



Public Accounts Committee
Quarterly Hearing
Witness: Interim Chief Executive

Monday, 31st January 2022

Panel:

Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier (Chair)
Connétable K. Shenton-Stone of St. Martin (Vice-Chair)
Connétable J.E. Le Maistre of Grouville
Connétable A. Jehan of St. John
Mr. A. Lane
Mr. G. Phipps
Dr. H. Miles
Mr. P. van Bodegom

Ms. L. Pamment - Comptroller and Auditor General

Witnesses:

Mr. P. Martin, Interim Chief Executive
Mr. J. Quinn, Chief Operating Officer
Mr. T. Daniels, Director, Jersey Property Holdings
Ms. C. Madden, Chief of Staff
Mr. A. Hacquoil, Group Director, Strategic Finance
Mr. T. Walker, Director General

[15:01]

Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier (Chair):

Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the public hearing with the interim chief executive. Mr. Martin, thank you for coming on your last day in this office. I appreciate that you found time. It is

very important and the committee is looking forward to hearing your views on the Government's performance management, COVID-19, integrated technology solutions, estate management and general views from your experience in Jersey. I will apologise to director generals and officers in advance that you might not have a lot of questions today but it is appreciated that you joined and we will follow up questions with yourself after the hearing. But before we start with the questions, we will introduce ourselves. Deputy Inna Gardiner, chair of the Public Accounts Committee.

Connétable K. Shenton-Stone of St. Martin (Vice-Chair):

Karen Shenton-Stone, Constable of St. Martin and vice chair of the Public Accounts Committee.

Connétable J.E. Le Maistre of Grouville:

John Le Maistre, Constable of Grouville, member of the Committee.

Mr. G. Phipps:

Graham Phipps, independent member of P.A.C. (Public Accounts Committee).

Mr. A. Lane:

Adrian Lane, independent member.

Dr. H. Miles:

Dr Helen Miles, independent member.

Comptroller and Auditor General:

Lynn Pamment, Comptroller and Auditor General.

Connétable A. Jehan of St. John:

Andy Jehan, Constable of St. John, member of the panel.

Mr. P. van Bodegom:

Paul van Bodegom, independent member of the panel.

Interim Chief Executive:

Paul Martin, interim chief executive.

Group Director, Strategic Finance:

Andy Hacquoil, group director, Strategic Finance.

Director General:

Tom Walker, director general.

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

Tim Daniels, director, Jersey Property Holdings.

Chief Operating Officer:

John Quinn, chief operating officer.

Chief of Staff:

Catherine Madden, chief of staff.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Thank you. We will start with general questions. You have been the interim chief executive in Jersey for 11 months. Can you give us your general thoughts on your time in Jersey and working for the Government? What objectives did you set for yourself when you arrived in Jersey?

Interim Chief Executive:

Thank you. The reason that I came to Jersey was because it offers a unique opportunity to work within a Government and a jurisdiction that handles all governmental services. That is to say of a nation state, of a regional authority and of a local government relative to other places, all within one Island, with an outstanding sense of community identity and a spectacular natural environment. I thought that that would make for a unique career experience, and it certainly lived up to that. It has been an absolutely unmissable year from my point of view, both personally and professionally, and I am very grateful to the States of Jersey for the opportunity to work here. I think, and no doubt the committee will explore this during the course of this hearing, the Government and public services have gone through an enormous period of change, particularly prior to my arrival in the period since 2018 and then, of course, unexpectedly overlaid on top of that was the pandemic and all of the numerous and unpredictable challenges of the pandemic. I hope that what I have done is to bring a measure of orderly leadership and management within that context so that the services and the staff can perform their best, can give it their best, which I think is one of the most important things a chief executive can do. I have been extremely fortunate in that regard because I have been working with people of a very high capability, some of which are with me this afternoon, who are both very experienced in working here and have a deep professionalism to serving the Island. So that has been a great benefit as well. I think by way of an opening observation, I would say Jersey is a highly accountable place to work and I think accountability is an essential component of a democratic system. I do not think I have worked anywhere that is as accountable as Jersey. I think there are great benefits to that, which I have also enjoyed during the course of the year. You asked, Chair, about objectives. I am not sure whether you want me to pause before I get on to those or do you

want me to get straight into the objectives now? Straight to the objectives. So, I am a big believer in performance management, which of course this committee is now looking at in some detail, and you are right in what you suggested that the first thing that I did when I came over a year ago was develop draft objectives and discuss them with the Chief Minister to make sure I was on the right lines and that the priorities and targets that I received were in line with his thinking. I could read them out but I think that might be a little bit tedious to do that. They come under 5 broad headings, so if I can just share with the committee the 5 broad headings and then if you want to explore what that means in practice we can do that in greater detail. The first of them is about understanding political imperatives and delivering them. That is to say those objectives that are most important to the Council of Ministers, and particularly the Chief Minister. Just to give you a little illustration as to examples of what that might mean in practice. That is around things like the development of the case to move to a single office headquarters, that would be an example of that. Or addressing COVID and the pandemic, that would be another example, developing our work on climate change would be another, the development of the hospital programme would be another. These are examples of Council of Ministers' priorities as articulated in the Government Plan that the chief executive is responsible for overseeing the implementation of. The second broad heading is about value for money, efficiency and performance management. So to give a bit more detail of that. What that looks like is our rebalancing programme as it is described and ensuring that that is implemented and also that we prepare for, in my case, 2022 and a comprehensive range of efficiency measures that enable us to meet the Government Plan targets. The third broad area is about ways of working. This is really important for a chief executive in a governmental jurisdiction about developing trust and confidence and especially internal teamwork within the civil service and capacity within the civil service. So here in my time the thing I have concentrated on most is the development of the skill base within the civil service. Quite a lot of people have been brought in from outside the civil service in the period up to my arrival. That has happened much less over the last year for various reasons and I have wanted to place an emphasis on the progression of the people that we have and internal appointments have been made to, I think, 4 director general posts while I have been here. The fourth broad heading is around openness and transparency, which I think deserves a heading of its own. It is an expectation now of those of us in senior roles in the Government that we are absolutely as open and transparent as we can be. In practice what that means is that it might be evidenced and measured by relationships with committees like this and developing the confidence on your part that we are not hiding things, that we are being transparent, that we are acknowledging where things are not working as well as they should be. Equally with States Members in Scrutiny committees and also in the way in which we work more widely with the public and respond to freedom of information requests, that kind of thing. So that is the fourth area and then the fifth and final broad area of my objectives is about strategic planning and therefore preparing for the future. What that looks like in practice is the oversight of the Government Plan for this period, for 2022, which has been amended by the States Assembly and subsequently adopted and published, but also importantly it means the

preparation for what 2022 has in store for us, especially the preparation for the election in June and scenarios around what might follow that in what we might envisage will be an extremely busy period in the summer of 2022. These are the 5 broad areas if you want to explore any more in practice. Thank you.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Your role covers the chief executive, principal accountable officer, head of the public service and various advisory roles. In what ways do you suggest the role of chief executive could be improved?

Interim Chief Executive:

Yes, of course you are right in what you have said, that there are various dimensions to the chief executive's role; all of the ones you describe I think are valid and important. Are you inviting me to explore one that might need a bit more work or needs more effort? Just to help me with that a little bit, are you looking for one which maybe needs further work?

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Are there any suggested changes to be made to the defined roles and responsibilities of the chief executive?

Interim Chief Executive:

I understand. I think probably 2 things come to mind. One is in relation to arm's length bodies, which in fact this committee has been interested in for a while, and the C. and A.G. (Comptroller and Auditor General) also, where I think that we need to develop the sophistication of our approach. I will not say too much about that because the C. and A.G. has reported on it very comprehensively. I think ideally the chief executive would have a greater capacity to help him or her with working with arm's length organisations and States-owned entities to ensure that we were getting, between us, absolutely the best value for money and the greatest impact. I think that is an important area and it is something that I have paid personal attention to during the course of the year. The second, I think, relates to the paid service role and the States Employment Board. The delegations to the chief executive in relation to the staff are relatively shallow, that is to say that some really quite minor issues need to be taken to the States Employment Board for their decisions, and I think that that is worth reviewing, to look at whether there might be a more streamlined, effective way of ensuring that the States Employment Board consider the most significant and strategic issues and not necessarily the smaller detailed employment issues which perhaps better belong to the chief executive or to the director generals.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Would it be possible to give one example of each these 2 areas so the committee can understand more what you mean by arm's length organisations? Something specific so we can ...

