, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

The interim Chief Executive held the pen on the terms of reference and invited input from others but while keeping the editing role and then those terms of reference have been shared with the Council of Ministers so they are aware of the terms and of the people as they were being appointed on to the panel.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

I notice on the panel's website that the timeline of the review, a briefing to States Members and a public press conference will take place in September. Will you request the new Chief Executive Officer to suggest to the next Council of Ministers an earlier briefing to the Assembly?

The Chief Minister:

It is purely a practicality as we did have this discussion. We can make it earlier but the reporting date is towards the end of July and in reality, if they do their briefings to new States Members in August they will not get much of an audience, depending on what the individuals ... after what will have been quite a demanding election period, whether they will be around in August or not. I think it is purely practicalities. If people think they do want it on 1st August, I am sure that can be accommodated and it would be ultimately a decision for the next Council of Ministers.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Does this meet the intention of the second amendment to the Government Plan as agreed by the Assembly in December?

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

Can I ask, on the review panel what powers do they have to obtain information? I ask that quite openly and clearly because I know the trouble we have had trying to get minutes. It is a problem so I think it is important that the independent review panel, if they are to look at this properly, will be able to access all the information.

The Chief Minister:

As far as we are concerned, they are getting access to all the information.

Chief Executive Officer:

They do not have the same powers as a public inquiry would have in the U.K. but from what we have seen so far, in terms of the documentary evidence they have in front of them and the other reviews that are being carried out, P.A.C. and the Comptroller and Auditor General as well, they are getting access to those reports as they come through too. They will also get all the self-assessment reports being done by all the persons responsible, so they will have access to all the information they will need. In terms of the process, they will have their drafting done. The process will be completed and their drafting will be done by the end of July so that is within the boundaries of the proposition. The reporting back in September is purely getting them back on the Island at a time they can brief all concerned, including chairs of Scrutiny as well.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Are the current Ministers duty bound to respond to any calls of evidence from the review panel? Can they be subpoenaed to the panel? So, they can refuse to give evidence if they so wish.

The Chief Minister:

This ties us through to later on when we think about inquiries and things like that. Wearing a different hat some time ago, as Senator Vallois will recall, I got the Assembly to agree that Scrutiny can put witnesses on oath, provided they are not ... it is non-politicians if I remember correctly, you will have to check the law. Ministers do not have that power. If you want to set up a small review, Scrutiny has more power than the Minister to do it. My view is that within the inquiry there should be scope ... you would have cost control and all the rest of it, to avoid exactly this position. In essence, as far as I am concerned, if somebody does not want to participate and the panel feels it is appropriate that they should, they will draw their own conclusions from that. This is meant to be a lessons learned exercise. This is not meant to be a blame game, so my expectation is that all Ministers will be taking part, I have not had any indications to the contrary.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

At the current time, what are the Government doing to promote participation with that review in terms of discussion you might have with the Council, for example?

The Chief Minister:

I have had no feedback to say no one is co-operating, I have to say.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

I am not suggesting they are not.

The Chief Minister:

There is a theoretical principle but my expectation is that everybody will be taking part in them and those discussions take part during the course of this month and until the middle of May.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

My last question on this is the communication of the review's website does not seem to have been very broad. Could you request that the communication directorate aid in this?

The Chief Minister:

When you say not very broad ... sorry?

Senator S.W. Pallett:

I think the Chair might have to help me with this one. I think it is just the content of it, is it not?

Senator K.L. Moore:

I think we can move on to the next question, to Deputy Ahier.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Moving on to the Public Inquiries Law, when is it anticipated the Public Inquiries Law will be introduced and could you outline why this has not been lodged prior to the election?

The Chief Minister:

This is one I was very keen on getting in before the elections, as Tom will elucidate shortly. In essence, its complexity, even though this is the one we put extra resource into, and I think the law drafting instructions have got to 60 pages plus. They are complicated and long.

Senator K.L. Moore:

We will move to the next question then.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

How will this impact the administration and procedures of any public inquiries that take place during 2022, primarily the impact on the independent COVID-19 review?

The Chief Minister:

The COVID review is not a public inquiry, so from that perspective, in my view it would be useful to have that in a proper framework and structure for low-level reviews to give some substance and support behind them and some backing behind them if people decide not to co-operate. The COVID-19 review will not have the impact. It is a review, not a public inquiry. It is meant to be a lessons learned and very tightly controlled as well in terms of costs.

Senator K.L. Moore:

While we are talking about different methods of accountability, we can move on now to Senator Pallett's questions.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

I have 2 very quick questions on this one. When is it estimated that the public service ombudsman will be established? You previously indicated it will be established in shadow form during 2023 and have law drafting instructions been submitted yet?

The Chief Minister:

Law drafting instructions again have another set of complications. They are slightly smaller than the inquiry. At the moment we believe legislation should be ready, subject to the approval of the next Council of Ministers, by quarter 3 of this year. It will come to C.O.M. (Council of Ministers) as one

of their first items is our expectation, and then it is down to, provided they are happy with it, it can then go for lodging. That is the expectation.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

It remains a priority.

