



Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Review Hearing

Witness: The Chief Minister

Thursday, 13th October 2022

Panel:

Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier South (Chair)

Deputy M. Andrews of St. Helier North

Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier Central

Deputy L.J. Farnham of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter

Witnesses:

Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter - The Chief Minister

Deputy A. Curtis of St. Clement - The Assistant Chief Minister

Connétable A.N. Jehan of St. John - Vice Chair, States Employment Board

Ms. S. Wylie - Chief Executive Officer

Mr. T. Walker - Director General, Cabinet Office

[13:00]

Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier South (Chair):

Good afternoon and thank you, Chief Minister, Assistant Ministers, members of the public and officers for being here this afternoon for this quarterly public hearing with the Chief Minister and the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel. We have lots of questions to get through but just to start with the formalities. At the table we have the Chief Minister and Assistant Minister, if at any point there is a particular question of detail that comes up that you need assistance from officers to deal with then please invite them up to the table at that point. If they could introduce themselves when they do so just for the benefit of the transcript that would be helpful. For the benefit of the transcript we should go around the table just to introduce ourselves and say what our titles are as well. I am Deputy Sam Mézec, I am the Chair of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel.

Deputy M. Andrews of St. Helier North:

I am Deputy Max Andrews, I am a Deputy of St. Helier North and also vice chair of the panel.

Deputy L.J. Farnham of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

Deputy Lydon Farnham, member.

Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier Central:

Deputy Rob Ward, member of the panel.

The Chief Minister:

I am Deputy Kristina Moore and I am the Chief Minister.

Vice Chair, States Employment Board:

Constable Andy Jehan, vice chair of States Employment Board.

The Assistant Chief Minister:

Deputy Alex Curtis, Assistant Chief Minister.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

A final formality, if you could just confirm that you have read the notice in front of you and you understand it? I expect the Chief Minister understands it very well.

The Chief Minister:

I am quite familiar with it, thank you.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay, so you should have had the subject areas we were looking at in advance so let us crack on. We have quite a few questions so apologies if I have to rush us through at any point just to try and get as much through as we can. The first opening question to you, Chief Minister, is to ask you if you could briefly outline your longer-term policy and legislative priorities for the next 12 months, particularly in respect of those that fall outside of the 100-Day Plan that you have already published and are pursuing?

The Chief Minister:

Thank you. We will all try to be brief but if you obviously want to ask any follow up questions we will do our best. In terms of looking ahead, we only one week left of our 100-day plan. Officers across the whole of the Government of Jersey have been absolutely brilliant at rising to that challenge of

meeting the 100-day plan and the 18 actions points. We have been making some brilliant progress and I think many of those items have been publicised as we have gone along. Looking ahead, after that 100 days of course we have elements of that work to continue but across the Government each Minister has now set out their ministerial plan which makes fully transparent their agenda for the year ahead and that includes also the major pieces of legislation that we wish to tackle.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Could you give some examples of legislation that you think you will be bringing forward in this first year?

The Chief Minister:

Well, the legislation is right here in the back and they are very familiar areas for the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel. A few items have been left over from last time, the employment of the States of Jersey Employees Law and the introduction of the public services ombudsman, which of course is also in the 100-Day Plan, to name just a couple.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

What do you think you will have achieved at the end of the first year in office?

The Chief Minister:

We hope to start as we mean to go on and that means being very focused on delivering and meeting the many challenges that Islanders are facing at what is quite a difficult and uncertain time, particularly with regard to the cost of living. Really our main focus over and above the 100-day plan and as we continue on the day to day business of office is what will be a relentless and determined focus on the recruitment and retention of people to our critical services, so that is health, education and social work also because they are areas that need real focus and dedication to make sure that we are delivering the very best for Islanders, and also the best value for Islanders. At the heart of that is, of course, housing issues so that people can enjoy a great quality of life when they are here working and delivering services for the people.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

How will you measure that?

The Chief Minister:

Well, we are very keen on measuring and we will be measuring and monitoring the number of staff in each of those roles, alongside the permanent head count and where the focus really needs to be very fixed is in terms of agency staff and also people on non-permanent contracts because we want

to see a reduction in that and a real strengthening of a resilient and permanent workforce who can offer continuity in their services to Islanders.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

How will you demonstrate that to States Members and the wider public on whether you are meeting those outcomes or not?

The Chief Minister:

Well, we look forward to and welcome our opportunities to meet with yourselves and we will have to figure out a method of reporting that back to you, because there is no state secret in those figures. It will be important that we share them with you.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

In terms of the 4-year term of office, what do you expect you will have achieved at the end of that and how will you measure that as well?

The Chief Minister:

Well, we have set out in our common strategic priorities a number of items that we consider of particular importance to measure from things such as access to open spaces for our children. In one of our first days and first actions we visited Springfield school where we learned that over 90 per cent of the children attending that school do not have any access to open space when they go home, neither communal nor private open space. So that is an area of focus. We, of course, have the better life index and the suite of measures there, alongside the performance framework, which is an exemplar of reporting measures that are critical across our community.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

With 3 St. Helier Deputies sat on this side of the table, we will be keen to confirm for you then, based on what you have just said about children not having access to green space, are you saying then that they be the end of this 4 year term of office you will want there to have been delivered more open green space in St. Helier?

The Chief Minister:

We would, yes. There are many different ways of doing that and achieving that and take a strategic approach, perhaps. That is one of the things that the Future Places group, which is incorporating what was previously the R.S.G. (Regeneration Steering Group). This is group, Future Places, is a ministerial group that takes a strategic approach rather than a building by building and capital project by capital project approach. So it will look at how we cross town, we transport ourselves in and around town and the Island and therefore how we use our space differently.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Before I move on to question 5, any others?

Deputy R.J. Ward:

You specifically mentioned 90 per cent of children at Springfield do not have access to green space. What would you consider a success in terms of change of that percentage in the next year, the next 2 years, 3 years and 4 years?

The Chief Minister:

Well, at the outset we are working with some schools to ensure that there is adequate improvements in the outdoor space in those schools and also some shade because it became ... as we are all aware, it was a very hot summer and the heat and also shade became an issue in schools. Working with Deputy Gardiner, of course, as Minister for Education and Children, we have been looking at how we can improve that. But also talked about future places and our strategic approach to town and the surroundings. By taking that approach we can create pocket parks and also in determining planning applications I am sure the Minister for the Environment will take a great interest in communicating that desire for change with the relevant players.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

It is about when the children go home so can you see that their home environments, many of whom might be in private rented accommodation where there is no regulation, would improve and you can, if you like, guarantee that they will have that space in St. Helier? There is an enormous amount of building going on and there is no green space in those buildings.

The Chief Minister:

That is right and so it will perhaps be a ... that is why it would be a matter for the Minister for the Environment to communicate with people once we have come up with the strategies. I think it is a real desire to see a greening up. The areas where we do have authority is perhaps the public roads and how we can perhaps change some of those uses and free up some public space that will green up areas and bring some open space closer to those homes of those children.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Just a final thing, when will ... give us a timescale for when the residents of St. Helier Central will see a difference?

The Chief Minister:

I think that is perhaps a medium to longer-term issue, is it not? There is a determination to see those improvements and to deliver change in those areas. But I think this may be something that the ultimate measure will be on our success at the end of this term of office.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Anything else on this before I move to the next one?

Deputy R.J. Ward:

No, thanks.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Just turning to your Assistant Ministers, I will just offer them each an opportunity to say exactly what they see their role as Assistant Chief Minister, including what responsibilities have been delegated to you so far and which may not yet have been delegated but which you anticipate may be? Constable Jehan, first.