[15:15]

Interim Chief Executive:

Yes, okay, it is a very fair question. Starting with the States-owned entities, arm's length bodies. If we take climate change as a crucial part of the Government's and States Assembly's priorities going forward some of the most significant capacity that we have at our disposal in the Island to support the development of our carbon neutral goals is with, for example, Jersey Electricity. How we - that is the Government of Jersey - work with Jersey Electricity to ensure that together we achieve the maximum progress that we can in our climate goals; that is a piece of work on its own. I know my colleagues in Jersey Electricity are very seized of this and they are very keen to make the fullest contribution, we just need to be sure we have the resource and capacity to work with them to translate that potential into practice. That would be an example on that one and on the States Employment Board, which was the other example I gave, the delegations to the chief executive, the P.59s and ... sorry, let me take a practical example. Where there is a business case within a scale to move somebody, even just a few thousand pounds, from one point on the scale to another, that has to be taken as a proposal, obviously with paperwork to the States Employment Board for them to determine. Now this is something in my earlier career ... in other words, we are talking about an existing salary scale of a senior person moving up by a small amount of money, by thousands, that is not something within my delegations to achieve. I do not think it is a particularly good use of anybody's time to have to prepare a business case and to achieve the assent of the States Employment Board for something as straightforward as that. The reason I think it is not an optimum way of working is it is expensive in itself, it minimises the time that can be spent on more significant things and importantly, I think, the chief executive should be accountable for those decisions. Should be answerable for those decisions. That would be an illustration of that one.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Thank you. We will move to workforce modernisation with Dr. Helen Miles.

Dr. H. Miles:

What have you identified as the most important workforce and digital modernisation programme since you first became interim chief executive?

Interim Chief Executive:

In the context of the States of Jersey, workforce modernisation has meant slightly different things at different times. We probably need to first of all define our terms, what we mean by workforce

modernisation, what do those words mean in a Jersey context. In fact I know that even prior to the 2018 reforms there was a workforce modernisation strategy or intention that was unveiled with using that term that was subsequently amended or redefined in 2018 with the OneGov changes that took place from that point. I do not think you mean workforce modernisation in that context necessarily, in a programme that was subsequently refined but rather in the more general sense of what we are doing in our public services to reform and to make best use of our human resources. The most significant progress we have made on this over the last year is the development in the capacity and expertise within our people in corporate services division. Without question, we have a much stronger and better resource for people in corporate services division, H.R. (human resources) if you like, than has been the case in the past and that has led to the publication of the people's strategy, which was published last autumn, which sets out the master plan for how we are going to make sure we make best use of our human resources going forward. I think that is a very important piece of work. I do not know if during the course of this hearing John Quinn, who is the director general responsible for overseeing this area, might want to add to what I have said, but I think it is important and it is gaining traction with our colleagues. It is also important to say, when I arrived a year ago the Be Heard survey - you will remember which was the colleague survey to identify levels of engagement, morale and motivation - had been published. It demonstrated clearly that there was work to be done to improve employee engagement, and every department has worked hard at ensuring that practical steps are put in place to achieve that employee engagement. These are all areas of good progress. I am trying to avoid saying impeded by COVID but inevitably COVID plays a part in all of this and it has not been helpful necessarily but there have been some points maybe where it has - I will come back to that in a minute - with the intermittent and differing regimes that we have lived with during the past year. That does not always help employee engagement but I feel strongly that we are on a positive trajectory, not least in the more agile and hybrid way of working. That has been one change that Jersey has embraced over the last few years. That is to say that colleagues who in the past would always have worked in an office are able to work now in a much more agile way, including remotely. I think that has been welcomed by many of our colleagues. Finally, just to give you a little bit of insight into what this looks like in practice, I hosted a webinar with my successor, Suzanne Wylie, last Monday in fact, to which all of our colleagues who work for the civil service were invited. So this was a live webinar where we both presented to our colleagues on some of the big issues we are facing. We also had a panel of the rest of our team with the different perspectives they brought into the room and then a Q. and A. session, which was probably the liveliest part of it, with our teams to give them an opportunity to quiz us. I think in these sorts of ways we see employee engagement and what we mean by the workforce strategy moving forward in practice. Let me just pause here and give you a chance to ask any supplementaries.

Dr. H. Miles:

I think you have answered my second and third follow-up question in that first one. Just to move forward in terms of how you are tracking that, are you satisfied with the way the Government of Jersey are tracking programmes like the people strategy and tracking the key internal projects? Do you think any of that could be improved?

Interim Chief Executive:

There is always scope to improve all that we are doing. The answer to that must be yes. I think if we are considering how do we track the effectiveness of a strategy in practice there are many metrics, different ways of doing that from differing perspectives. In this committee, for example, you might rightly have a perspective about the use of resources, can we demonstrate value for money, what is our usage of contingent labour or consultancy and that kind of thing. We might return to that later. That might be one metric. We certainly would want to look at turnover rates and vacancy rates, that would be another. But among the most important is what colleagues themselves think, so what their experiences of working here are. Suzanne will bring her own experience and her own preferences on this. My feeling is I think it is helpful to have regular feedback, workforce information feedback, including sense checks from colleagues as to what they are thinking and feeling. So rather than have it in one big lump every few years, to have regular monthly data and insight and that is way that I would go. I.T.S. (integrated technology solution) will help us with that. Again, we will talk about I.T.S. I am sure later this afternoon. One of the things that the I.T.S. programme will bring is much improved workforce information, which will help us to track progress in these areas.

Dr. H. Miles:

You quite rightly suggest that as the Public Accounts Committee we are interested in value for money. Do you believe that the workforce modernisation programme has delivered any savings and, if so, in what ways?

Interim Chief Executive:

I think that the current programme, the people strategy, is too new. The roots are not sufficiently deep, it has not had sufficient time to answer that question conclusively. I am certain that our colleagues are working hard during a very demanding period to give it their best. That is happening and I think that the standard of management practice continues to improve in the Government.

Dr. H. Miles:

Have there been any instances where you believe that funding of key internal projects could have been matched more successfully than it has been to key targets?

Interim Chief Executive:

Could have been matched more successfully? I am not sure entirely. Can you help me just a little bit with what that means?

Dr. H. Miles:

Are there any broad projects where you have not really been clear how the funding has been matched to meeting the target?

Interim Chief Executive:

I think probably the system we have is pretty good at that. I would not be critical of that. I think that possibly the greater rigour that we have put in place in recent years around the preparation of business cases and the need to define more precisely what resources have been bid for and how they will be used, I think it means that most of the time we make a pretty good fist of aligning and anticipating resources necessary for any change programme. So I think that is reasonably well done.

Dr. H. Miles:

Thank you. I am going to have you over to Connétable Jehan.

The Connétable of St. John:

Thank you. You mentioned earlier about the need for S.E.B. (States Employment Board) to focus on strategy. That is my interpretation of what you told us. How would you describe your working relationship with the States Employment Board?

Interim Chief Executive:

I try to attend all of their meetings, certainly as many as I can, and to give advice where that is helpful. So I think my relationship with S.E.B. has been an appropriate one and a professional one. I think there are things that I could have done better there, that perhaps if I knew what I know now a year ago I think I might have done a little bit better. We could explore those either now or later.

The Connétable of St. John:

Can you give us some examples?

Interim Chief Executive:

Yes, so I think it took me a little while to fully appreciate that S.E.B. and the civil service and the Council of Ministers are all really quite separate in the way that they work, particularly S.E.B. and the Council of Ministers, and that is very different to my earlier working experience. Of course, as chief executive, I have the privilege of being present in each of these forums. I am president of the Council of Ministers meetings and also the States Employment Board, as well as in other forums

like this within the civil service. I think if I had quite appreciated how distinct and separate S.E.B. was in the way it works in Jersey within States law a year ago, I think I might have done a better job to relate the work of S.E.B. back into other parts of the machinery, particularly to the Council of Ministers, and equally perhaps to have ensured that that dialogue was working in the opposite direction back to the States Employment Board. It has taken me a little while to appreciate quite how important that more complete holistic relationship is and I hope, in saying that, if Suzanne is watching this, she can learn from that and do better in the future.

Dr. H. Miles:

That was my next question. What advice have you given your successor about working with S.E.B. and its governance arrangements?

Interim Chief Executive:

Well, I think that S.E.B. is under review itself, is it not? So I think what I would say to my successor is there was a Scrutiny review last autumn, a people and culture review, which was published with a significant set of recommendations. One of those recommendations was that some aspects of I think the targeting operating model should be subject to an independent review, and that S.E.B. accepted that recommendation that it should be complete by the time of the elections in June. So these are opportunities really. This provides an opportunity for us to review and evaluate how things have worked and what changes need to be made in the future and I think, more generally, the States Employment Board has been subject to a number of C. and A.G. reports.