The Chief Minister:

Yes, it has been a priority. As we have said, time and time again we have lost over 2 years because of COVID and that has created a log jam, and those 2 I would particularly have liked to have got in before the recess.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

As a follow-on to that, notwithstanding COVID and I understand the impact it has had on the public sector and the whole Island, but do you believe if we had not had COVID - so I will ask a hypothetical - we would have been able to get these pieces of legislation through before the election?

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

On the basis of what certainty?

The Chief Minister:

On the basis that the reason why COVID-19 sucked resources out is that in layman's terms, when you are drafting and putting out all the guidelines, the law changes, the auditing and that type of stuff, it is landed very much on Tom's department at a senior level. Those are the same people who would have been working on and have been trying to move forward the inquiries on the ombudsman and others.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

And the Law Officers' Department as well, we have to thank them for their help.

Director General, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

I would point to the over 50 pieces of unique and novel legislation that have been developed to help manage the pandemic. All that legislation was complex. It was unlike legislation that was needed before in the Island, so the legislative team, the team between policy and law drafting and the Law Officers' Department, have been phenomenally productive during this period, hugely productive, and that has undoubtedly helped to keep the Island safe and save lives. The consequence of that

while they were drafting those more than 50 pieces of unique and novel legislation, they obviously were not working on this.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

I totally understand that. That is why I asked a hypothetical, not asking for certainty.

Director General, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

I share the Chief Minister's confidence that if we had not been working on that huge raft of legislation, I am very confident the laws you ask about would have been brought forward on their original timetables for the Council to consider.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

That moves me on to something that I think is quite pertinent, the Employment States of Jersey Employees (Jersey) Law and, Chief Minister, you know I have had a bugbear about this for a long time. P.1/2018 was quite controversial in terms of its implementation and we were able to introduce the new Public Finances (Jersey) Law, who part of P.1/2018 suggested that the whole government structure should be brought in together, not just the financial power in terms of the Public Finances (Jersey) Law. Can you provide some clarity or understanding why it is the case that even though in Government Plans expectations that were set? In the beginning the law was supposed to be March 2019. I know for a fact the law was supposed to be ready for March 2020, which was when the COVID stuff was hitting. Let us forget about COVID for one moment, I know it has affected us, but there was an intentional priority right at the beginning of this term to fix this, so why was that not the case?

The Chief Minister:

In terms of the period running up to pre-March 2020, I honestly cannot tell you, it may be we thought we had the luxury of time. Having said all that, there is an element of P.1 that most of the Council of Ministers wanted some more information about. I think there had been an implication then and particularly implications of - I seem to remember, Tom, you saying at the time - it would have impacted across a whole raft of legislation.

[11:30]

Deputy K.L. Moore:

This is a very specific part of the legislation though.

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

It is about introducing disciplinary process for the Chief Executive, which did not exist particularly ...

The Chief Minister:

No, no, sorry, the bit I was talking about was the overall single legal entity.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

But that was not the Employment States of Jersey Employees (Jersey) Law, that was just States of Jersey Law.

The Chief Minister:

No, it was P.1.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

Yes, but they asked what it amended in the States of Jersey Law, so ...

Director, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

If I can assist, I think that in the run up to March 2020 there are a number of discrete recommendations in relation to the Employees Law, some of which came from the Comptroller and Auditor General subsequently, some of which came as a result of the overall Government's framework. Originally when we looked at the law we decided that for the Employees Law we would need to do a comprehensive piece of work, more comprehensive than it appeared. Rather than trying to pick off small discrete areas just around, say, the Chief Executive alone, we were attempting in 2019 into 2020 to do exactly what you described there, Senator. We were attempting to do a much more comprehensive piece of work on the Employees Law as a whole. That then got interrupted by the pandemic and then when we came back to it the political prioritisation then slightly reversed from its previous position and wished us to bring forward the Jersey Appointments Commission provisions discretely and in advance of the others.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

That has been delayed as well.

Director, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

We have worked on the Jersey Appointments Commission provisions. Those provisions achieved full drafting and were subject to public consultation. Then because we had lots of interesting feedback from the public consultation the States Employment Board felt that this is something that the next S.E.B. (States Employment Board) should pick up and give more time to.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

In the meantime what I believe needs to be a fundamental overhaul of that piece of legislation and clarity around roles and functions, how do you provide clarity around the roles and functions, as the Chief Executive Officer has a number of roles just within one person? How do you assure that accountability framework and the clarity around the roles going forward without the statutory backup?

The Chief Minister:

I think you have got 2 sides and I think it is also worth just remembering what the law that is presently in place was trying to address, which I seem to remember it being the comments, I think, from the first C. and A.G. about what he called the double fracture. The double fracture was, essentially, that the C.E.O. did not have any ability to direct; let us call them the chief officers or director generals, chief officers of the day. The Council of Ministers did not have the ability to direct Ministers and, essentially, the chief officers were responsible to individual Ministers. You had kind of a very, I will say, dense, multiple layers of silos going on in there. P.1 and the law changes that came through were an attempt to try and resolve that problem, so to an extent that has been addressed. But obviously the points you are making are that there is some finessing, shall we say, that needs to take place.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

That finessing, Chief Minister, was a commitment given on the agreement of P.1 that certain legislative changes would follow through.