Vice Chair, States Employment Board:

I have been appointed as vice chair of the States Employment Board with responsibility for the people. It is an area that I have quite a bit of experience in and we have quite a lot of work to do. So I am looking forward to working with the team. We have mentioned already the need for recruitment. The delivery hub have already come up with a plan to make it easier to recruit people, to streamline the process for both candidates and the organisation. That is one of the first things that the new Cabinet Office have delivered. That has been launched this week in the education area and we are looking forward to seeing some good results there. At the moment it is far too complex for both candidates and the organisation to recruit people in terms of the process. We are looking to streamline things where we can and we are going to follow this trial with great interest and hopefully widen it out as soon as we can. I have just come from a meeting with the 3 teaching unions so we are looking to meet regularly with trade unions and staff. We are looking at launching new codes of conduct, we are really going to put a lot of emphasis in the values of the organisation, the existing values. We believe they are suitable but we have to embed them through the organisation. As the Chief Minister has said, less reliance on agency workers and zero hour contract workers. We will be able to measure those by the amount we are currently spending to what we spend in the future.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

You mentioned meeting the teachers trade unions, are you anticipating meeting representatives from other trade unions?

Vice Chair, States Employment Board:

Absolutely. In our meeting this week we have put together a template to work with trade unions, which is going out for consultation with all of the trade union bodies and we look forward to working with all organisations.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Are you committed to having regular face to face meetings with those union representatives over this 4 year term?

Vice Chair, States Employment Board:

Yes, 100 per cent. I have experience in partnership working, something the T.U.C. (Trades Union Congress) have been advocating for over 20 years. We will not be doing face to face pay negotiation but we will be listening to the ideas and the concerns of representative bodies throughout the term. Today I have committed to meeting with the joint 3 unions from the teachers on a quarterly basis.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Excellent, thank you very much.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I just check, when you say agreements there was a previous agreement with one teacher union above and beyond all the others, which I thought was a very wrong thing to do. Can you assure us that there will not be one ... I cannot remember what it was called, a partnership agreement that only one union signed. Can you assure that will not happen again?

Vice Chair, States Employment Board:

We are going out with a template and we will listen to the feedback. What we do not want to do is to not have a partnership agreement because of the wording in one template. I cannot assure you that the wording will not be different. We hope to have one agreement but clearly they are coming from a wide range of services so we will deal with each one but they are based on the same principles.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

But what I mean is if one union decides to sign that partnership agreement and others do not, you will not simply negotiate with one union or meet with one union because of the partnership agreement?

Vice Chair, States Employment Board:

No, as you are aware, unions have the right to negotiate with the employer so they will be able to negotiate with the employer. It is our intention to meet with the unions on a frequent basis and to listen to their concerns, their members concerns and also their ideas because often they have the answers to the problems that we face and we need to listen to them more, I think.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

But, again, there will not be one union that will sign a partnership agreement and then you will speak the other unions separately but, if you like, there is a special deal with one?

[13:15]

Vice Chair, States Employment Board:

I cannot pre-empt what is going to happen in terms of any kind of negotiation with them but the aim is to have a template which we invite all unions to sign up and we will listen to the feedback that we get. Whether we meet the teachers unions singly or together, ideally we would meet them together but clearly their members have different needs. We need to be aware of that nuance.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I think what Deputy Ward is getting at with his question is a scepticism sometimes existed in the past about working with one union to divide them from the other union, even though they may represent the same profession in there. It would just be helpful to have your commitment that that is not the intention.

Vice Chair, States Employment Board:

Sure, this is not about divide and conquer, this is about partnership working in the true sense of the word. It is about working with the organisations and our organisation to try and get the best outcome for the Islanders and for our staff.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

As well as you meeting with union representatives, which I think is a very positive thing, and I know they will appreciate that as well, would you be encouraging ministerial colleagues to do the same thing, obviously not for pay negotiations or anything like that but to learn first hand from their workforce and their representatives about the areas that fall in their portfolio.

Vice Chair, States Employment Board:

One hundred per cent. I should make it clear, it is not just me, it is the States Employment Board that are going to be meeting with the trade unions. Clearly we will not always be able to attend all

of the meetings and we have already met some of the trade unions with some of the Ministers and it is something I will really encourage because of my previous experience.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Anything more for Constable Jehan? Okay, Deputy Curtis, over to you.

The Assistant Chief Minister:

Thank you. My responsibility that the Chief Minister has delegated is for modernisation and digital within the Government. That is both the department named Modernisation and Digital, which now falls under the newly formed Cabinet Office, formerly through the line of Chief Operating Office, as well as a project directly into the Chief Operating Office, which is the I.T.S. (integrated technology solution) programme. Beyond that I am trying to make sure that I am involved with other Ministers on digital projects, whether it be with the Minister for Children and Education on the digital education strategy, and also obviously looking at how it plays with my role as Assistant Minister for Economic Development with digital policy. Within that my real vision and ambition for this department is to be more centralised and considered in how it delivers I.T. (information technology) services that address the citizen and business needs. I think there has been a level of work in creating a foundation in baselining and securing our internal I.T. systems previously but right now I do think we need to be at a point where we pivot and see that the digital solutions government are delivering are not only talking to each other and creating a better platform for government to be a more efficient organisation but are directly addressing needs of citizens.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

A view I have heard expressed before on this area with previous Government Plans, in particular looking at the budget allocated to I.T., modernisation in the Government is that there has sometimes been a perception that those budgets have gone up and up without seeing much delivered as a result of that. Is that a view that you shared before taking on this office affecting what your programme will be now that you are in this role?

The Assistant Chief Minister:

I would definitely say that the budget has gone up and up. There are a couple of reasons for that, some legitimate, some that we are challenging and making the department think long and hard about how they are delivering against. One of them is that the Modernisation and Digital Department has taken on the I.T. responsibility of C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills), H.C.S. (Health and Community Services) and the States of Jersey Police. In doing so, have also taken on the head count and the operating of those services. That was a direct cost that if you line up the budgets you should see come off other departments. But I think there is a great challenge as to whether we are utilising resources and money efficiently and that has been something I have been

... I brought in with the Constable, we are looking through the budget and we have gone through, together with the department, to work out how we can be more efficient.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Thank you. Anything else on that? Okay, back to you, Chief Minister. One thing you have spoken about in your election campaigns has been your intention to restore trust in government. Can I ask you what exactly you mean by that? Why you feel it is necessary and provide an example of how you will do so in your view?

The Chief Minister:

We all saw the publication yesterday of the report that looked at the COVID pandemic and gave very clear feedback on how the previous government did not communicate very well with its public and therefore there were some issues that arose out of that. We intend to start as we ... well, to carry on as we have already started I think and that is through communicating differently and through our actions. Hopefully we will gain the trust of others because we understand that trust is earned and we cannot simply expect to have it. That was one of the really important reasons for having our 100-day action plan and delivering on it. We continue in that vein.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Do you think you have been an effective communicator in the few weeks that you have been in office?

The Chief Minister:

I do my best. Sometimes it is something that is hard to fit into the day but I certainly do my best and, of course, we have a communications team who also assist with the wider government communications. We can always do better and there are often messages that I wish I was sending from my sleep, but I hope that people notice and feel a difference.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Aside from communication is it not also about outcomes and what will you be doing to ensure that where there are positive improvements on outcomes that you are promoting that effectively but also being honest about where you might fall short and allow the public and their representatives to hold you to account?

The Chief Minister:

That is why we felt it was very important to include some of the outcomes that we wish to focus on in our common strategic policies. Also, as we identified, with our approach to retention of people in our critical services in particular, it is very important that we define that information and that we share

it particularly with yourselves as the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel, as ultimately those who hold us to account in our roles but equally with the public.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

The Chief Minister is very knowledgeable on communications coming from a media background. The P.R. (public relations) from the Government has been excellent so far. How will she differentiate between P.R. and communications?

The Chief Minister:

I think it is a very different thing, is it not? Our job is to communicate, to tell people what we are doing so that they have a good understanding of that. It is so easy to do when we take the time to do it. If we simply take a small video of ourselves or snap a picture of a meeting and share it with people via social media. Of course we have excellent media in the Island but we also have the ability to communicate our own messages via social media, which I find to be a particularly effective way of engaging with people and talking to them.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Beyond just your personal approach to those issues, do you think there are systemic changes that are needed in the Government and democratic structures so the public out there believe that they can Trust not just the individuals who hold office but the office themselves to be equipped to deliver for them?