[15:30]

I believe that all observers, certainly including the States Employment Board itself, would say this is something that needs a review and a revaluation. So that is what S.E.B. itself thinks. The challenge is, it seems to me to be, who will carry out that; so who is the guiding mind on that review? So that needs a little bit of clarity. In practice, of course it will be after June 2022 and it will be a new States Employment Board and a new States Assembly that will take responsibility for these things. I think what is clear is that, alongside the law changes in relation to the Jersey Appointments Commission which are well underway and we are consulting on them at the moment, work in relation to the States Employment Board needs to catch up with that. That is a piece of work that I hope we will be able to make progress on during the course of the year.

The Connétable of St. John:

Thank you. You mentioned the importance of performance management earlier. Is the tracking of performance of P. and C.S. (People and Corporate Services), S.E.B. and other groups co-ordinated?

Interim Chief Executive:

I think increasingly. I touched a little bit on this earlier. I think that the provision of workforce information is a very important part of my job to understand whether, going back to your earlier questioning, we are utilising workforce information properly. Do we understand what is going on in our human resources team? I think that, particularly as a consequence of I.T.S. and the investment that is being made there in the future years, we will have a much fuller, more comprehensive and more accurate workforce data than we have enjoyed in the past.

The Connétable of St. John:

How do you avoid silos in that area?

Interim Chief Executive:

Well, that is a big question. Let me just take a step back then. I think that a lot has been said about the OneGov reforms in 2018, some positive things and more critical things, but one of the crucial things, it seems to me, that OneGov was seeking to do was to achieve a less siloed and more corporate civil service than has been the case previously. I would say that that is a goal of probably every Government everywhere in the world that all Governments wish to see. They want to avoid silos and want to ensure that public services work collaboratively across professional disciplines. So it is a very important goal that I think the States set itself in 2018 and I do think a great deal of progress has been made to accomplish it. Do you want me to give examples now? Some examples I would give are many of the most important things that we do require the contribution of a number of departments and not just one department. It has particularly been true of COVID, which has pretty much involved all government departments working together and if each was seeking to frustrate the work of others it would be very apparent to Islanders if we were working in that siloed way. So I think COVID has both endorsed and reinforced the importance of teamwork and corporate work in public services. If you take another major project - I will just take one other to make my point - of the hospital and of course there are different views, and properly so, about the new hospital but one thing we can be sure of is that it demands cross-departmental working. It involves, just to use an example, the contribution of the director general for Infrastructure, Housing and Environment, of course it does equally involve the director general for Health and Community Services and also the director of Public Health, in 3 different departments, just to use that one example, so it is critical that we work corporately as a team. Part of that is structural in terms of the target operating model. Part of it is cultural. Do we have a team ethos working together, listening to each other and respecting each other's views? A part of it is having the right systems and processes to support corporate working, so all of that is a work in progress. People do of course naturally reflect on the way things used to work with a committee-based system and with a more direct Ministerial relationship between senior civil servants and Ministers and of course that element

of Ministerial control is crucially important over decisions and Ministerial accountability for the way in which public services are working. That is really important but I would just say we need to be careful we do not throw out the baby with the bath water because also what is important is collaborative working and teamwork. So I think that this is about achieving the best possible balance.

Mr. A. Lane:

So you have made several references to the target operating models set of changes initiated by your predecessor to improve effectiveness and efficiency. What is your view on how they stand now and how the implementation has gone?

Interim Chief Executive:

Yes, so this answer I can illuminate with the benefit of an event with some of my most senior colleagues at the senior leaders group last week where we had a workshop of the top 40 or 50 colleagues working in the civil service on exactly this topic of what have we learnt since 2018 about target operating models and the immense change that has taken place. What have we learnt? What has gone well? What has gone less well? What do we think needs to be done differently in the future? So rather than just giving a personal answer, I can draw on the experience of others who have been there throughout that journey. I think the most important highlight to bring out from that event is the sheer complexity of the Government and our public services was probably underestimated in 2018. So the scale of the change that was undertaken might have been biting off more than we could chew at that point. An enormous programme of change was unveiled 4 years ago which, in practice, has proven both controversial in parts but also difficult to implement in the kind of timely way that everybody would wish. So I think that the conclusion that follows from that is it seems to me unlikely that, in the next period, there will be a similarly kind of comprehensive and momentous change programme launched across the whole of the public services because it just is a very complex organisation. It has taken a while to implement the T.O.M.s (target operating models) which, in truth, are only just being completed now so, in some cases, it certainly has taken much too long and I suspect that, going forward, we will be looking at more incremental change rather than big bang.

Mr. A. Lane:

Have you managed to ascertain what the root of that underestimation was back in 2018?

Interim Chief Executive:

Well, I am not sure I could give a conclusive answer and I think there probably would be others who would be in a better position to do that than me. I think it probably was a combination of a very high level of ambition, which is commendable, and perhaps a second element was quite a fundamental

sense that things needed to change. Perhaps that was informed by the childcare inquiry, which had just preceded this period, and I think was an influential factor that the States needed to do things very differently. So I think it was almost that we need to reset this completely. Obviously, I was not here at the time so I think these were elements to it. The risk is always, including for me coming from the U.K. (United Kingdom), if you are coming from outside of Jersey in, you might not understand it as fully as you need to and should. Perhaps the risk as well was that assumptions were made that something must be doable without quite appreciating in the level of detail that might have been more prudent that change in an island context is very different to change elsewhere in the world and specifically in the U.K. So I think these are all relevant factors.

Mr. A. Lane:

Can you highlight an area where the change has gone relatively well and then perhaps one where it has not gone as well?

Interim Chief Executive:

So I think one that has gone well I would say would be S.P.P.P. (Strategic Policy, Performance and Population). So I am going to single out that area, which for people watching this who might not know our acronyms and quite what I am talking about here, is the department which is headed by Tom Walker who is the director general here and can add to this if he wants to. I do not suppose he will disagree that that has been a successful part of the reforms in 2018 but it brings together the accountability and responsibility for the development of policy and also for performance as well as other really important areas like public health. So its intention was to make sure that policymaking should not be siloed in different places but should be integrated in a single place that looked at the interrelationships between different government policies and how they might work together and also how performance management might develop in a more coherent way than had been in the past. I think that that has been demonstrably effective. It has been evidenced I think in the COVID period where that join-up has been so valuable, and also in the performance review process, so I am absolutely certain that the development of our approach to performance evaluation and insight is getting better year on year. I could see when I arrived a year ago that it was better than it had been the year before and I think that now I am seeing the development of the draft annual accounts and performance review for last year as we work through those, it is stronger now than it was this time last year. So that seems to me to have been a significant success. So that was the easier part of your question, which was asking me for an area that has worked well. Now you are inviting me to consider an area that has worked less well so I would say that where target operating models are not yet complete and embedded, that has to be an area of concern. So I think in relation to Infrastructure, Housing and Environment, it has taken longer there to complete and implement the changes in the T.O.M.s, so I think that might be one of the less successful areas.

Mr. A. Lane:

Based on the review that you did last week, what would you do differently in that area if you were to start it again? What have you learnt?

Interim Chief Executive:

So the main thing in the management of change is that change creates uncertainty and it unsettles everyone who is a participant in that process and, to a degree, it disempowers them because when change is unleashed, colleagues or employees I am thinking of in particular, will be uncertain. "Is my job changing? How is it changing? Where will I be working? What will I be doing? Will I have a job?" All these sorts of things that are all features of change management. Therefore the best change management is change that is in as short a period as it can be, is precisely defined in its timeframes and is realistic. There is an opportunity for people to engage in it and understand it, comment back and feed back to make sure that there is as full an engagement and as full a commitment as possible and it is completed in good order. I think that this links to the comprehensive nature of the change that was launched in 2018 that it was more difficult to keep a grip on that because it was affecting everywhere all at once.

Mr. A. Lane:

Do you have a sense then as to the overall impact on staff morale as a result of that wide-scale change?

Interim Chief Executive:

Well, there is no doubt it suffered. I think that that is demonstrable in the period from 2018 onwards and the chief executive at the time observed it and was questioned about it. Change unsettles people and there is a dip in morale as a consequence. There is no doubt about that and that will have happened in Jersey, as it would happen elsewhere, so the crucial thing is to get to the benefits as quickly as we can.

[15:45]

Mr. A. Lane:

Can you see that morale issue persisting in the areas that have been relatively slower?

Interim Chief Executive:

Well, I think that the drivers of morale might be slightly different so I suspect that the way you have skills shortages and high vacancy levels, that is where there might be particular concern because people are carrying unrealistic workloads or because they are struggling to deliver according to the expectations of the Government and the States Assembly. My colleague Tim from I.H.E.

(Infrastructure, Housing and Environment), who is here, was telling me earlier today that we have just recruited to a surveyor post and that is fantastic, so that is really good news. The team is still massively down on the full complement of staff that ideally he would need so I think now it is less the machinery of government I believe and it is more other factors, especially our access to the right level of skills to fill key roles.

Mr. A. Lane:

Is there a concerted effort at the executive level then to hiring what remains of the vacancies? I think particularly I.H.E. and H.C.S. (Health and Community Services) are the 2 areas that spring to mind.