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Therefore, the helpful description of the director general there has indicated that the directions from yourself and your colleagues have shifted over the period of time. The question, ultimately, is if it was that important that it was included in P.1 as a commitment to make those changes so that it was a proper disciplinary process, why did you not see fit to direct that that work was done at the outset?

The Chief Minister:

I think I may need to make the point that the commitment was given by a previous Council of Ministers, is my understanding, because that was when P.1 was debated. Obviously the prioritisation ...

Director, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

Also, just to be clear, our advice to Ministers was that it would not be wise to just try and pick off one very small, isolated element of the Employees Law in relation to, say, disciplinary processes. The more that we looked at it the more interrelated it is, as the Senator outlined earlier, and, therefore, the more you got to take a holistic view. Our advice to Ministers was very clear, which was not to take a small, isolated part and try and focus on that answer.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Okay. Given that advice, perhaps we ought to move on to the rest of Senator Vallois' questions, which are about how the Chief Minister, therefore, does hold its Chief Executive to account.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

Yes. We know with the former Chief Executive you did performance appraisals and they were quite public performance appraisals.

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

We now have a new Chief Executive and we welcome her and wish her a lot of luck. It is a huge organisation but I am sure you are used to dealing with some of the challenges that we face. But in terms of how the accountability framework works with the Chief Executive for the Chief Minister, how that performance appraisal will work going forward and whether it will be the same or whether it will be different.

The Chief Minister:

The performance appraisal proposals are in my inbox at the moment. We will be working through that obviously before things change. Obviously there is an existing disciplinary process if we need it, which I hope we will not.

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes. If I can add to that just obviously in terms of - and this will be assurance for you and the public as well - the clarity around my role I feel it is quite clear what my role is and also in terms of the principal accountable officer, how that then relates to the D.G.s (director generals) through their letters as accountable officers for the very discrete pieces of work that they do. I do have a set of objectives that is with the Chief Minister and that takes us up to the election point and then a more

medium-term set of objectives that clearly will have to be then agreed with the subsequent Chief Minister.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

You have been in your role for 6 weeks at least.

Chief Executive Officer:

About 10, yes.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Ten weeks.

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

The objectives have not been set yet, could you explain to us why, Chief Minister, it is still sitting in your inbox? Would one not set those objectives at the very outset?

The Chief Minister:

I think part of it is we are in the last phases of this particular Council of Ministers and, therefore, it is going to work its way through. Bearing in mind we have quite a lot of other items on the agenda and we just ...

Senator T.A. Vallois:

You were so keen to see a change of Chief Executive ...

The Chief Minister:

... had a war break out in Ukraine, which has diverted some attention recently.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

But it is just interesting to understand your priorities, Chief Minister, because you were very keen not to keep the interim for a longer period of time, which is an option made available to you. You wanted to choose the successor that would work with the future Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

But you do not consider it important for you then to set the objectives. Are you just going to let the next Chief Minister do that?

The Chief Minister:

Two things, the previous interim C.E.O. did not apply for the job, let us just be clear ...

Deputy K.L. Moore:

No, we have been through all of that, we do not need to go back over that but ...

The Chief Minister:

Let us be just clear there ...

Deputy K.L. Moore:

No, no, sorry, you are wasting time and we are running out of it. I will let Senator Vallois go back to her next question.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

Just finally from me really is about one of the big issues that this Assembly probably had to tackle was the Care Inquiry report. We have recently seen the resignation of our director of ... I am not going to get the title right, it used to be Children's Services, Safeguarding Children's Services, only been in a limited amount of time and there were criticisms around turnover of social workers and leadership in terms of Children's Services for the Island from that Care Inquiry. We have talked about issues of having interims. What assurance can be given not just to the public at large but those children who are within our care that there will be a smooth process handover and we can improve upon where we are at the moment because there is clearly some issues with trying to get things done?

The Chief Minister:

I think there is 2 phases, one is the level of care is obviously going to remain unchanged and/or continue to improve. But I agree with you entirely about stability in that part of the organisation is incredibly important. I saw the very recent interview which you identify as a very good piece of work that had been done but also identifying, as we know has always been the case during this entire period, that a lot more needs to continue to be done to get to where it should be. We always knew this was going to be a journey and this was the start of it. But, Mark, do you want to talk about the process?

Group Director, People and Corporate Services:

No, Suzanne.

Chief Executive Officer:

I do think that since I have come into the role as Chief Executive my objectives are clear and there has been an ongoing discussion on those with the Chief Minister and the Council of Ministers from the very beginning. But I do think that Children's Services does need a lot of focus and will need a lot of support over the next period of time to make sure that we can provide the right services for Islanders. It is difficult to get some of the disciplines on Island that we need to provide. That is something that Mark and I are looking at, how we streamline recruitment in some of those areas. Obviously we will have to get agreement from S.E.B. as to how we might do that but that we can onboard some of those disciplines that we need much more quickly than, potentially, has been done in the past.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

There is a great deal of concern that there may be overreliance on looking at things like charities or private businesses, we see it with healthcare. It has happened in England and Wales where we have seen more reliance on charities or private institutions providing what is predominantly a public service, I would argue, role in terms of looking after our most vulnerable children. Is there an intention or a plan to go towards that or will we fundamentally overhaul how we are now doing things so it would free up the ability to deliver for these children?