The Chief Minister:

We all heard on the doorsteps, did we not, the word “accountability”? I think people really want to see that. That means that we have to operate in a transparent and open environment and welcome that opportunity to, warts and all sometimes, share information and to be open about some of the challenges as well as some of the great things that go on. Later this evening we are holding ... or the chief executive is holding a celebration event for people working within the Government and across what is a very large organisation that makes Jersey work every single day. People doing all sorts of job with varied skills. So it is brilliant to be able to celebrate those moments and those achievements, and to recognise them. But, of course, when things do not go so well equally we need to be open about that.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

But they still sound more like approaches as opposed to systems. Are there systemic changes, rule changes, law changes, that kind of thing that you think would enhance democratic accountability?

The Chief Minister:

One of the actions in the 100 days is a public services ombudsman. So if that is what you mean then we are certainly making progress in finalising the law drafting instructions and ensuring that progress is made on that. We also see ... and our colleagues across the water in Guernsey are keen to join us in that approach. I think they will be debating on 19th October, which is next week, a proposition to do that.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay, thank you. Deputy Andrews for the next questions.

Deputy M. Andrews:

Okay, I would like to start off ... first of all we have a new ministerial government in office so what can we see that will be different compared to previous ministerial plans and Government Plans as well?

The Chief Minister:

I think we published them all for a start and we have certainly taken a different approach to communicating the minutes of our meetings and making sure that they are dealt with in a timely manner and communicated. We have published our ministerial plans separately and then will move next year to delivery plans. So the programme of government has been as clear and concise as we can possibly make it and now we look forward to getting on with the delivery.

Deputy M. Andrews:

In terms of some of the components that have been mentioned quite explicitly in the reports that we have seen and also in the detailed plans, what for you would be a standout that has been different compared to previous administrations?

The Chief Minister:

I think it is the team approach. We all are very minded and focused on delivering for the public, engaging with the public and working together as a cohesive team. I think that is very refreshing.

Deputy M. Andrews:

I see as well there has obviously been some level of preparedness, of course with inflation, in terms of the capital projects. However, has there been any extensive discussions with the Minister for Infrastructure in terms of when there is going to be renovations taking place and also making sure that the budgets are allocated and also timely to meet those project needs as well within the Government Plan.

The Chief Minister:

We are very aware of the impact that capital projects can have on the community because, of course, the construction industry has a lot of private work to do as well and long and involved public projects can impact on the ability of workforce planning which has an impact on the private sector, if that is what you mean. Also I think there is Comptroller and Auditor General recommendation to ensure that condition reports are conducted on all publicly owned buildings and so the money for that has been allocated in the Government Plan and that is certainly a piece of work that we see as very important press on with, because then we can make further decisions about the condition of those buildings and where improvements need to be made.

Deputy M. Andrews:

Given the short time period as well of new composition of Ministers, in terms of when you were discussing with one another the budget allocations, have there been some tough decisions that have been made?

The Chief Minister:

It was a very condensed period of time that we had to deliver that because, of course, the elections moving from May to June had a big impact on the delivery of the Government programme which still had to meet certain deadlines. So we conducted those discussions in a relatively short period of time and we had to deal with £100 million worth of requests for growth money and bring that down into something that was deliverable. Of course along the way there were some challenging conversations that we had to devise a way of pushing forward and prioritising what we think the public want to see and what we must deliver for the public. That was where we came back to in each of our conversations.

Deputy M. Andrews:

Of course we have seen the mini budget that has been approved but obviously the dynamics have since changed. For instance in the UK we have interest rates be reported in terms of increases and also in terms of the mini budget as well. There has obviously been a huge level of government redistribution but some members of the public could potentially be questioning the mini budget having to be decided upon in such a short timeframe. Is there potential lessons that could be learnt moving forward as well?

The Chief Minister:

We were very pleased to deliver the mini budget as quickly as we did and we were really pleased to see unanimous agreement across the Assembly as well. But at the time we did say that we would be keeping a watching brief and responding to the challenges that were ahead because it is a period of uncertainty and so it is something we certainly need to watch closely and be nimble enough to respond as and when is necessary. But I think at the moment there is a suite of measures that

provide that comfort and some support to all sorts of people out there in the public and in our community. So we will do exactly what we said and keep watching.

Deputy M. Andrews:

In terms of, say, sustaining a primary budget surplus moving forward as well, are you quite confident that can be achieved even though, for instance, the Government's level of expenditure, especially with inflation, is also going to potentially increase?

[13:30]

The Chief Minister:

Legally we are bound to deliver a balanced budget and so that is what we did through the process that we had. But also internally we have a value for money project which has been put together and I think it is a fantastic approach from government and it will help us to deliver more for the public but with always an eye on value for money. So we should be able to simplify and perhaps in some areas stop doing things in order to better deliver on those areas that we really must.

Deputy M. Andrews:

Thank you. Chair.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Thank you. I was just thinking, a slightly different response to your mini budget than your U.K. (United Kingdom) counterpart's mini budget in terms of the effect on the economy. Your government programme, that kind of formation we have not quite seen before in terms of the combination of C.S.P. (Common Strategic Policy), Government Plan, that happening at the same time is different to how that was presented previously, and timeframe is also slightly different. Is there anything that you think needs to change in what the Government is required to deliver after it takes office based on your experience of choosing to do things slightly differently versus what the rules say you have to do?

The Chief Minister:

I do not think we have particularly strayed from the rules. The C.S.P. ordinarily comes out earlier than the Government Plan but under the law if we did not deliver it within 4 months, we had to deliver it on or before the Government Plan, so we had no choice but to meet that deadline because of the timing of the debate for the Government Plan and the need to have the budget ready for the following year on 1st January. So it has really been a matter of necessity but also a real desire to, yes, state what our intentions are, but then really focus on getting on to do because that is what we are here to do, we are here to deliver for the public and we are ...

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

But you are content that the process is okay and does not need to be amended before the next government takes office to tighten up a little bit, or you are happy as it is?

The Chief Minister:

I think what we could have done with was a bit more time. So perhaps Members might like to think about the timing of the next election in advance of that because it is a real challenge for anyone entering government, I think, to meet all of those deadlines. It has particularly been a challenge for the public service to assist us in meeting all of those deadlines in what is a very restrictive period of time.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I have thoughts on that but I will not say them at this point; Deputy Ward might, who knows. So just one final one from me before I hand over to Deputy Ward who has got some questions on this, have steps been taken in this Government Plan to improve the demonstration of the links between finance delivery of services and performance? Have you made efforts to make that clearer within that document itself?

The Chief Minister:

I think we have. The Government Plan is to me very different just in its size. We have covered a lot of bases in here but I think in a clearer and more cohesive way. Well that is down to the good people who have made it happen but by dint of the timeframe in which we were working, we had to really focus on what was important, but we did strategically want to deliver documents that were clear, easy to navigate and to understand.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Can you give anything away as to what may or may not be in the annex that people will be interested to see when that eventually does come out? Because in previous iterations of the Government Plan, really that has been where the key detail is that people have been interested in, so can you give anything away at this point?

The Chief Minister:

Well I think it will give some of the finer detail. I know there have been requests for business cases which we are working to get to at the earliest possible moment, but we have been grateful for the feedback on those areas. My approach is always to be concise but clear, and so I hope that you will be satisfied with the additional information when it is presented to you, and I think that is going to be very soon.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Some questions that came from before; it is always difficult when you wait your turn and it goes a little ... but the difference between this government and the last government, so for an example our Value for Money project. What is the difference between that and the old government's efficiencies agenda? Is that not the same thing just called something different?