Interim Chief Executive:

Yes, the director general for Health and Community Services is often asked about the workforce challenges in health, as you will know, and she will say that what the evidence demonstrates is that Jersey is doing pretty well in that area and that some of the understandable concerns about workforce shortages can be exaggerated or misunderstood. So I think it is probably more secure there than some people feel. You are right in relation to I.H.E. and particularly in specific areas like engineers and surveyors. It is challenging and we just need to work as hard as we can to ensure that we are an attractive employer for the skills and talents that we need to make sure that we are marketing Jersey as an amazing place to work, and both outside of the Island and within Jersey that people we wish to attract to work here see the Government as an employer of choice. So we need to keep working on those things.

Mr. A. Lane:

So if we understand it, the target operating model programme was entered without a single explicit business case around it but designed, as was said, to create efficiency and effectiveness. Looking at efficiency, you have shared some numbers with us around the number of full-time equivalent personnel that are employed by the Government of Jersey and that has increased over time. I think we are looking at 2016 to 2020. It appears to have increased faster in the civil service and faster still at the more senior grades 12 to 15. I think you called them spot salaries, which is negotiated pay. Do you have any reflections on how that has happened or why that has happened?

Interim Chief Executive:

Yes, I do. Now if you look back to what the goals of the OneGov programme and the T.O.M.s that followed from that were back in 2018, although many people may think that it was about efficiency savings and reduced cost, that is not particularly prominent in what was set out at that time. You are right. There was not a business case in the way that we would do now but there were 8 key principles that were identified which would drive OneGov, and reducing costs was not one of them.

This is remarkable to me coming from outside, especially coming from a U.K. context and the career I have had in recent decades. It is very notable because for the most part, the reforms I have been involved in have been about reduced cost invariably with a target that this is the maximum pay bill that we can afford, but that did not form part of the OneGov changes. It was never part of the OneGov changes. There are 8 principles. The closest any of them get to saying: "We wish to reduce cost" is there was nothing of that headcount but the closest it gets is to talk about the importance of financial control which is, you might say, linked to reduced cost but is not implicit in it, so it simply was not there.

Mr. A. Lane:

There is quite a difference between reducing costs and adding, let us say, 800 staff, particularly 400 or something in the civil service.

Interim Chief Executive:

Yes, totally, but my kind of observation really is that we need to take care that we are not, in 2022, assessing the reforms against a criteria that was not adopted in 2018. Possibly it should have been but it was not. A lot of the emphasis of the 2018 reforms was around capacity building and the underlying sense of the reform starting in that time was that many of the crucial components of a jurisdiction were not in place in Jersey in ways that left the public services at great risk in areas like cybersecurity. So it was a lot about capacity building, particularly in Children's Services where significant parts of what we know to be essential elements of a children's social care and child protection system simply were not in place and needed to be built. So that was the focus back then. I do agree - and there is no reason why I would be defensive of something that was developed when I was not even here - in fairness to people who were there at that time, that needs to be said. If we extract the learning from that, I would say if we believe that reduced headcount or reduced staff costs are an important goal, then that needs to be stated. It needs to be stated, defined and people like me need to be held accountable for the delivery of it, but that did not happen. What did happen, just to provide some mitigation to the overall situation, is in the period 2018 to 2022, there has been a lot of work on efficiencies and rebalancing, and I think that that does mean that there is a very creditable story to be told about the move towards a more efficient public service but I suspect you are going to come on to that later.

Mr. A. Lane:

Before we move on then, setting aside whether you were looking for cost savings or not because you were not: how do you make the link between the increase in the number of people working for Government and the outcome metrics in the public services?

Interim Chief Executive:

Well, I think that the crucial link is in the risks that the Government was running without well-developed I.T. (information technology) systems, as an example, so this is one of the areas where there has been a growth in John Quinn's area, and John is very welcome to come in and add to what I am saying if he wants to. In areas like John's, there was not a capacity that there needed to be to protect and support our public services and that leads to a very unproductive public service and one that is running significant risks. So let me just give a practical example of what that means. Legacy financial systems like J.D. Edwards, which are no longer supported I think by Oracle, which leave public services at significant risk. The case for the investment that has been made is that it was a necessary investment in the modernisation and good Government of Jersey.

Mr. A. Lane:

Thank you.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

A couple of follow-up questions and just your views, I have reviewed the letter that you have supplied to us, and I thank you, and I found the numbers that were mentioned. So in January 2017, we have 5,985 employees and in December 2021, we have 6,871 employees. We are talking about a 15 per cent increase in the workforce. On top of this, what are your views about a 15 per cent increase when we are trying to create an efficient and leaner Government regarding the cost?

Interim Chief Executive:

Well, I suppose the starting point is that that kind of growth going forward is inconceivable so, I think in terms of the trajectory, I do not think it is plausible that that will continue in the years ahead. I believe - and time will tell if I am right or not - that the high point of that growth has been reached and that it will, at some pace yet to be determined - and of course all these things are politically driven - ultimately be reversed. So I do not think that we could continue in that way. There are risks for us though in the public service, which are what I can see over the last year is that the development and improvement of public services has become synonymous with growth, and I think that is quite a significant thing both for the Council of Ministers and for us as officials. Almost an assumption for anything new to happen we need a new team or we need an extra resource and extra people. That needs to be understood, so I think we need to observe that as being where we are and we need to confront it and say there are other ways of getting development and improvement that do not have to be driven by increases in cost or more staff. The way through that is around prioritisation, as well as addressing legacy issues and looking to stand down activities and services that possibly were important but are less important now. These are difficult things of course because it is not always easy to persuade anyone that there needs to be a flex, and that something that used to be important is less important now, and that we might be able to disinvest in something in order to invest in something new. But I would predict that whatever the outcome of the election in June the States

Assembly Members and the new Council of Ministers will want to do new and different things. That is the nature of our politics. They will want to do new things, they will have an appetite for development, and yet they will not be able to grow our public services in the way that they have been grown in the last 4 years, therefore, it follows we will need to be looking more closely at productivity and about priorities.

Mr. A. Lane:

The previous chief executive told us in January 2020, so 2 years ago, sitting in this meeting that a process of zero-based budgeting was being run which would drive many of those outcomes that you are talking about. How is that going?

Interim Chief Executive:

I think it is going well. In terms of the rebalancing programme, I do not have the figures in front of me, but overwhelmingly the very significant efficiencies that the Government Plan required have been made, and again I think it is important to get the context of this clear. So in the period 2018 to 2022 the significant growth that we have seen in public services has been funded by promised efficiencies and rebalancing which were promised back in 2018, and I think in subsequent years, and which have been delivered through a separate rebalancing programme. So every year our public servants have been asked to revisit that programme and identify more efficiencies, and that has substantially been done. This year in 2022 I think we were £5.5 million short - is that the figure - of a target that was £60 million. That is pretty good. Even in the £5.5 million I believe that will be identified during the course of this year by those director generals, so I think it is important not to underestimate the savings and efficiencies that have been made.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

As your answer to the Public Accounts Committee is the public submission to our performance management and review, which our report should be published shortly, probably the public would ask as well so that we have an understanding between grade 1 and grade 15; what is spot salary?

Interim Chief Executive:

I think a spot salary will be a salary that is not a pay grade but is just a specific point, so it will be a particular number rather than the usual civil service thing of having a range from one point to another. So a spot salary will just be an appointment to a specific, precise pay level, but I would invite you just to check that with Mr. Quinn.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

I just want to understand; is it higher than grade 15 or lower?

[16:00]

Interim Chief Executive:

Well I think it would depend. John? Usually higher.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Usually higher. If it is usually higher I would like to see your views because I can say that in 2017 we had 33 within the civil servants on the spot salary, now we have 105. It is a top salary that increases 3 times. If I am going to personal contract holders and spot salaries, again it has increased from 14 to 48; another 3 times more. Any views on it; how it could happen?

Interim Chief Executive:

These are metrics that relate to all of the conversation that we are having, so I think that what is shared ground here is that the public services have grown, the numbers of staff have grown, and the underlying capacity of the civil service has grown, including some of the more senior staff that you refer to, so I think it is a feature of the trend that you are identifying.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

I think as a note, for example doctors and consultants it is more or less around £165,000, £180,000, and it is something from our perspective needs to be reviewed and re-evaluated, the growth in different areas. I am minded about the time and we will move to the integrated technology solution and the I.T. generally.

Mr. P. van Bodegom:

You mentioned earlier the importance of digital modernisation and its delivery. What is your view of the current status of the Government's I.T. strategy?