Chief Executive Officer:

I do think we need to look at the model for provision. I think that is something that needs to be presented to the next administration as to what model is right for the Island and what should be provided to commission services and what should be provided by the Government; that will be a choice clearly for the next Government. But I think it is time to look at that.

The Chief Minister:

Can I just point out the dilemma you have just identified? Because particularly if at the extreme end we go down 100 per cent Government-provided services, Senator Pallett, or whoever is here rather, will be asking us why we have got more individuals, employees under this ...

Senator T.A. Vallois:

But I think the reason why it concerns me more with regards to Children's Services is because they are extremely vulnerable children but when you brought the issue of getting these disciplines in your own public sector, what is the ability of the private sector to make sure they have got the right disciplines and the right qualifications?

The Chief Minister:

I am not disagreeing with the issue you are raising, I am just making the point that this is the dilemma we are going to be facing.

Chief Executive Officer:

I think it depends on which services, which aspect of all of their services. Because of course all the early year services that are provided by some of the charities across the Island are very good services as well.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

Yes, yes, no, I understand that, yes.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Okay, thank you. Just before we move on to people and culture, you mentioned briefly there, Chief Executive, that you feel that your objectives are clear. If they are, would it be possible for us to receive a copy of your objectives, please?

The Chief Minister:

In due course I am sure, yes.

Chief Executive Officer:

I am happy to do that, yes.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

In due course, is that like the Competent Authorities' minutes, which we still do not have an electronic copy of?

The Chief Minister:

I think you are up to October now.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Sorry?

The Chief Minister:

I think you are up to the end of October now.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

No, while you mention it I think, as you are aware, the Assembly agreed with a proposition on 3rd November that we should receive the Competent Authorities' minutes. I do not believe any member of this panel has it yet had an opportunity to look at them, or those that we have received, because they were given to us in hard copy only with a diktat that we could only view them in a certain way, which is of course not really workable, particularly in ...

The Chief Minister:

You have received my letter of 17th March, which I do not think you have published yet but it did identify the issues of (a) policy controversies we have had and (b) the issues of breaches in confidentiality that have taken place at various times. Therefore, which is in keeping with the proposition of the States and also could logically ...

Deputy K.L. Moore:

It is extremely disappointing that you would seek to raise that, which is an officer-level issue, in this forum. I think you should withdraw those comments, Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister:

As a matter of fact there had been breaches of confidentiality.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Sorry, no, look, we are not going to talk to this.

The Chief Minister:

It is a matter of fact that there have been breaches of confidentiality ...

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Could you please stop? Stop.

The Chief Minister:

... from the non-executive side.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Sorry, I am very sorry but there is a reason why that has not been published and I think you are out of line there. We will move on.

The Chief Minister:

I am sorry, I thought we were all into transparency.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

But I think it is important that we ... I think we will just move on, shall we? The People and Culture Review, the third recommendation of our report states that the States Employment Board, who accepted it in part, suggested: "The employment of States of Jersey Employees Law should be amended so that the annual States Employment Board report, currently required by law, should be released at the same time as the annual report and accounts", which of course we received, I think, last week. The board, however, does not believe that a legislative change was necessary. Could you explain your reason, please? I think that is for you, as the Chair of the board.

[11:45]

The Chief Minister:

Do you mind, sorry, just repeating the question? Apologies.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

It is just asking you to explain the rationale for not believing that there needs to be a legislative change for the annual States Employment Board report to be released alongside the annual report and accounts.

The Chief Minister:

In essence, it is due to be released imminently, whether that is needed to be done by a statute or not is really another matter.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

The statutes say the end of March every year, so we have gone over that again, have we?

Group Director, People and Corporate Services:

We have. What we have done this year is aligned it to the annual reports and accounts, so that the figures and tables are all audited at the same time, rather than it being done at different times. The annual report and accounts was signed off last week and released last week. We are just making amendments to the tables to make sure that it is consistent. It has been signed off by the S.E.B. and it will be released by ministerial decision within the next week.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Thank you. Okay. Do you consider it to be acceptable to miss such deadlines that are bound in legislation?

The Chief Minister:

At the end of the day we do try our best but sometimes there are occasionally delays on these things. We prefer not to, we do apologise for missing that deadline but it will be out, as we have said, in early ...

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Thank you. Vice-Chair.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

We move on to P.75, the Technology Accelerator Fund. Chief Minister, noting previous attempts to help nurture the Island's economy such as the Innovation Fund and the delayed Fiscal Stimulus Fund programmes, how has the Council of Ministers satisfied itself that past mistakes will not be repeated through the Technology Accelerator Fund?