The Chief Minister:

No, I do not think it is. So, the Comptroller and Auditor General said of the efficiencies programme that it was unwise - and I am paraphrasing their words there - to deliver an efficiencies programme without the knowledge and the reassurance that each individual item could be delivered on. So, particularly given our timeframe, we have taken a different approach in terms of just thinking about how we deliver and what we deliver to drive better value for money for the public because everybody in the public service is motivated by delivering for the public. That is one of the things that really drive them and it is clearly their passion, and so we all want to ensure that we are doing of our very best, but also being mindful of the public's money.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I think it is a question of transparency. I see what you are saying but I cannot see just some ... I suppose we have to wait for practical examples of that. But does that mean the removal of some services because they are just not cost-effective and thus relying more on those services being provided by other sectors, for example?

The Chief Minister:

I think if I could give a really simple example, you can look at forms that we all fill in. Those forms have to be administered, and so the simpler the forms are for the public to fill in, the easier it is for that person, but also the easier it is and the less time-consuming it is for the person who then has to administer it and deal with it. So it is about functions, really, which is part of Deputy Curtis's work and our move to digitisation and using information technology to our best advantage. Because that of course is a simplification, and it goes back to the broad premise of our tax system which has been low, broad, simple and fair. The simple bit is about being simple to administer; therefore, as cost-effective as it can be.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I ask, in those sort of situations where digitisation ... many of us can fill a form in online but there are significant sectors of our society that need one-to-one help. We have seen in C.L.S. (Customer and Local Services) that the failure really to have one face to face has created genuine problems for people. So can we assume that those sorts of services will not become a victim of

value for money because they may not appear to be value for money in a digital world. Well it will not, they obviously will not, because they will be more expensive.

The Chief Minister:

We really understand that. Earlier this week we started the Older Persons Living Forum and, in doing so, we went along to Age Concern and talking to people there who were having their lunch. Firstly, they were delighted that Revenue Jersey had been holding drop-in sessions for people who do want to go and engage with someone face to face and to receive advice. So the first one was held, I think this week or last, at the library. The feedback was really good and so that is a real positive step. In those discussions, the inevitable conversation came up about social security and the one front door. So we made a commitment to take those officers out into the community and go and actively hold drop-in sessions at places like Age Concern because it just makes sense, does it not, to go to places where people are and where it is convenient for people. We really understand that, particularly for certain sectors of our community, people really value face-to-face communication.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

So moving on, I am absolutely determined that this can be a yes or no question, so let us see how we go. Chief Minister, of all of the proposals in your 100-Day Plan, can you confirm that they will all have been achieved at the end of this 100 days?

The Chief Minister:

Yes, in one way or another.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

That sounds like a no.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

It sounds like a maybe.

The Chief Minister:

It is a yes but perhaps I think I acknowledged in question time in the Assembly last week that my language was rather ambitious in some areas. So we may be moving towards an absolute delivery of the words but essentially we are making amazing progress on each of the action points.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

What, if anything, has faced any unanticipated delays?

The Chief Minister:

So, there are always little issues here and there but people are working really well to iron those out and make sure we are making as good progress as we can.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Such as?

The Chief Minister:

Well, I think the delivering meals for every child at primary school has some practical issues that we need to iron out.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Sorry to interrupt, but on that one - and correct me if I have got this wrong - but I thought I saw the wording of that particular item to be "to bring forward proposals or a proposition" or something along those lines. Where is that?

The Chief Minister:

Yes, well I was probably quite careful with those words, and so we are doing well on that. But, as I say, there are some practicalities to iron out but last week ...

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

But there is not a proposition in this 100 Days then?

The Chief Minister:

Well, the money is allocated which is the main thing, and also some work has been done to complete serveries in some of the schools, so we are making good progress.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Of the proposed actions in that 100-Day Plan, could you identify which of those were initiatives of your own creation versus which ones were kind of already in train anyway but that you have seen to conclusion?

The Chief Minister:

So, they were drawn on a number of sources and I think ... well, for example, the Democratic Accountability Group, which identified the use and value of creating a cabinet office. Then there was the £10 which I think was widely talked about as the minimum wage in and around the election period. I am not saying that I was plagiarising your manifesto of course ...

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

You are welcome to the rest of it if you want it, honestly.

The Chief Minister:

But I think on that one we have gone one better in that the Minister for Social Security received the views from the Employment Forum and in quite an extraordinary fashion took the decision to go over and above the recommendation and set the minimum wage at £10.50 from 1st November which has been broadly really welcomed, and I think that was really the right thing to do.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

One of the action points was about setting up the Older Persons Living Forum, which I think you briefly alluded to. Could you say what is the composition of that forum and how is it being set up to continue to perform its role? Do you have a clear terms of reference for that body?

The Chief Minister:

There is a terms of reference and that is available on a website, I am absolutely certain. It will be a quarterly forum; we are looking at the moment for people to join it. We look to a broad cross-section of that community to come together and to provide their views and their advice and feedback.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

How do they do that? Is that directly to you, is it to the whole Council of Ministers, how many people are you anticipating to be on this body? What will it look like if I see it?

The Chief Minister:

Well, the finer detail is set out on the website but it is essentially a diverse group that will come together and they will be ably supported and we look forward to hearing their findings once it is fully formed.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

They report directly to you or ...

The Chief Minister:

Well, it is going to be more of a broader conversation, I think, because their findings will be directed in different areas to the people who can most effect the changes that are defined by them.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

The People and Skills Commission was another one you proposed setting up, could you just update us on where that is?

The Chief Minister:

Yes. So, it has become a ministerial group which encompasses also what was formerly known as H.A.W.A.G. (Housing and Work Advisory Group) which Deputy Farnham will be very familiar with.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Sorry to interrupt, formerly known as H.A.W.A.G.? H.A.W.A.G. is established in law so it still exists, I would have thought.

The Chief Minister:

Well it is, yes. So it encompasses it so H.A.W.A.G. members still exist and we still have to take decisions as a group under the law in certain areas. But the People and Skills ministerial group has taken a more strategic and broader approach in its work and it is working through many of the issues and finding new ways to balance all of those competing areas of responsibility but also delivery across the community.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Who supports that body in terms of officer support?

The Chief Minister:

Officer support comes from the Cabinet Office.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Can you say any more than that? Any particular titles that fall to that if you need to call upon another officer to help out? Please do.

[13:45]

The Chief Minister:

I may need to invite somebody to the table but we have policy officers who will be well known to yourselves from S.P.P.P. (Strategic Policy, Performance and Population). They have been supporting us very capably, along with Statistics Jersey who also have supported us in terms of delivering facts and figures from which we can base our decision-making.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Anything else from the other members on these ones? No, okay. So the appeals process for the Co-Funded Payroll Scheme is now live, so can you explain how that appeals process was decided

upon and any options that were disregarded during the development process and why you have settled on the version that you have.

The Chief Minister:

Yes. So we set up a small ministerial group, and Deputy Curtis and Constable Jehan were members of that group, so perhaps one of them might like to ...

Vice Chair, States Employment Board:

Yes, so we looked at the different types of claim that may arise, and we have tried to put them into different categories. We looked at the amount that people would be asked to pay back and we set the figure at what we believed was reasonable and we discarded some of the previous figures, and also the time that people were given, we extended as well.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Do you mind if I ask why it was these 2 Assistant Ministers in particular, just based on what we heard for their main responsibilities as Assistant Chief Ministers? It did not strike me as obviously connected to this, so I thought it might have been another Minister.

Vice Chair, States Employment Board:

So there are 2 Assistant Ministers for Treasury and Resources also with us.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Right, understood.

The Assistant Chief Minister:

Just to be clear, my role in that is as Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

There you go. That makes perfect sense, thank you. So, can I ask how you have been communicating this to businesses that might want to avail themselves of this? I know it has been reported in the media but has there been anything more proactive behind the scenes and, so far, what kind of take-up are you getting?