Interim Chief Executive:

Well we need to distinguish a little bit between the I.T. strategy and I.T.S. as a programme, so again for anyone who is following this and just to help distinguish between the 2, the I.T.S. programme is a particular and specific programme of investment in our systems, which is in the process of being implemented now. It is currently in the second release and we have got a high level of confidence and indeed I think the C. and A.G. shares that confidence that it is a reasonably well-managed and organised programme that will deliver to its intended outcomes. The I.T. strategy itself - and the chief operating officer who is here has been questioned about this I think in Scrutiny committees - is at a point in its development and I believe it is anticipated during the course of this year. Do you want to add to that, John?

Chief Operating Officer:

When the Government Plan 2020 was put together we put out what was described at the time as a technology transformation programme, although technically it was not a programme, it was a view of core technology that needed to be addressed around the likes of J.D. Edwards, the fact that at the time we did not have adequate cybersecurity, we were using a very old Microsoft suite. So we set out a group of programmes that needed to happen to, as we described, get well. We will now publish during the first quarter of this year the follow-on from that, which will set out the approach to technology and we will split the strategies up; there will be several strategies that come out this year. The first one will be the technology strategy, that will be followed by a data strategy and a cyber strategy. What we will be looking for though is that going forward technology will be driven by the business. We have effectively repaired the skeleton that we need to work from and now it will be business driven. The first of those programmes is already underway in Customer and Local Services where they are looking obviously to replace the current messy system, which again is 2005 vintage and very clunky, but not as a technology programme. This is about looking at how you deal with the services that they provide, so not starting with technology but starting with how do you, for instance, deal with someone who loses their job, and all the things you need to do, and then how do you enable the technology to do that. What I would say is that you will have seen the benefit of the early work we did in the way we responded to COVID where we put in place a border testing system. I am sure everyone is familiar with what will now be turned off in a few days' time but what was a system whereby you filled in a form and got a Q.R. (quick response) code and depending on where you have been, depending on what tests you had to have and how long you had to isolate. That system was stood up in just over 4 weeks. Without the work we have done to build that backbone we could not have done that. That is testament to the first strategy, but that strategy is now in its final year of delivery and we will come out with a technology strategy for the next 5 to 10 years.

Mr. P. van Bodegom:

Just coming back to you, Paul. John has answered some of the question there. He made reference to Customer and Local Services. How is the Government of Jersey connecting the ongoing I.T.S. programme with I.T. projects, for example, with Revenue Jersey that sit outside the remit?

Interim Chief Executive:

I think that the investment in robust and adequate systems that John has described will benefit all parts of the public services, including Revenue Jersey. I do not know whether we will get a chance to talk about performance during last year and what we are seeing in terms of fluctuating patterns of performance, but one of the things that is most encouraging is the significant increase in the numbers of people returning their tax returns online. That is encouraging for anybody who wants to see a more digital public service and the ability of Islanders to transact their business with the Government remotely on a digital basis. I think we should take a lot of heart from that, that when

we get that right, as we have there, and I think currently with the COVID digital passport, that there is great potential for the development of a more digital and therefore convenient and efficient public service.

Mr. P. van Bodegom:

What other benefits do you see? What savings can you see as we move towards a more digital environment?

Interim Chief Executive:

There are definitely great benefits as well as savings. Just to exemplify those, it is the case that face-to-face transactions and, indeed, telephone transactions are significantly more expensive than online transactions. That is a fact. The transactional cost is cheapest when it is digital and Governments everywhere, including Jersey, can realise the benefits of those. The benefits are, of course, both for the individual because they can file a tax return when it suits them on a Sunday afternoon, whatever it is, rather than necessarily when the offices are open and without having to make the journey to the office. That is of great benefit to the individual Islander as well as being cheaper on the public purse. It has numerous benefits. It does need to be mediated with care around those people who are not digitally savvy and who are not able to get access to technology. Of course, in an Island like Jersey, that is an important consideration as well, that we do not completely switch off alternative channels but for most people increasingly digital self-service is both what Islanders want and what is most cost-effective.

Mr. P. van Bodegom:

How are these being identified and tracked?

Interim Chief Executive:

How have the ...?

Mr. P. van Bodegom:

The benefits.

Interim Chief Executive:

The benefits of I.T.S.?

Mr. P. van Bodegom:

Of I.T.S.

Interim Chief Executive:

The benefits of I.T.S. are as we have discussed around the capacity and resilience of services. They are, to a degree, financial so there are some efficiency savings associated with the implementation of the I.T.S. programme but they are relatively modest. I think that when you come to evaluate, as no doubt you will or your successors will in future P.A.C.'s (Public Accounts Committee) the success of the I.T.S. programme ... so in 2 years' time will the P.A.C. be in a position to do that, to evaluate the success of the I.T.S. programme? I think that it would be important, as a discussion of the OneGov changes, to go back to what it was for. What the purpose and goal of I.T.S. was at that point. It was not primarily around cost reduction nor even was it primarily about digital self-service. It was primarily about the reliability, resilience and dependency of the crucial systems that our public services use as well as the ability of staff to do their jobs more efficiently and productively. It was these things. Those benefits are being tracked. As we work through the implementation of the I.T.S. programme, they are being tracked. Let me just give a practical example of what that means. You can visualise what that looks like in practice. Chief executives in any public services would expect to get accurate, timely and regular workforce information and that is very difficult in Jersey because we do not have the systems or the reliable systems to do it. They are very dependent on people collecting manual data, which itself is amenable to inaccuracies. Sometimes inaccuracies then get reported, which leads people saying: "You said this on one occasion and that on another" because there is so much potential for human error in manual processes. What I.T.S. will enable us to do, for the senior managers and States Assembly Members of the future, is to have access to regular, reliable, robust and comprehensive workforce information, which I think will make the production of work, for example, let us take an illustration of the cost of using consultants in the Government of Jersey, which is something that we are required to report on regularly. It will make that a much more streamlined, slick and efficient process.

Mr. P. van Bodegom:

Will the programme be delivered in full in line with the business case or are there likely to be any issues that may compromise the benefits expected to be delivered and/or the cost to the programme?

Interim Chief Executive:

I think it will be delivered on time and within the cost that has been approved by the States Assembly.

Mr. P. van Bodegom:

What has been your personal involvement with the ongoing I.T.S. programme?

Interim Chief Executive:

We have a very good governance structure, a comprehensive governance structure, which I think the C. and A.G. has taken a look at and sort of largely endorsed. That board is chaired by John

Quinn, who reports to me, so my role has both been as John's line manager and of course it plays a significant part in his targets and also through our executive leadership team, which has regular reports on the implementation of I.T.S.

Mr. P. van Bodegom:

How frequently is that?

Interim Chief Executive:

I think it is something like quarterly; something in that order.

Mr. P. van Bodegom:

Have you been able to recommend changes to the programme to improve the quality or the distribution of the promised improvements?

Interim Chief Executive:

I think it is perhaps a little early to be doing that. It is a practical programme that needs adjustment and modification as we work through its implementation. It is very important that it engages with managers and that it is not excessively directed by, for example, the finance function in the case of the first release. So there will need to be a careful dialogue with all of those managers in departments who are impacted by the programme to make sure that they are on board with the programme, that they have an opportunity to steer it and own how the programme is being implemented. I think that the scope for influence is more about making sure that we get it right. That seems to me the most important thing, that we get it right and adjust as we might need to. So the second release, the H.R. release is proving to be straightforward, relative to the first release. So I think we just need to be realistic and patient about its implementation and within the overall programme through to the end of next year.

[16:15]

As I have already said, I am sure it will be implemented in time and on budget.

Mr. P. van Bodegom:

How well do you think it is being managed?

Interim Chief Executive:

I think it is being managed very well.

Mr. P. van Bodegom:

Final question: with its full implementation when it is up and running do you think we will see a reduction in the number of people employed to manage it?

Interim Chief Executive:

I think there will be a reduction but I do not think it will be in itself dramatic. I think it will help our colleagues be more productive and it will enable them to do their job more efficiently than they have been able to before. But I think translating that into a cost saving that we can capture, that will happen and indeed I have got the figures somewhere here to demonstrate it. That will happen but I do not think it will be on a hugely impressive scale.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Two quick clarifications. You said there might not be savings delivered with the I.T.S. programme; monetary savings.

Interim Chief Executive:

That is not quite what I said. What I said was there will be savings. In fact I now have the forecast savings in front of me. That demonstrates that there will be cashable savings, I think in the period up to 2026 of just under £9 million. So there will be savings there. The savings for 2022 is defined as £250,000. So there will be savings but, relative to the cost of the programme, that is not the reason for doing it.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

I understand. But it is for clarification for the number, it is really helpful. The last question on I.T.S., going back probably for the first question. We still do not have an overarching I.T. strategy; we have I.T.S., we have some going to Health. It is still programmes and one of the things that we have all the time in Jersey, that £1 million was spent by different departments and we did not have an overarching strategy. Now again we do not have an overarching strategy. Not yet hopefully. What are your views of not having an overarching strategy?