The Chief Minister:

I think I would like to say, firstly, that I can understand but I do not particularly agree with the similarities between the Technology Fund and the Innovation Fund. I believe also that the lessons that were learned out of the Innovation Fund have been fully adopted into the terms of reference, et cetera, that are before the Assembly for the Technology Fund. The fundamental, I think for me at the end of the day, is obviously it came as a result of the sale of the Internet of Things division from J.T. (Jersey Telecom). Obviously a sum of money was received by Government, as opposed to being retained within J.T. to invest in their networks, et cetera. My view was that as a one-off sum it was very right that that should go into supporting the digital economy. As I explained in the Assembly end of last year, we have got globally the fastest broadband connectivity, as I said, in the world. We have done a number of things as we have seen through COVID, we have moved fast working with Microsoft, working with Mastercard and they are things that we should be very proud of. In essence, we have got a 6-year head start on any other jurisdiction. If we want to diversify the economy properly and - bear in mind that 6 years I was informed was at the end of last year and we are now getting close to being not quite in the middle of the year but time will move on very swiftly - we need, in my view, to demonstrate that we are serious about putting some resource into that diversification of building on the really good foundations that we have got and that is the purpose of the fund. I think the terms of reference do cater, I hope, for the requirements, both of the lessons learned from the past but also to give the flexibility and certainty for the industry going forward.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you. Why in your view, Chief Minister, should public finances be used to fund private endeavours?

The Chief Minister:

As I think I have just outlined, we have had a 6-year start and I suspect that has been compressed in terms of speeds. I think the number 2 is about 30 per cent slower than us, certainly last year. I think the U.K. is presently at number 43 relative to us. That U.S.P. (Unique Selling Proposition), if you like, is going to diminish and it will diminish fast. If we want to have something that we can build on that gives actual job opportunities to people who are not necessarily attracted by finance but can go into this different area of skills, which is well remunerated, is of benefit to the Island and will assist in things like productivity and population, all the things we have been covering today, then I think we need to get some money into that swiftly.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

What are the objectives of the fund? What will be considered a success?

The Chief Minister:

I think you are right and that is one of the designs. If we can give the go ahead on it that enables them to design the details around that and I will hand over to Tom and Suzanne on that. But at that point, yes, I would expect metrics and things to come out of that as part of that process. But it will be, ultimately, where we are 5 years from now, in my view. Have we made significant improvement in our offer, if you like?

Director, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

I think to pick up both of those questions, on the first question I think that the governance that we are proposing really does learn the lessons from the old Innovation Fund and it is fundamentally different. It has that clarity around accountability through accountable officer, through clearly accountable Minister, which was one of the challenges and the learnings from before. Of course now it has Digital Jersey as an elite partner as well. I think that the governance learns many of the lessons from the previous fund and it is fundamentally different in this fund. I think also, to pick up your second question, one of the other big differences is that the fund is designed to support existing public policy objectives. This is not a venture capital endeavour which is designed to produce a return on investment. This is designed to accelerate progress with existing public policy objectives, as set by the Assembly and the Government and that will be the mark of its success.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

Can I just quickly follow up? When investing or putting money into things like the Technology Accelerator Fund or if it is an Innovation Fund, start-up businesses concept, research and design, those types of things, there is always a risk that is added to that. Is there a recognition ... because I think our public finances manual and our Public Finances Law kind of sits on more of a risk-averse site? In terms of their willingness to take risks from an accounting officer point of view to ensure success of the Accelerator Fund, is that recognised and how is it recognised?

Director, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

Yes. In fact the documents submitted to the Assembly outline that there are both high-level benefits but there are also associated high-level risks and so that is something which is a feature of, as you have outlined, these type of accelerator funds. Yes, that is very explicitly recognised.

The Chief Minister:

Do you want to add anything, Suzanne?

Chief Executive Officer:

I think just to add, other jurisdictions do have similar funds and obviously this is about being more competitive in the economy here on the Island. Moving towards ... we are having a fourth industrial revolution basically with artificial intelligence and machine-learning, et cetera, this is about getting this technology distributed across our industry. It is about creating better productivity. You are asking about what success would look like, it is also about creating real I.P. (intellectual property) here on the Island as well and solving some of the problems that the Island has through the tech community and some of the industries we already have here. It feels quite ethereal to talk about an equal system but that is how technology works. Big companies, small companies coming together to solve society's problems or environmental problems or problems in the economy and these funds help the process in doing that. While they are still in their infancy in other areas, they certainly very much exist.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you. Finally from me, Chief Minister, you have not responded to our panel's letter of 6th April. Since that time the Economic and International Affairs Panel has also expressed its support for the proposition to be withdrawn, given the late lodging of P.75 in this term of office. Will you be withdrawing the proposition?

The Chief Minister:

No.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Would you like to explain why, given that the grounds for the request is that adequate scrutiny needs to be made available?

The Chief Minister:

Obviously I understand fully the position, obviously disappointing, it was lodged on time obviously. It is accepting that we have a large ...

Deputy K.L. Moore:

But without adequate time for scrutiny, which is part of the Government process that you are well aware of, Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister:

As I said, it has been lodged on time and it is not, in terms of the proposition, that big a proposition in terms of documentation. However, my key concern ...

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Sorry, earlier you said that £2 million is a lot of money, Chief Minister, so this is about £20 million.

The Chief Minister:

But it is about the process, around that money, I am assuming. But the fundamental thing for me - and that would be a matter for the Assembly at the end of the day - is the message that we send to the industry because it has been put out there. Obviously everybody was aware this was going to be coming at the end of the last year and if we delay the reality will be it probably will not come back to the Assembly for some time early next year and that is my take, it will be a significant delay that will come through.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

Can I just ask then, it was in the Government Plan, so why did it take until March to lodge it?