The Chief Minister:

Yes, I am not aware of the take-up so far, and I do not think the Assistant Ministers have either but what we did some weeks ago was to write to all people who had outstanding issues under the Co-

Funded Payroll Scheme just to give them a timeline and to let them know what was going on behind the scenes and then they have all received follow-up letters, I believe.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Have you had to allocate additional resourcing to this and what kind of cost are you looking at for this? Do you have any anticipation for how much may be written off as a result of this?

Vice Chair, States Employment Board:

I think there is a figure of £250,000, if my memory serves me right. But I would need to come back to you on that, and I can also come back to you on the amount of take-up.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Thank you.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Congratulations on introducing this. We failed to reach a consensus in the previous government but I do warmly welcome it. One of the challenges is, though, one of the concerns which came to us in advice was we could be setting a precedent, for example, if we agree to write off some of the alleged debt. That could bring other businesses forward who have paid it and they could be seeking compensation. It is a tricky one but how would you deal with that?

Vice Chair, States Employment Board:

Yes, I should have mentioned earlier when we were asked about what we had discarded. We discarded writing off claims of up to £100 and claims of up to £500 for that very reason, inasmuch as if you had paid £200 would you get a refund, and if you paid £600 would you get a refund, so we discarded those. We hope that we do not have to write anything off at all but I think because we have extended the amount of time that people have got to pay, then that is where that £250,000 could come in.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I think that is four-fifths of the problem but good luck with it. Thanks.

Vice Chair, States Employment Board:

Thank you.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Anything else on this? Deputy Farnham, over to you for question 18.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Thank you. Yes, this is in coming back to the Cabinet Office. I have got probably half a dozen questions, they are quick questions, but I will do maybe a couple at a time. How will Islanders benefit from the formation of a Cabinet Office? Is this not just a reconstitution of the old Chief Minister's Department?

The Chief Minister:

It is about streamlining and operating efficiently together, really, and as a public service.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

So, Islanders will benefit from perhaps financial savings from streamlining the services you offer?

The Chief Minister:

Well from an efficiently-run, clear and focused public service that supports their senior leaders and the Council of Ministers. Would you like us to invite the chief executive to the table at this point?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I have no problem with that. Chair?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Well we can see how the Chief Minister does as a last resort.

Vice Chair, States Employment Board:

I think we have already seen, as I mentioned earlier, the good work that has been done in terms of recruitment. Now, I was briefed on that on Friday. I am really excited by the work the team have done, and they have done that in a reasonably short period of time, and that is where the talent from around the organisation has been poured into that Cabinet Office to help on a specific project which I am sure the chief executive can tell you in more detail than I. But that is an example of where we are giving the team the tools to do the job, is how I would describe it.

Chief Executive Officer:

Shall I reply to that?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Could you first just introduce yourself for the microphone, please?

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes, of course, I will do. Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive and Head of Public Service. So you are correct in that the formation brings together the different units of the Chief Operating Office of the Office of the Chief Executive and of the Ministerial Support Unit. Doing that in itself means that we are much more joined-up in supporting the Council of Ministers and also much more joined-up in terms of getting a grip of all of the issues that need to be improved across the organisation, and also enables us now to look at rationalisation of the Cabinet Office and its structures and ensure there is not duplication, ensure that the Ministers are really effectively supported as well. One of the new aspects of it is to set up what we have called the Delivery Unit which is what Constable Jehan is referring to. That unit is bringing people from across the organisation, creating a talent pool as well across the organisation to address some of the long-standing issues and problems that we have, and to identify some of the opportunities that we have as well. So, supporting the Chief Minister on the functioning of the Future Places Working Group, as one of those examples, looking at the timeframes for recruitment and retention and trying to make sure that we concertina that and get it much more streamlined is another one of the projects that this delivery hub is doing.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

So, all of those workstreams, or most of them, the majority of them, if I remember rightly, did exist but they perhaps had responsibility with different Ministers across the organisation, but they all technically reported into the C.E.O. (Chief Executive Officer), so bringing it into a Cabinet Office will help to consolidate it. So which Ministers will the new Cabinet Office serve, how many staff will it support, how many new, if any, public sector jobs will be created and what will it cost?

Chief Executive Officer:

So, it is being delivered within the existing costs, that has been very clear, and also there will be no additional costs in terms of staff. Now we will be moving staff between different jobs and we will be moving staff between different parts of the organisation to try and support that streamlining of those approaches. But we will also be looking for efficiencies within the Cabinet Office over a period of time once we identify whether there is potential for consolidation and removing duplication. In terms of Ministers, obviously the ...

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Will there be a Cabinet Office Minister or will that be Chief Minister?

Chief Executive Officer:

I think that is a question for the Chief Minister. However, at this point in time, the Cabinet Office is reporting into the Chief Minister and the Council of Ministers, the Deputy Chief Minister and the 2 Assistant Ministers that are here represented today.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

So I ask this because being a Member of the past 3 governments, it was sometimes quite challenging when too much was centralised, and in the past we had seen too much influence in the hands of a few Ministers; that is why I am asking which Ministers will it report to and will the Cabinet Office report generally to the Council of Ministers. How will that remain inclusive?

The Chief Minister:

Well we are very mindful of the lines of accountability and the proposition that former Deputy Young brought to the Assembly, and so that is a piece of work that continues to be done. Under the law we have to publish an Article 38 report which will identify the Ministers with their delegated responsibilities underneath each of them and of course that goes for Assistant Ministers as well, so we will be publishing that soon.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Is it likely to be, as it is now, the Cabinet Office will be led politically by the Chief Minister and the Assistant Chief Ministers at this stage and then ...

The Chief Minister:

Yes. Well you are all familiar with the Troy Rule of course and we are somewhat limited to a government of 21 Members only, and so I have to make sure everybody is well engaged and clear about the work that they each have to do.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I was not meaning bringing extra Members in, I mean will, for example, the Minister for Treasury and Resources and maybe the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture be part of the Cabinet ministerial team, or you have not decided that yet? Is that still a work in progress?

The Chief Minister:

We have not yet, yes, but we continue to work together as a team. Particularly having brought together the Government Plan, I think as a group we are finding a very cohesive and collaborative way of working together that enables each Minister to focus on their own priorities, but also to collaborate and to support each other as and when it is needed.

Vice Chair, States Employment Board:

I think in the example that we have given, Health have got issues with recruitment, C.Y.P.E.S. have got recruitment issues, and so we have listened to that feedback, and then the delivery officers have gone off and done the work, so they will be delivering for the organisation, yes.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

No, understood.

Chief Executive Officer:

Also reporting into the Council of Ministers as well on a very regular basis as to what the Cabinet Office is doing and how we are helping them to solve some of the issues that they face within the department.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Good, I hope it can avoid duplication and we do not see Cabinet Office taking up work that is also being duplicated in other parts of the public sector.

Chief Executive Officer:

I think that is the very point, that consolidation is really important to us.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Thank you.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I just ask - as a general question, it is not on there - but what is your mechanism for disagreement? Because we have heard a lot about agreement and collaboration and people singing from the different manifestos, but what is your mechanism for disagreement?

The Chief Minister:

Well it goes down to being open with each other again and working through those issues. Of course, people disagree all the time and on varying levels, do they not? So, I guess, we have to pick them up at an early stage and work together to resolve any differences of opinion, and then if there is an escalation then there needs to be a process. I think we published yesterday the code of conduct?

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Yes.

The Chief Minister:

Yes, so that does identify something of a mechanism.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Well, it says that there is effectively a collective responsibility sort of light, if I can be controversial and call it that, but I think any good organisation does know how to disagree as well as agree. Will

that be transparent in the minutes to say that there was a vote taken and it was just a majority of 7 to 6? Is that what we can expect in terms of minutes from the Council of Ministers?