Interim Chief Executive:

I am reminded slightly when I came in a year ago of the debates about the estate management strategy and the lack of an estate management strategy. That was a great concern - rightly - for this committee. Now we have a strategy. We have published the strategy. But a strategy important as it is, does not necessarily accomplish in itself everything that we want to achieve. So we have an estate management strategy but it would be wrong to say, as a consequence, we therefore have addressed all issues. A strategy is not necessarily a panacea. I can tell you what I think, which is really what you want to know, is it not? What I think is we have taken a view in the I.T.S. programme of the need to prioritise investments in our systems in the underlying and legacy systems on which

the States are dependent. That must be the right thing to do. We have not sufficiently taken a view from an Islander perspective, a resident user perspective, of what Government and public services look like from their point of view. Mr. Quinn referred to that earlier when you were talking about business benefits, and the next stage is to look from a business perspective. What I think that means, in layman's language, is looking at it from a service perspective and from a service user's perspective. That is a very challenging thing to do because if we did, and it might be a really good thing to do, to crack this nut, if we carried out a survey of Islanders and said: "What opportunity do you think there is to improve the digital experience of working with the Government of Jersey and our public services? What could be easier and better?" It would be really interesting to see what comes from that. Part of that, I think, will be about the structure of public services in Jersey because I would certainly, from my own experience, and I think from other people's, there are transactions that are not at all digital. I am thinking particularly, for example, of getting a driving licence in Jersey. That is not a digital experience. It is an experience that you engage with the Parishes, as things stand of course, and requires you - from my memory a year ago - to pitch up in the Parish Hall and present documentation. It cannot be done digitally. If I was asked, as an Islander currently, that would be one of the things, yes, I think that could be done better digitally. But then one starts to look at the structure and organisation of public services, which maybe we should be doing. So in summary, I think, it is very helpful for the Government and our public services to see things from the users and Islanders, the residents' perspective, through that end of the telescope, even if it is uncomfortable sometimes or it poses questions which we find a bit awkward. I think it is a very good thing to do as well as seeing them from the perspective of the service providers.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

I appreciate it because at the end of the day we are the Public Accounts Committee and you are spending £66 million, so we want to see how it has improved the services that we receive. The public need to understand that this is what is happening and what will happen in the future.

Interim Chief Executive:

Yes, indeed.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Thank you. We are moving to the COVID review now.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

The world had already experienced a year of COVID when you arrived in Jersey during the COVID-19 pandemic. How do you believe the pandemic has shaped your approach to the role of chief executive?

Interim Chief Executive:

This is the second jurisdiction that I have had responsibility for COVID. Obviously in the first year of the pandemic I was in London. I have had an unusual opportunity to be involved in shaping the response and see how it worked in one place and then in another in Jersey. Clearly a lot of the work in the COVID response was undertaken in 2020 when the pandemic was unfolding, from March 2020 onwards. I think that Jersey as a totality, not just the Government or the States Assembly but our public services and, importantly, the Parishes and Islanders, did incredibly well, I believe. It is a very impressive mobilisation of responsibilities, services, support and intervention to protect the Island during such a major and traumatic period. A lot of that heavy lifting was done in 2020 such that when I arrived there was a battle rhythm underway, so decision-making through the competent authority meetings and all the machinery that you are very familiar with, the support that was being provided to businesses and to people who otherwise would be suffering both economically and in health terms, I think that this was all done well. I can, if you want me to, give you a little bit of insight into what I think a chief executive's role is in that context, because it is very clear what other people's role is - very clear what one of my colleagues like Dr. Muscat's role is - it is probably a little bit less clear what a chief executive's role is. I think a chief executive's role, and the role I have tried to play during the year ... I think I have been to every competent authority meeting during the year. This is a quite good way of getting insight into it. I have been to every competent authority meeting but have not been to a single S.T.A.C. (Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell) meeting. That is just to draw the distinction. I see the S.T.A.C. meetings as being about the science and the medical advice and I do not think that is something that I felt I want to intrude into or to obscure in anyway. I think that is for the relevant professionals to determine the advice they are seeking to give. So I think my role is to understand what S.T.A.C. is saying and ensure that all parts of the public service have an opportunity to think through and understand what impact this might have on them by the time that we get to the competent authority meeting, that the civil service advice is coherent and is joined up, and implications for different services are drawn out in a way that is helpful to Ministers. It is trying to ensure that not just in public health terms but the wider impacts on all parts of our economy and public services that Ministers have an opportunity to understand what those impacts are and for that to inform their decision-making. That has been the role that I have played. What that means in practice is understanding and incorporating the economic impacts of COVID, the impacts on children and young people, the impacts on schools, for example, as well as on the health system and in the civil service, as with the competent authority Ministers and probably everywhere, people have different perspectives. Everybody is not thinking one thing. Among my colleagues it would be completely fallacious to think that we are all of one mind. We certainly are not. My colleagues have very strong opinions based on their roles and the job that they are employed to do, as well as sometimes their personal insight and even how they have been impacted. All of these things need to be brought together in a way that is not simply a noise of conflicting perspectives but is a more coherent, organised and comprehensible account that then enables the Ministers to take the

decisions that they have. I want to say something in a moment, when I have a chance, about the review of how this has all been done but I do not know whether you would like me to do that now or subsequently. Would you like me to say something about that? So the States Assembly agreed in December, in an amendment to the Government Plan in fact - that was then I think modified and adopted unanimously I believe by the States Assembly - that there should be an independent review of the Government's handling of COVID and that that should take place by the end of July 2022. It is a very demanding timescale as you would appreciate as it is February tomorrow. An independent review of what the Government has done to be completed by the end of July 2022. Now, I met with several States Assembly Members, including the Chief Minister but also the chair and vice-chair of the Privileges and Procedures Committee and the president of the Scrutiny Liaison Committee to talk through our thinking about the terms of reference of that review as well as who might undertake it, the membership of the review panel. I was keen that by the time I leave in a few hours' time that there had been sufficient progress, that we can have some confidence that that review will be complete by the end of July, and I am sure it can be. So that review is being put in place currently and therefore we will be communicating about that in due course during February. The reason I think it is so important is everybody here is concerned about how Jersey protected Islanders during COVID. Have we done the best we possibly could to protect the health and well-being of Islanders? Where things have not gone as well as we wanted them to do, what have we learnt and what might we do differently if there was a major event or disaster of another kind in the years to come? I think that putting in place a review, a rapid review of lessons learned, is very commendable because it demonstrates a well-governed Island that is serious about continuous improvement and wants, in a transparent way, to ensure that there is rigour. We hold a mirror up to ourselves and say: "How well did we do? What could we do better next time?" and make sure that any lessons that should be learned are learned. I think these are really important features of a well-managed jurisdiction.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Thank you. I was going to ask you about that. I just want to go back to what you were saying before when you said you attended all the competent authority meetings but you did not attend S.T.A.C. I take it you were briefed after each S.T.A.C. meeting?

Interim Chief Executive:

Yes, that is right; that is exactly how it has worked.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

So you do not feel you should have been invited to them?

Interim Chief Executive:

No, I guess I could have come if I had wanted to. I am not particularly holding up my way of working as being the optimum or the best. There might be other ways of working but I think for me the important thing was to give S.T.A.C. the space and the opportunity to do its job. So what would happen typically would be that the director of Public Health, or indeed Tom Walker but particularly the director of Public Health, and I would talk, he would debrief me on where we had got to and then that would carry forward into the subsequent competent authority meeting.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

You have more or less answered my other question which was: what are your overall views on how Jersey and its Government has handled the COVID-19 pandemic? Where would you identify potential areas for improvement?

Interim Chief Executive:

Potential improvement. I would be a little bit hesitant about that given that we are just instigating a review. The C. and A.G. is doing great work on this through her office to identify how it worked in practice. I find it easier, if I am honest, to identify where things have gone well.

[16:30]

If I take a different kind of area, in the support to businesses and the co-funded payroll interventions, the extent to which those have been targeted, the extent to which they supported the economic well-being of Islanders, even the level of fraud and error relative to what we read about elsewhere, I think these have been well-managed interventions that the Island should be proud of.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Thank you. What are your views on the effectiveness of the decision-making within the Government of Jersey in responding to the pandemic?