The Chief Minister:

I think it needed approval and then it was January and February to get the terms of reference together and do the consultation in the relevant parts of the industry?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

But why was there no engagement with Scrutiny at an earlier stage in that event because when you pitched as a candidate for the role that you have held for the last 4 years you declared that you were going to run an inclusive Government and, therefore, one would expect that you would respect the role of Scrutiny, having served in it yourself and, therefore, allocate time, as would be appropriate for the Government, towards important pieces of legislation and propositions that are coming?

The Chief Minister:

The short answer on that is we had understood that there had been at the briefing but as it turned out that it did not take place in the time I had anticipated. I am guessing that was due to the various pressures of people getting it together. I do not know if that was the output of the length of the consultation in terms of the feedback from the industry before they had something to bring to you. I do not know, Tom can elaborate a bit. But I had hoped that there would have been some engagement.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

I think 4 years into the role and having portrayed or put oneself forward for running an inclusive Government, therefore, respecting the role of Scrutiny and its importance in the development of policy, perhaps you might explain why we have still 4 years in seen a reluctance to engage properly with Scrutiny and to provide time in the tabling of your policy developments?

The Chief Minister:

Tom, do you want to deal with the practicalities and then I will come back to it?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

I think it is more of a political question to you, as we are running short of time.

The Chief Minister:

The political will is there, it has been and we have engaged generally fairly constructively with many panels. I had requested that a conversation was had with the head of the Economic Scrutiny Panel, the Deputy of St. Mary, and, unfortunately, it did not appear to have taken place and obviously it is a matter for the economy ...

Deputy K.L. Moore:

But I think, as you were made aware, there were 2 Scrutiny Panels involved in that piece of policy, so it would have been normal practice to treat them equally, would it not?

The Chief Minister:

I only became aware of that later on in the event but I understood it was a matter for the economy side. Tom, I presume it was ...

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Okay. I think given that it is now approaching 12.00 p.m. and we would like to carry on with a few more questions if that is okay, shall we move to Senator Vallois?

Senator T.A. Vallois:

Hopefully, just yes or no answers.

The Chief Minister:

No, I love these.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

Be Heard survey, is there one being carried out this year?

Group Director, People and Corporate Services:

At the back end of last year we did pulse surveys in a number of areas and we are looking at how we are going to do it again this year in other departments.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

Will it be the same company?

Group Director, People and Corporate Services:

It will be the same company.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

Similar questions.

Group Director, People and Corporate Services:

Yes. Sorry, I was going to say, one of the logistical things we had last time was doing it all in one go, which meant that we did ...

Chief Executive Officer:

That is why I wanted to come in because I did not want to give the impression that it may be all done in one go. I think what we want to do is to look at the various outcomes from that survey and going a bit deeper this time round on specific themes at specific times during the year.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

Okay, I do not want to prolong it because I know we are almost at the end. But Team Jersey have now left, I believe, they were leaving end of March. What is the next step to the culture in the public sector?

Chief Executive Officer:

Do you want me to take that? Yes, okay. Team Jersey, as the consultants, have left but the programme has been handed over to Mark and his team - more work to do, yes - and also all of the

D.G.s have their people and culture plans, as Mark explained. They have to embed those throughout their departments; that is a really important exercise. We also are continuing with all of the leadership development programmes as well across the organisation led through learning and development in Mark's teams as well; that is really important.

[12:00]

In terms of well-being plans, diversity plans, et cetera, those are all now being driven out and you, hopefully, have seen some of those being lodged. The people strategy really sits at the top of all of this, so the implementation of the people strategy is being led really through E.L.T. and being supported through Mark's team as well. A real focus on learning and development, workforce planning and well-being of our staff.

Senator T.A. Vallois:

Brilliant, thank you very much.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Thank you, Senator.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

The Chief Statistician is independent but could you tell us, we are now not in quarter 1 any more, what has happened to the living cost and household income survey for 2019 and 2020?

The Chief Minister:

We are in the hands again of the Statistics Department, with the Chief Statistician. I believe they are using their best endeavours to get the data out of what they have managed to recover from the early survey.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Have we got a publication date or ...

The Chief Minister:

I do not yet have a publication date. I think I am just directing my responses to the questions from Deputy Southern and that was also expressing my views on the matter as well.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay. In terms of departmental business plans, performance reports and presenting improved financial information, has anything been done to improve reporting on departmental business plans?

Chief Executive Officer:

From a financial perspective, sorry, or from a ...

Senator S.W. Pallett:

In terms of expenditure within Chief Operating Office, particularly in modernisation and digital, it was a suggestion that you rejected but you did say you were going to improve reporting on departmental business plans and performance reports. Have you taken any action on that?

Chief Executive Officer:

I think there has been, certainly in terms of the performance reports. I think that they are now reported on a quarterly basis and also our part of the annual report and accounts as well. We are adding in performance indicators to make that and refining those performance indicators on an ongoing basis because of course this is a journey and there is a real balance between providing the right level of those performance indicators to the public so that they understand how well the Government is performing and not overwhelming the public with too much information either, so there is real balance to that.