The Chief Minister:

Well I mentioned earlier that we are taking a different approach to the minutes, and so I guess as and when that does occur, then it will be reflected in the minutes.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Thank you.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Just one from me on this and this is to the Chief Minister. When the P.P.C. (Privileges and Procedures Committee) subcommittee looked at the idea of a Cabinet Office, there was some discussion about where the C.E.O. would sit in that and whether we would have a separate cabinet secretary that would support the Cabinet Office. At this point you have not done that, is that still on the table or have you discounted a possibility of having a cabinet secretary and having a C.E.O. that is more focused on the delivery side?

The Chief Minister:

Well, the role of the C.E.O. is clearly outlined in the law at the moment and it encompasses both roles as it is ...

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

But you can propose changes to the law and you are democratically within your rights to do that. So, am I taking it by that answer you are not considering the introduction of a cabinet secretary to split those roles?

The Chief Minister:

I think perhaps if there are, going forward, areas where we need to provide support in one direction or another, then that will have to be looked at in conjunction with existing roles and people who have been appointed to doing them, because I think the roles that are there are very clear.

[14:00]

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Thank you. Moving on to another part of your 100-Day Plan which was the review of the Our Hospital Project. Could you update us on where that review is now and when we will expect to see its final report?

The Chief Minister:

Yes, I can. I think a press release was sent out earlier today, or it may have gone out while we have been speaking, to announce when that will be forthcoming because, unfortunately, due to the sad demise of the Queen and the impact that had on certain key people who were working on that review, there is a slight delay. But it is now in its very final stages, they have been working really well and the report will be published on 1st November now.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

On 1st November, okay. One of the reasons you gave as a rationale for holding this review and not simply going ahead with what the previous government and Assembly had decided was what appeared to be a view from you that there were more affordable options that could be delivered. Can I ask you on what basis you think that is the case and explain the rationale behind believing that there is somehow a more affordable option out there?

The Chief Minister:

Absolutely. I am a pragmatist, I think, at heart, but also I did a lot of listening during the election process and before in my role as a scrutineer. I have been tracking this project in its various situations since my first role in the States Assembly which was as the Chair of the Health and Social Security and Housing, as it was then, Scrutiny Panel. We watched the hospital project unfold in its first iterations and then, of course, I had a period of in government and then back in Scrutiny, and throughout that time the hospital project has rumbled on. So, I feel that I have a good understanding of the various viewpoints, the different iterations that have been considered, and a close understanding of the public's view of where we were, alongside the economic realities of today. We are faced with inflation and uncertainty in the global economic situation. It was therefore, I feel, entirely justifiable and rational to take a moment to pause and to re-assure ourselves that this was the right thing to do. Just this morning, if I could ramble on just a little ...

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I am looking at the clock.

The Chief Minister:

Just this morning, I attended the first Sustainable Construction Summit which was a really interesting morning, and I enjoyed the first 2 keynote speakers, one of whom used the new Cyril Le Marquand House project as a case study in what they considered to be not a great project in terms of its sustainability. But of course, as a scrutineer and a Member of the Assembly who tried to encourage the Assembly to take a different approach to that, I am now very aware that we are on a path and one of no return on that project. But where we can deliver better value for money for the public

going forward, we will use every possible opportunity, the hospital project being one and the Jersey Care Model being another.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

If you are mentioning that event this morning, I am presuming it is because it is relevant and you believe that that will lead to savings in the delivery of a hospital. But you have also mentioned the previous iterations of hospital projects and the one thing that they have all got in common is the one that succeeded them turned out to be more expensive than the one that came beforehand, so how can we have any confidence that this genuinely will be different this time? You have mentioned the economic situation that is making everything more expensive, does that not mean that the hospital will just be more expensive and that the only way to reduce its costs is to end up with something worse or something scaled back from what was originally planned at the very least?

The Chief Minister:

So, I come to this as a lay person with simply a common-sense, pragmatic approach, and I think that common-sense, pragmatic approach is shared by some of my ministerial colleagues, and in particular the Minister for Infrastructure, who I know to be a determined and focused individual who will take the project forward. But, in the circumstances, there is a need for somebody of experience and ability to provide a professional view in this and that is exactly what the review is doing. We really look forward to seeing the findings of it.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

As a potential patient, I do not want to be treated in a hospital designed on the basis of common sense, I want it led by experts ...

The Chief Minister:

Of course.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

... as I think most people will feel when it comes to something so complicated. So I ask the question again: how can we have any confidence that this partial reset of the project will lead to a more affordable hospital at the end of it when we have seen previous resets that have not led to such a thing?

The Chief Minister:

Well I think you are putting the cart before the horse slightly because, as I said earlier, the report has not been published, and so we await the findings of the report in the first instance before

receiving that professional view as to what is the best value, the most affordable and appropriate way forward.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Well is it therefore the case then that it is possible this review may conclude that there is no better viable option than the current plan and recommends to you to stick to that course? Is that still a possibility?

The Chief Minister:

It might do.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

So there has been no direction given to that review that they are to discount the possibility of maintaining the current project as it is?

The Chief Minister:

We have employed a professional person to give us professional advice, and we think that a really excellent person who has delivered many hospital projects throughout their professional life is exactly the right person to be taking this view and providing us with their advice.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Of course, as with any review that is presented to government, for political reasons you may choose to deviate from its conclusions, and that is democratically within your rights to do that, it sounded like the Minister for Infrastructure earlier has himself politically discounted the possibility of the current project going ahead. Do you agree with him on that?

The Chief Minister:

Well, I think he was talking about the increased costs and the fact that, if that project were to continue, we would have to be going back to the Assembly to ask for more money. It is our view that that money is going to be very difficult to find.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Difficult or impossible?

The Chief Minister:

Well, I like to believe that there is always a way but I think it might be very difficult.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

But it is still possible that the current project may remain intact by the end of this and you could make a political decision to do that if the review comes back saying that is a good option? The reason I ask that is because the political environment does not feel like that is the case, it feels like there is an intention to move to a different option. If that is the case, you are politically within your rights to do that but we need to know how and why, and how we hold you to account on that to make sure the public interest is served there.

The Chief Minister:

Well, I think this is where the difference between being a lay person with common-sense, pragmatic views versus seeking the advice from an experienced professional comes in. I cannot pre-empt the findings of a review. We have given a conundrum to a professional person and asked for their advice and so we look forward to receiving it.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

In what form will a final decision come to the States Assembly, whether that is to keep the project as it is but maybe ask for more funding, or whether it is to change the project substantially? How will the States Assembly be given that final say? Would it be as a standalone proposition, an amendment to something else?

The Chief Minister:

Well what we have to do in the first instance is publish the findings of the report and that will, of course, help us to define what next because there may be some steps; we might have to come back to the Assembly and ask the Assembly about funding. We might have to come back to the Assembly and ask the Assembly's view on other aspects but it very much depends on the findings of the report. Then we have to decide what to do best and how best to respond to it.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I have got one final one. Deputy Farnham, do you have anything to ask or ...

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

A couple as well, yes.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Yes, well I will come to Deputy Farnham, then Deputy Ward, but just the final one from me on this. This also follows something that was raised in the States Assembly which was the disruption that this has obviously caused to Andium Homes developments on the Kensington Place properties that they were looking at. When pushed on this, the Minister for Infrastructure said that he would ensure that Andium were compensated if there is a cost to them as a result of this. First he said "likely",

then I pushed him and he said: "Yes, is the answer from your perspective. Also, yes, that if Andium Homes are disrupted and bear a cost because of this that they are fully reimbursed to every penny by the Government."

The Chief Minister:

Well I think that is still a conversation that is ongoing.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

The Minister for Infrastructure made it sound like the answer was yes. I pushed him deliberately to try to get a clear answer and his clear answer did sound like yes.

The Chief Minister:

Well I am not cited on that position at this exact moment in time but what we are really focused on is delivering homes, particularly homes for key workers in the Island. We consider housing to be one of the single most important issues that we have to contend with over the coming years, but also homes mean quality homes and in an environment where people want to live and can enjoy a quality of life.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I am sorry to interrupt, I am conscious of the time, Minister.