Interim Chief Executive:

I think by the time I arrived a year ago the Ministers had found a way of efficiently and effectively taking decisions. They have got into a rhythm of working through the competent authority meetings that meant that they knew what they were doing, they knew how the system worked and timely decisions could be taken. The meetings were often in the evenings. If there is one thing to take care of in an extended pandemic like this is the risk of exhaustion and of fatigue. I think that is real and, from time to time, colleagues have observed that to me. The invariably evening meetings after a long working day and then the need after the meetings obviously to quickly implement the decisions have been made, to communicate and implement them. I think that in a contained emergency maybe lasting days or weeks, that is all very doable. In the very, very long pandemic

that we have had now, lasting nearly 2 years, it definitely takes a toll on people, on the various colleagues working in different departments who have been working on this for some years. Quite what can be done about that and how you can mitigate it maybe is a more difficult thing, but I think at the very least being alert to the health and well-being issues that a prolonged pandemic generate is important for the employer.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Who did you go to when you needed support in carrying out your duties as chief executive when responding to the pandemic? Did you go to Members of the States Assembly or just your colleagues in the civil service?

Interim Chief Executive:

It is a good question. I think in practice most of the time to my colleagues within the civil service. So most of the time the nature of the pandemic and the focus on quick decision-making and implementation means that my time has been particularly with my own colleagues but potentially, if I think back, perhaps that could have been extended more widely.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

One last one from me is: did you have any personal responsibility for understanding the concerns of business and individuals in Jersey and recommending action to the relevant department Minister? If so, can you provide details?

Interim Chief Executive:

So the principal insight I have had is through our Economy Department, and we have a very capable and effective Economy Department. The director general who has great insight into businesses and the needs of businesses ... my concern, and that is quite a good example, is to ensure in governance terms that he had full access to the decision-making process and the ability to engage with our public health colleagues so that we can ensure that decision-making at every point incorporated the views and feedback that we were receiving from business. I think the Economy Department did a very good job of that, I believe.

The Connétable of St. John:

If I might just ask about the well-being. It is something I raised in the debate. Do you think the review should have taken place sooner than is currently scheduled?

Interim Chief Executive:

It probably would have been difficult to have done it sooner in practice, particularly given the measures that will be implemented in a few hours' time. We are tangibly at a different point in the

pandemic now and the Omicron variant and the impact of the uncertainty in recent months, I think, would have made it pretty challenging to have undertaken a review concurrent with a whole new variant becoming widespread. Either fortuitously or through good planning this is probably the right time.

The Connétable of St. John:

Do you have a view on the S.T.A.C. membership, whether that should be made up of different people than currently or are you happy with the S.T.A.C. membership?

Interim Chief Executive:

I think the S.T.A.C. membership ... again this is something that the review will look at, whether the right people were involved in S.T.A.C. and, of course, the governance around decision-making and so on. But to the best of my understanding I would say that I think S.T.A.C. was appropriately independent with the right level of expertise within it.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Thank you. How were you briefed and updated on the healthcare response? Was it just through S.T.A.C. or did you get other information for other areas? Did you think that the information that you were provided was reasonable and sufficient for you to make your judgments?

Interim Chief Executive:

Yes. The most important person there, for me, is the director general of Health and Community Services. She and I, together with Tom in fact, would have regular and frequently daily check-ins around the health impacts on important measures like how many beds are available, how many people are in hospital, obviously, with COVID, the vaccination profile, of those the I.T.U. (intensive treatment unit) usage. These were things that we monitored, at many points during the year, on a daily basis.

The Connétable of Grouville:

What was your role in relation to the Island's test and trace system? Did you have any responsibilities or oversight in that area?

Interim Chief Executive:

For most of my year, and during the period when it was most important and significant, that oversight was undertaken by the director general for Justice and Home Affairs, who has since left the States. I inherited, when I arrived a year ago, an extremely well-managed and admired testing and contact-tracing programme that was led by the director general, I believe, extremely well and required, to be honest, little intervention other than support from me.

The Connétable of Grouville:

It did at times come under a lot of pressure because of the amount of cases at certain times.

Interim Chief Executive:

It did, and that is an important point to make. There were points - and on occasions I could envisage or predict that this was going to happen - when it got to the point of being overwhelmed. Those were difficult points. Yes, what we have done in recent months to step down the system has been well-managed, and it has been well-managed with a better understanding of earlier stages of the pandemic. It does not help anybody if the contact-tracing system is completely overwhelmed. The most important thing for the contact-tracing system is to triage or risk assess so that we are protecting people who are the most vulnerable and where the greatest risks are. One of the problems is if the numbers become so big you are no longer able to do that risk assessment. That has been done well but not perfectly.

The Connétable of Grouville:

There are improvements that could be made if something like this happened in the future?

Interim Chief Executive:

Yes. Probably the main improvement is to make sure that there is a persistent and regular interrogation between the scale of demand on the provision and the policy intent, so that the policy intent does not become frustrated by the very scale. It can become a tsunami in this pandemic, particularly with Omicron, which we have gradually started to appreciate is such a transmissible virus but one with, thankfully, relatively low impacts for most people. As that became clearer, it became obvious that the old approach at an earlier stage in the pandemic to testing and tracing was not applicable to this stage. What is the learning for that? Again, this is all for the review, but I think the learning is to understand, particularly in a pandemic, that each phase is distinct and different to its earlier phases, particularly in relation to the variants that are being experienced. Therefore, in current terms, Omicron required a different response, a different set of interventions and risk assessment, relative to Delta before it. Although it all looks the same because it is all COVID, for our public services and public health function, Omicron was very different to Delta and required a different set of interventions. I think that was reasonably well done but, like everything, we need to learn from what worked and what did not.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Looking back, how would you have changed Jersey's approach to COVID?

Interim Chief Executive:

That is quite a difficult question to answer because I think it has been well-managed. I am intrigued to know what this review makes of that. It would be difficult to say. We know what the most important metrics are around how far we have protected the health of Islanders. I think that has been done well, relative to other jurisdictions. There might have been occasions where possibly we could have moved earlier, earlier in the pandemic. Potentially there were points where that could have happened. It is very easy to apply that level of hindsight. I think it has been a well-managed programme.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Thank you.

Mr. G. Phipps:

I will switch direction a little bit and go back to the estate management, and compliment you on your organisation and strategy. It is well-developed. My question now is pertaining to implementation. Can you let me know how it is going? Can you let us all know, how is it going and what are the main challenges you have in implementing this to the extent that is envisaged?

Interim Chief Executive:

Thank you for the positive feedback about the estate management strategy. That is very welcome. We do have a clearer plan and a clearer sense of direction, and you have heard that in Jersey Property Holdings we are now starting to assemble the capacity and expertise that we need to execute it. For me, the most important part of the estate management strategy is that it relates to Island need. The population of Jersey, of course, continues to increase, the demand for housing is increasing and the cost of housing is very high in Jersey, probably among the highest concern levels within the Island, and very understandably so. The estate management strategy needs to do what it can to support that challenge, by which I mean where we know that we have surplus sites that could be redeveloped either for public services or for housing, we need to make sure that we have as clear, streamlined and smart a process for identifying those sites and then converting them into new usage as possible. Of course, that involves working with the States Assembly and, in terms of the delivery of that, with the Jersey Development Company and also with Andium. That level of execution is the crucial area, I think, where we need to concentrate and where we are concentrating.

Mr. G. Phipps:

Thank you. I presume you are sharing all this with your successor. Are there any other comments you would like to make in this domain of estate management, or advice you would like to share with her?

Interim Chief Executive:

Yes, there probably are. Carrying out effective regeneration and housing development - my successor has a lot of expertise and experience in this area - does not happen in a moment; it needs a strategic approach. There needs to be a strategic approach to development. We have some elements of that in the Island Plan and now the estate management strategy, but the more that the process is predictable and strategic, the better. What that looks like in practice is: what is the long-term regeneration of town? What does that look like in practice?

[16:45]

Where do we know, because we have already agreed through the States Assembly, that this site will be used for housing purposes, for affordable housing, for schools or for other purposes? If we are able to take a strategic view of that over a number of years, that level of clarity and certainty enables the implementers in the civil service and our arm's-length bodies to get on with the job because they know where they are heading. It seems to me that that certainty of purpose, that strategic overview, is really useful. The more that we can work with States Assembly Members to help us get to that point, rather than through more unpredictable, day-by-day decision-making where you find that decisions are being taken in an atomised or incremental way on a specific site, with debates about what affordable housing levels should be available on a particular site, rather than taking an overview of our policy goals as a whole ... that would enable us to get more done more quickly and probably with a better benefit to Islanders.

Mr. G. Phipps:

Thank you. I will turn to the next ...

Deputy I. Gardiner:

I had one follow-up question. Maybe you could help us to understand - and it is important you mentioned housing, which we know is a very important topic, and you mentioned schools - why St. Helier primary school estate review, which is holding back lots of sites, and allocate 2 sites, is taking almost a year; why it is not progressing as it should to release the property? Does the strategy help or is the strategy slowing the process down?

Interim Chief Executive:

My colleague, Tim Daniels, might be able to help on this, but my belief is that that strategy that you refer to is prepared and written, and will be published, I am sure, as soon as we are able to do so.