Group Director, Finance Business Partnering and Analytics:

On the financial reporting, so there is monthly financial reporting into the Executive Leadership Team. We have timelines that are established within that reporting framework and we comply with the C. & A.G's proposal in terms of the timeline. There is a very quick turnaround at the end of each calendar month to ensure that reporting is going into E.L.T. and that supports the decision-making of the Executive Leadership Team.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

The panel has made recommendations around the outcome based accountability of digital and I.T., how is that being improved? Is it being improved to ensure that the money we are spending is being spent wisely and targets are being met?

Chief Executive Officer:

In terms of the I.T.S. (Information Technology Systems) programme you are referring to in particular or ...

Senator S.W. Pallett:

We are spending an awful lot of money, £17 million and more ...

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes, £63 million, I think.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

... in terms of making sure that money and how it is spent is outcome-based. Can you explain to me how you are going to present that to us and ensure that is the case?

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes, of course the I.T.S. programme is about having the right type of technology in the organisation so that we can run services as effectively as possible. There had been an underinvestment in technology for a number of years until this was brought in. It will focus on financial systems, it will focus on procurement systems and it will focus on asset management and also our people as well. It will do everything that, potentially, in terms of looking at digitisation of services we still need to look at how we do that better going forward. There is a Government process in place, there are boards set up to oversee the implementation of I.T.S. As you, I think, are aware, it is released in 4 phases. At this point in time I have had assurance that it will in all 4 phases come in within the budget that has been set for it.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

I think what we want to see is the tangible benefits for the public in Government and see that reported and see how that is accountable. That is what I am getting at, is how are you going to improve that? Because I think for all the money we are spending I can understand the improvements internally within Government but the public have not seen much of that. When are they going to see a difference?

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes, and I think that that is what I was saying about the I.T.S. programme itself. It is about bringing in better financial reporting, better procurement processes, better staff systems as well in terms of where our resourcing with equipment needs are.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Just move the tax office.

Chief Executive Officer:

Of course, of course but that, in itself, will not do everything. It was because there was an underinvestment in our technology and we have had to spend money to bring that up to speed and go to cloud computing, et cetera. That is hard, I understand that that is hard for the public to understand but it does make us ...

Senator S.W. Pallett:

It is hard for us to understand as well.

Chief Executive Officer:

... more effective as an organisation to have those systems in place and it working.

The Chief Minister:

What I will just add and we have said it a number of times, we have said it to States Members back in 2019, I think it was, and Suzanne has just referred to it, the significant underinvestment in the cyber systems for a long time is what we are remedying. Unfortunately, it is a negative that the public are going to see because the point is to maintain services. If the I.T. systems collapse then that is where they will see it because a whole range of things will not happen, potentially at the extreme end payments not being made out of Government on time. But what you are trying to do is put something in that is a lot more robust and is of modern day industry standard.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

But it is the accountability for that spending and making sure that both the public and Government itself understands what those benefits are and how it ...

The Chief Minister:

The benefit is making sure that Government can continue to operate, let us put it that bluntly.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay. I will pass over to the Chair.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Thank you.

Group Director, Finance Business Partnering and Analytics:

I was just going to add very quickly, if I might.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Briefly.

Group Director, Finance Business Partnering and Analytics:

That we have talked about a lot of areas of modernisation and one of the areas, particularly in relation to your question, Senator, was we have a corporate portfolio management office and they have recently published frameworks within the organisation which all projects need to comply with.

That is ensuring that we have got robust governance around all of our major programmes and projects. It also speaks to your question about reporting and also how we monitor benefit realisation from the projects and the investment that goes into those projects. It is an evolution that we are going through but there are improvements around that reporting and around accountability for the delivery of those projects.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Can I just ask one very quick question? Can you explain to me the rationale about moving all of the health I.T. staff into the Chief Operating Office? It is a very specialised area, health, and I just wondered the rationale behind that.

Group Director, People and Corporate Services:

Under the operating model for M. and D. (Modernisation and Digital) we have a corporate estate infrastructure and it touches the health infrastructure and we have the same with the police and education, they were separated out. In order to make sure that the infrastructure talks to each other, it meets the standards and does not duplicate or cause problems, it is necessary to have it as a central team. It does not mean that health lose control over their specifications or their requirements. There is also very technical aspects within health and they then act as a client around what their needs are. But most of what that team will be doing is around the infrastructure of the organisation and we cannot have one part of the organisation doing something completely different.

The Chief Minister:

Yes, because this has come up on a number of occasions as well, from memory I think every time they lift something - it is like lifting a stone and you find another can or worms underneath it - I think they have found, is it, 800 different programmes applications across the service? What you try and do is bring a standardisation across, yes, making sure those interfaces work so the whole thing is more co-ordinated and, therefore, then you can and get the benefits. If you do not and if you continue to have silo here, silo here and silo here because they are all special cases, then you will not get the benefits of the investment we are putting in; that has been the problem all the way through. But that takes time to get in place and the foundations we have started with, frankly, have been shot.

Group Director, People and Corporate Services:

Senator, if we had not done that, the investment that you have been talking about in terms of cyber, the Microsoft platforms et cetera, there will be vulnerabilities within the organisation.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

I was going to go into more detail but we have not ...