The Chief Minister:

Of course.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

There is probably going to be a bit more interrupting; I will try not to be too rude about it. But the point you have just made nobody will disagree with that, Andium will have to work hard to deliver as many homes as possible and their job has just been made harder by being asked to pull the plug on projects that they were already underway on. That might provide a cost to them which, if they are required to bear, will make it harder for them to pursue other projects, whether it means buying land to build homes on or whatever. If they were compensated for it to every penny that they will have lost, that will make that less difficult for them. Are you not prepared at this point to say in pursuit of that plan for more homes that they would be compensated if it transpires that they are going to lose these options and have to build homes elsewhere?

The Chief Minister:

We were talking earlier about outcomes and I would prefer to focus on the outcomes. That, I hope, might be that we will be able to deliver better quality homes for people. Those units were 109 units

of accommodation, I think, the design of which was agreed by most people, that they were not the greatest offering that we could deliver in the Island, just they were given as an example in the planning inspectors' inquiry to the Bridging Island Plan described as single aspect, unsustainable units of accommodation on a narrow street.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Yes. I am not going to follow this up, I think I get the point, but I want other members to get a chance to ask as well. Deputy Farnham.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I just wanted to follow up on that briefly. It is highly unlikely that a developer on such a large project would just agree to down tools and stop working with an entire team workforce in place. Does the Chief Minister know, have any financial arrangements - and I do not think it is a problem, the Chief Minister wants to champion transparency - been agreed with the developer? That is all we need to know and, at some stage, the details of that would be interesting to find out. I would think the answer has to be yes because otherwise the developer simply probably could not have afforded just to stop a build at this stage. So, has there been an arrangement with the developer?

The Chief Minister:

Naturally, there is a negotiation between the 2 parties involved.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

So I take that that there is an intention of a financial arrangement to compensate the developer for the delay?

The Chief Minister:

Well, my understanding at the moment is that there is a negotiation, and I do not think anything is straightforward at the moment while we await the findings of the report, but I am not cited on the position of that negotiation at the moment and I believe it remains open.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I wonder if the Chief Minister would undertake to discuss the situation with the Minister for Infrastructure.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Do not have to ask through the Chair; you can go directly to the Minister.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I am new to this; I have managed to avoid Scrutiny for 20 years but I finally made it. I finally got a promotion. Does the Chief Minister recognise that any variation to the current plan ... and I would just say in defence of the previous hospital team and the team before that and the team before that, that they were politicians, elected members, lay people, as we all are, generally speaking, who came up with plans based on expert advice. We have all done that. But you could ask 10 expert professionals the same question and get 10 different answers, we all know that. So, our previous teams of experts have come up with the iteration that the States Assembly and the planners have approved. The new experts have come in, and I am pleased to say I have had 2 constructive meetings with the team and I know a little bit about what is being planned. But what is to say we do not come along, Scrutiny do not come along and say: "We are going to get another expert in to review your experts" and so it just goes on and on. We have to come to a stage soon where we agree to make progress.

[14:15]

We all want the same thing at the end of the day: a hospital that is appropriate and good value. But does the Chief Minister recognise that any variation to the current plans which are due to deliver a fully-operational hospital by the end of 2026, any variations, whether it is a lighter version, slightly smaller or a dual site, would add significant delay and cost to the project insofar as that ... you are probably looking at least a 2 to 4 year delay on the 2026 completion date. Do the Ministers recognise that that is the likelihood of this process?

The Chief Minister:

I do not, I am afraid, no. I am quite ambitious for this project. We all know that we need to deliver a health facility for the Island and for Islanders and we are absolutely committed to delivering an affordable and appropriate solution for Islanders in the quickest timeframe possible.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I guess you are probably going to say: "Let us wait for the review" but does the Chief Minister think it is still realistic with changes to the existing plan to deliver a fully-operational hospital by the end of 2026?

The Chief Minister:

We will have to wait until the review gives its advice but we are really focused on delivering the best possible, appropriate and affordable health facilities that we can for Islanders.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Have the team been told that less than £804 million must be spent? Is £804 million a figure that is too much to invest in the hospital as far as the current government is concerned? Is that driving their thoughts on the matter?

The Chief Minister:

Well I think Islanders were quite clear during the election period that they consider £804 million to be an extortionate amount of money, and they want to be reassured that their money is being spent wisely on this project, particularly in light of the current economic circumstances and rising interest rates in the bond market.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

We can all say without any anecdotal evidence that we were told this, that and the other on the doorstep and, funnily enough, I do not know, because it was me and they did not want to hurt my feelings, but most doors I knocked on said: "Get on and build it." Most doors you knocked on said: "Do not build it." I will hand over to Deputy Ward at this stage, thank you.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I was going to ask because we keep saying about "affordable figure", what is an affordable figure for you?

The Chief Minister:

Well, I do think that that requires some professional advice because the Assembly at the moment, the previous Assembly has set that limit. I argued that it was achievable for a lower sum and so we are seeking professional advice.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

So, £804 million is extortionate on levels of costs, so what is semi-extortionate, what is a bit expensive, what is affordable? Because I think it is okay for us to sit here and talk about those ... use those words but we must have some sort of figure in mind that would be acceptable you think to the public, given that you have spoken to the public. One of the drivers behind this is you believe that the public has said to you: "Do not build the hospital for £804 million", what type of figure ... I am just being, I will just use the word "pragmatic"; I would love to have an idea.

The Chief Minister:

Well, I think that is why we need professional advice because that can help to inform our views, of course. But I think what the public want is reassurance that their money is being used to best effect and delivering the best possible health facilities that we require as a small Island nation.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

But would we expect a figure from the report?

The Chief Minister:

Well, part of the brief is to define an affordable way forward, so I am sure there will be some indication but I would be surprised if there was an exact cost because, of course, there needs to be a tender process.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Sorry, just to push, but anything that came back to the Assembly would have a figure on it, because I would imagine something would have to come back to the Assembly. You would have to rescind the old agreement and so on and so forth.

The Chief Minister:

Well, we work in a democratic environment and the last Assembly agreed the funding envelope of £804 million with £756 million of borrowing on that, so if it differs from that then we will be duty-bound to come back to the Assembly to ask their opinion.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

With a figure?

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Thank you.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Nothing else on this at all?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I was going to just ask some questions about interest rates but we can leave that for another day.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

We are in the territory now of wanting to get through this stuff quickly because it is quite late. So, brief answers would be great, would it not? So, Deputy Ward.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Yes, I can do that.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

He is a drummer so he knows how to do this at pace.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Yes, I can keep time. Technology Accelerator Fund in the programme, please can you update us very briefly on the progress of this workstream?

The Chief Minister:

Deputy Curtis will do that.

The Assistant Chief Minister:

Happy to do so. I hold the responsibility for this, albeit with the role of Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture which the Minister has delegated to me. So, although the Chief Minister lodged it in the former Assembly, the actual proposition reported out that it would be the responsibility of the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture, and so it is under that role, but happy to officiate under this form. I have written to both the Chair of the C.S.S.P. (Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel) and of the E.I.A. (Economic and International Affairs) to ask how they would like to look at the scrutiny of this. The proposition currently dictates that Digital Jersey is a delivery partner and that has led to them going in an open-tendering process for a design partner to help define the blueprint; that is Challenge Works. So, the timeline is they have been on-Island once to work with stakeholders and they will be on-Island again, and I will be looking to follow up with Scrutiny to see how they would like to progress with engaging with the scrutiny. I would like to see personally a possibility of having Scrutiny get really involved with Challenge Works as well during the design phase.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

So, you have a delivery partner in mind that is coming to the Island, that is where we are with the workstream?

The Assistant Chief Minister:

So delivery partner is the partner intended to deliver the fund, the programme, which is Digital Jersey, under P.75. The design partner is those who have come to the Island.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Yes. So, is there anything that you have learnt from the Fiscal Stimulus Fund, which is due to close in December this year, to ensure appropriate monitoring of the performance measurement of the outcomes is undertaken?