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

There is a meeting on Wednesday with the Chief Minister and the Minister for Children and Education to go through that primary school allocation, to talk in detail about it.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Did it go through the process of the Corporate Asset Management Board, to the Regeneration Steering Group and after to the Council of Ministers, or it still did not? We are trying, because we are finishing our estate management review, to understand if you follow up the process that you have established in your strategy.

Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

Yes, it has gone through the Corporate Asset Management Board but it has not gone to the Regeneration Steering Group yet.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Thank you.

The Connétable of St. John:

You mentioned earlier about the level of vacancies and my interpretation was that they were not as bad as people think; 353 in H.C.S. or 14 per cent. Do you think that is sustainable?

Interim Chief Executive:

Well, there will always be a level of vacancies in any service and any area. Of course, the ideal is that we minimise that as much as we possibly can, but I think what we have in our senior colleagues in Health and Community Services is a very experienced and capable team of people who have a good insight, above all else, into safety and patient care. I know that they are confident and they are more experienced in this area than me, and probably most of us. They are confident that they are able to continue to provide safe and timely health services, although we have to recognise that after COVID, of course, there is a backlog. We understand that.

The Connétable of St. John:

Can you tell me what progress, if any, you have made during your time with joint working with Guernsey?

Interim Chief Executive:

Thanks. I will not overclaim for this. I had the pleasure of spending a day in Guernsey a few months ago and met my opposite number there, who is also an interim chief executive, with some of his colleagues, particularly looking at the digital side of their work. They have a slightly different approach there, working with a company called Agilisys in a 10-year digital programme, which is very interesting in itself. In terms of professional relationships and developing between officials the level of co-operation and joint working that you might hope to see between the 2 largest Channel

Islands, I think that is really good. I think officials work well with Guernsey and it is important that we do. I am not going to overclaim for that though. We do not have significant or substantial pipeline plans to develop shared services with Guernsey. We do, of course, do a lot of work with Guernsey, some of which is under-recognised, but there is not a transformational plan to strengthen that. I know you are very keen to see positive relationships with Guernsey and joint work with Guernsey. The crucial starting point is relationships, trust and confidence. I led and oversaw a big shared service in London before I came to Jersey, so I have done a lot of work in this space, and there is a whole literature on how partnership working develops and what stands in its way. The thing that obstructs and obscures partnership working is most often cultural dissonance and suspicion and mistrust. Partnership working will never work if that is in place.

The Connétable of St. John:

My final question is: why did you believe it was necessary to request a letter of instruction for the purchase of Le Câtillon coin hoard?

Interim Chief Executive:

Thank you for the question. Well, there is a long story here which I know people in this committee and many people watching this hearing will be very familiar with, of valuations and differing levels of valuation, and a storyline that has gone back over many years. Where that led to, ultimately, was one where from a professional perspective - and I am thinking in my role as P.A.O. (principal accountable officer) with responsibility for the best possible use of limited public money - I could not recommend the valuation which ultimately was agreed and determined. The accountable officer responsible for this area, Richard Corrigan, was of the same view. I took some time to make sure that I understood the perspective of other partners and particularly Jersey Heritage, who have some expertise in this area, and that influenced me in coming to the conclusion that this was not something that I was going to be able to recommend, and I know that Mr. Corrigan felt the same way. Having said that, for reasons that I equally understand and respect, the relevant Ministers, and particularly the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister, who have been involved in this story for a very long time, for many years, who will have seen this from the perspective of the Island in a way that I have not and have the benefit of insights that I do not have, were absolutely convinced that the higher level of valuation needed to be paid in order that this transaction could be complete, and that without that higher level of valuation it would not be complete. For that reason, we had the letter of instruction that you have seen. Finally, what I would say on that is that although people might have different views about the rights and wrongs of the view that I took or the ultimate Ministerial view, I hope that most reasonable people feel that it is a sign of a well-managed jurisdiction that that process can be seen transparently and that, therefore, the differing perspectives are set out and the Ministerial accountability for the decision-making is clear.

The Connétable of St. John:

Thank you. I will pass you back to the chair.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Thank you, that was really helpful. I am going to my couple of final questions. What areas do you think the public service will need to focus on over the next 12 months and why?

Interim Chief Executive:

Where to begin with this? I think that keeping careful track of performance and quality of service and standards, especially as we emerge from the pandemic, is very important. The first thing is to understand as deeply as we can, both through performance data but also through peer reviews and inspections, at what quality and standard are our public services being delivered and what level of efficiency and value for money. I do think that is especially important where services have expanded and developed quickly. I am thinking particularly of in children's services. There has been a very significant expansion in terms of the legal responsibilities that we have but also in the capacity, the numbers of staff, the resource base, of C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills). We just need to be certain in all areas, and particularly in children's social care, that the investments that have been made are having the effect and impact that you hoped that they would and that you intended that they would. I would say almost certainly there will be things that we have learnt and different and better ways of working. That is one crucial area. I think that the preparation for the June elections and afterwards needs to be carefully managed by the civil service so that we are prepared for whatever the policy framework looks like after June. I hope that that might be done in a way that is as strategic as possible, by which I mean part of our infrastructure of public services is the arm's-length bodies, the arm's-length organisations, States-owned entities, which work so well. I hope that what we will be able to do, as we move into the period of a new Government, is to take that big and strategic view around, for example, just to give an example of this: have we got the right organisations and public services in our arm's-length arrangements relative to what is managed within the civil service? If we took as an example the hospital, the General Hospital is managed currently within the civil service. Is that the best way of managing it? Is it best managed in that context or is there a case for saying that it should be, in some form, an arm's-length organisation? What are the benefits and possible disbenefits of such an arrangement? The reason I give this as an illustration, so I am not just talking to high level, is that we should have a strategic outlook for the public service infrastructure and the economy, not just thinking about the day-to-day, which of course is so important, but also the underlying strengths of the public services. We talked a little about the employment issues and States Employment Board so we know that that will be under review, and it needs to be. That is an important focus for the coming period. Finally, I think it is really important for the public services to respond to the most significant issues facing Jersey and the experience of life that Islanders feel. Right now, we know that that is very influenced by the

high housing costs in Jersey and by the skill shortages that we have, which impede economic development. It is important that we give deep thought to the best solutions for addressing those challenges.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Thank you. Really helpful. Finally, could you please outline 3 things that you have learnt about in your role from your time as interim chief executive in Jersey, and maybe 3 areas of improvement you believe your successor should focus on?

[17:00]

Interim Chief Executive:

Three things I have learnt. I am sorry if it is not 3; I will do my best anyway. Some areas that I have learnt and some areas for my successor to think about and improve. Maybe this is going to be a bit of a summary of some of the things I have said during this afternoon's hearing. What I have learnt is that it is true anywhere, anywhere that you work as a public servant, that listening, engagement and understanding where people are coming from is important. That is important everywhere. I would say it is more important in Jersey than almost anywhere else I have worked. That is the first thing I have learnt, in an island context, respecting the place that you are in, and I do. The 108,000 people who live here all know more than you do about the experience of being in Jersey, and being open to feedback and seeking it, that is something ... I hope I knew it anyway but I think I have learnt it more than ever as a result of being here. That is one thing. Secondly, what I have learnt is that, maybe like other organisations, the Government of Jersey is very dependent on a relatively small number of senior civil servants. People do work very hard. I think they are always conscientiously doing their best to implement government policy, to advise Ministers and to run good public services. I suppose I have learnt that it is important to respect and value that, and to support those people's health and well-being. I do not think it has necessarily been an easy period for our public servants because of the pandemic, because of the rapid change we have talked about and also because of the demands on them over a long period. The second thing I have learnt is the importance of supporting the team of colleagues. What would the third thing be? The third thing I have probably learnt is: take care before you embark on an ambitious proposal for a new hospital. I did not have much option about that but it is an enormous project that we have taken on and very, very demanding in all kinds of different ways that you will understand. Probably, in a future job, if my elected members were to say: "We are thinking about building a new hospital", I might have a few words of advice. Those are some things that I have learnt. For Suzanne going forward and things that I would suggest to her; I think in a sense they are all versions of what I have just said. My advice for her would be to get out and about, to see and to be seen, to listen and to engage. There is an enormous passion and enthusiasm in Jersey and a great pride in the Island, and the best things that

we often achieve are when you are harnessing that strength and capability. I would say that there is a paradox in being a chief executive that the job constantly takes you away from the front line and from being out and about seeing things, but that is often where most progress is made. I would suggest that she does her best to balance in that way. I do hope, secondly, that she is able to continue the journey of performance management and, I believe, performance improvement that we have embarked on. I think that will pay dividends in the future. Thirdly, I would probably advise her to take your work seriously but yourself not so seriously.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Thank you very much, it is really appreciated, your answers today, and we wish you all the best in your next role in the future. Thank you for being here.

[17:05]