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Yes, thank you very much. Just very briefly, there is one question that we really want to ask, it is a technical point and then a final question. The question that is vaguely technical is about the office modernisation project and we would just like to have this cleared up because it is important. Obviously demolition of Cyril Le Marquand House is underway, could you confirm, Chief Minister, that the demolition costs are being paid for by the contractor of the project and not by the Government?

The Chief Minister:

As far as I am aware it is all one contract and it is a turnkey price at the end of the day. Looking to my left I am getting vast nods, so, yes.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Yes, that is reassuring, thank you. Finally, the *Better Life Index* has just been published. Under the Public Finances (Jersey) Law sustainable well-being is one of the duties of decision-making and, sadly, the *Better Life Index* - I believe also this was a feature in your common strategic priorities at the beginning of your term in Government to improve well-being of Islanders - shows that Jersey is 11th out of 13 regions in the British Isles and we have dropped 26 places in the *Better Life Index*, compared to where we were in 2019. What is your view of your performance based on the recently published *Better Life Index*?

The Chief Minister:

I think, number 1, you have got to understand the detail before going to the headline figure and that is the table I am looking at, for example, we rate zero on civic engagement because apparently they base it purely on voter turnout and voter participation which we are low on. But, frankly, I would have said civic engagement, if you rated things like the community and the Honorary and all that sort of side of things that we would rate very well. There are areas that we do well and we are well above the average, including education and skills, environmental quality, health status, personal safety, just picking a few at random, so ...

Deputy K.L. Moore:

But overall, Chief Minister, we have dropped 26 places and we sit at 11 out of 13.

The Chief Minister:

What it does not tell us, unfortunately, which we will have to go back and look at, is where we were. Because what it does it ranks us according to everybody else in the world, it does not want to look at where we were previously and whether we have improved.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Everywhere else in the world during the last 4 years significant improvements in social well-being and sustainable well-being have been made, yet here where you made a commitment at the outset of your Government to improve well-being there has been a significant decline.

The Chief Minister:

I think the question is ... we need to understand why we are rated for zero at civic engagement because, frankly, I think the methodology there we would need to understand.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

As we approach the elections, hopefully the public will be able to turn that curve and they will see that there is a value in going out to vote.

The Chief Minister:

If we are lucky.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Yes. But we could be here all afternoon if we followed that rabbit hole. But it is clear that you do not wish to address any of the other issues that are related to sustainable well-being and you choose just to focus on one very narrow part of the index.

The Chief Minister:

No, as I have said, I have identified there are some areas where we perform well. I have literally seen this sometime this morning, so before I comment on it more in greater detail I will obviously seek to understand the full impact, rather than just focusing on a particular number. But I make the point that we are rated zero for civic engagement, which seems to me slightly odd.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Could I ask when the last time the Sustainable Well-Being Ministerial Group met?

The Chief Minister:

The short answer to that is I could not tell you that at this stage because, as I said, we have obviously been focusing on, firstly, the pandemic and, secondly, everyone coming out of recovery and then, more importantly, over the last few weeks with what is happening to our easterly neighbours.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Right, we ...

Director, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

I was just going to say that Senator Vallois may be pleased, as a former Minister for Education, to note that we seem to have gone up 3 places in education and skills.

The Chief Minister:

Good. Obviously by the way the Health and Social Recovery P.O.G. (Political Oversight Group) does meet on a regular basis.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Sorry, it is hard to understand what you are saying sometimes.

The Chief Minister:

I said the Health and Social Recovery P.O.G. does meet on a regular basis.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

That is not the Sustainable Well-Being Group though, is it?

The Chief Minister:

But it does impact on improving well-being from this, particularly post-COVID.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

I am sure it does.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Right, okay. We did not really want to get involved in table tennis at this point in the day.

The Chief Minister:

Good.

[12:15]

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Chief Minister, as it is your final opportunity as Chief Minister to address the Corporate Services Panel, we thought perhaps you might like to offer some advice to the next Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister:

Yes, get a very good crystal ball. No, what I will say is that although it has been difficult in the last 4 years, it has been an absolute privilege. Some people look at me completely as if I am mad

because of having come through the pandemic, which has been a massive focus of work. But we have also got to remember it has been an absolute privilege to work with the teams that I have worked with and led, and I generally do feel that we are going to put the Island into probably one of the best possible places we could have ended up, whether it is in terms of saving lives or whether it is also making sure there is something left in terms of the economy to move forward with. I think the accounts that have come out very recently demonstrate that the Island is in a very position going forward. It has challenges but, equally, we have achieved a lot of changes for the longer term, which, ultimately, will give benefit to Islanders and that is separate to COVID. On that basis it has been an absolute privilege and it has been very interesting.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Your advice is for a future Chief Minister or somebody ...

The Chief Minister:

I think for me it is about making sure you work with people, you try not to deal on personalities and you keep your focus on what is, ultimately, what we are all here for, which is what is the benefit for the Islanders and sometimes discount those who shout loudest or closest.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

With that we close the hearing and thank you all for your time.

The Chief Minister:

Thank you very much.

[12:16]