The Assistant Chief Minister:

Specifically from the Fiscal Stimulus, I have not looked directly into that. We are looking at all formal reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General and of Internal Audit and working closely with them.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Because that was one of the issues why Members voted against it, I believe. You may have yourself, Chief Minister; I know I did because there was not appropriate tracking of where the money will go. So, giving you an example, would you consider the £20 million allocated to be an investment of spend?

The Assistant Chief Minister:

It should be an investment in the Island, one that you will not see, as a government necessarily, a direct financial return on which makes the choice of which projects and programmes that you target incredibly important and needs a different form of governance but one that is arguably far higher.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

So it is a spend that you will not necessarily see a return on directly to government?

The Assistant Chief Minister:

It is not necessarily a spend. It is a spend by government, yes, in that sense.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

So would the fund have the ability to produce shares? So, for example, if a spend was made for a company, a start-up, and then would the Government take some shares in that company to try and get an investment return later on from this spend?

The Assistant Chief Minister:

Well, P.75 is really broad as to how the fund could work, whether it be for co-investment into an idea or a programme or pure funding, so we have to find out and we have to look at that. I think the current feeling is at, as P.75 dictates a release of money by tranches into Digital Jersey to administer it alongside how it is designed, the initial tranche that will target whatever strategic programme we give to Digital Jersey would be more likely grant funding but based on the learnings from that. The idea is for a fund to be really learning how it can better implement itself over time. There could be models where that would be appropriate.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

So it is a grant fund, so it is really a spend in order to try and build up a technology industry from where we are with Digital Jersey running it?

The Assistant Chief Minister:

P.75 is really broad and this is why I think the design of the ...

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Are you going to change it. Are you going to bring any amendments? Because that might be a way forward.

The Assistant Chief Minister:

It could be and I would like to have a chance to brief Scrutiny and involve Scrutiny to collect a wider set of views from the Assembly.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

That is all I was going to ask. Thank you.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Unless anyone has got anything desperate on this?

Deputy R.J. Ward:

That was quick.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Yes, indeed, and we are going to be just as quick with the Public Services Ombudsperson because that was again something in your 100-Day Plan but had of course been referenced multiple times previously in previous government and other iterations as well. So, when do you think it will be up and running?

The Chief Minister:

That is a very good question. I think we are aiming for early 2024 but I ...

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Please introduce yourself and you might want to swap the label in case anyone thinks you are ...

The Chief Minister:

The Director General has been itching to get to the table so ...

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Just a reminder, we are trying to be brief with this.

Director General, Cabinet Office:

So, Tom Walker, Director General in the Cabinet Office. So we would anticipate that in its fully legal legislative form, it would be operating from the start of 2024 but what we would hope to do is to start in shadow form during 2023.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

So you will have been doing work on policy on this to decide exactly what form it will take and how it will be constituted. Just in terms of some of the key decisions that may or may not have been made at this point, are you looking to maintain this body alongside the States of Jersey Complaints Board or will it be completely replacing it?

Director General, Cabinet Office:

It is mostly likely that it would supersede it.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

One of the criticisms of the processes of the States of Jersey Complaints Board is that its recommendations were not binding and that was one reason why some felt it lacked accountability. How will the Public Services Ombudsperson be different to that?

Director General, Cabinet Office:

That is one of the aspects that I think we are seeking early input from this Scrutiny Panel on. I believe that we have shared the drafting instructions in order to ...

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Trying not to refer to them.

Director General, Cabinet Office:

... get the feedback from you.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Indeed, thank you. In terms of what you have looked at so far, have there been any issues or challenges that were noteworthy that have made this a difficult thing to put together?

Director General, Cabinet Office:

No, I do not think so. I think perhaps the scale of ambition has increased slightly over the original plans in that we are now looking to see whether we could follow the Scottish Ombudsman model and also use the Ombuds to be kind of a guardian for whistle-blowers which is an enhancement over the previous proposition. Also, we are looking to see if we can bring health complaints into the process much earlier and, if possible, from the outset which again is something that originally we thought maybe we might do later. So I think our ambition has increased which will inevitably increase the complexity of getting it done.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Will it also increase the funding required to have it operate successfully?

Director General, Cabinet Office:

So there is funding already in the Government Plan which matched our original assessment. I think the expanding to cover health complaints will obviously increase the scope and remit of the office but equally, quite rightly, we are looking to see what we can do to increase the efficiency of the operating model to see if we can drive down the cost as well. So there are 2 competing forces that we are currently working our way through.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Thank you. Anything else on Public Service Ombudsman?

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I just ask, is that finalised that the Complaints Board is superseded? Can we not see a relationship between the 2 hierarchies so that complaints can be settled at the lowest possible level which is, I think, good practice for complaints?

Director General, Cabinet Office:

Yes, the Ombuds is itself the upper tier for that, so having 2 upper-tier bodies, I guess, might be confusing for Islanders.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

So that is the way it is seen, okay. We will come back to it, I am sure.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Yes, we will definitely. Thank you. This will probably be the last round of questioning. Deputy Farnham, are you okay to take question 38?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Yes. The *Independent COVID Review and Response to the Pandemic* has been published, can you briefly highlight your thoughts on the findings?

The Chief Minister:

Well, I was very interested to see it and I think I ...

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I should say the good and the bad, yes.

The Chief Minister:

I referred earlier to the comments about communications and trust within the public.

[14:30]

I think the report provides some helpful guidance in terms of how we plan and prepare for risks in the future, and we look forward to adopting some of those recommendations within the report, particularly around risk and resilience.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

What does the Chief Minister feel that the successes were of the previous government during the pandemic?

The Chief Minister:

Well, I think the report states that the implementation of test and trace was a success and also the rollout of the vaccination programme.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Thank you. I was going to ask how it is going to be presented to States Members but I understand States Members have had a presentation now?

The Chief Minister:

Yes. I think it was published yesterday and it is available for all who wish to read it.

Vice Chair, States Employment Board:

Today.

The Chief Minister:

Today? Apologies, today.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Do you have in mind any next steps in terms of formally responding to the review's findings? If it is going to lead to action from you to instil some of the changes that it proposes to more comprehensively outline what those plans may be, do you have an idea of timescale for that?

The Chief Minister:

Well I think there were some helpful suggestions in that and so I look forward to considering them with the Emergencies Council and ensuring that we embed those procedures going forward so that we are best prepared for any emergencies or crises that may be on our horizon.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Does the Emergencies Council have a date in mind for when it may want to meet to consider this? Because obviously they were an important body in the COVID response from the outset.

The Chief Minister:

Indeed. Now that we have His Excellency installed at Government House, we can formally bring together the Emergencies Council and, if it is not on Friday, it is next week.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

You can have the meeting on an aircraft carrier, hopefully.

The Chief Minister:

I think we might stick to a common old garden meeting room.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

It might be safer on land at the moment considering what is going on around the world.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Yes, indeed. So, on that note, there were a few other areas that we simply have not had time to get round to but this has been very useful and we have covered a lot of ground anyway, so thank you very much. Thank you to the Assistant Ministers, to the officers who are here to support, and of course our officers for administrating this for us as well. There will be a next quarterly hearing but we are also looking to do a review on our parts of the Government Plan as well, so there will presumably be hearings to do with that at some point. Do you have anything at this point you felt would be appropriate to raise at this hearing that could be helpful? It is not a trick question.

The Chief Minister:

In terms of the Government Plan, I think we are just very grateful for the opportunity to openly discuss all of these items of our agenda with you. We look forward to an ongoing positive relationship and we really look forward to engaging with you on the Government Plan.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Thank you. Any final points? Have I missed anything?

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I will just say the email has come through, the hospital report will be ready for 20th October to present to the States on 1st November.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Yes, we have got that. Thank you very much and I call the hearing to a close.

The Chief Minister:

Thank you.

[14:33]