



Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Hearing

Witness: The Chief Minister

Friday, 7th June 2024

Panel:

Deputy H. Miles of St. Brelade (Chair)

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter (Vice-Chair)

Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade

Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement

Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North

Connétable D. Johnson of St. Mary

Witnesses:

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

Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier Central, Assistant Chief Minister (1)

Deputy M.R. Ferey of St. Saviour, Assistant Chief Minister (2)

Mr. P. Wylie, Group Director of Policy

[11:31]

Deputy H. Miles of St. Brelade (Chair):

Thank you very much. Welcome to the public hearing of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel. Today is 7th June and it is our quarterly hearing of the Chief Minister. I would like to draw everyone's attention to the following. This hearing is being filmed and streamed live. The recording and transcript will be published afterwards on the States Assembly website. All electronic devices, including mobile phones, should be switched to silent. We do not have any members of the public with us today, but if we do have any who attend they will be requested not to interfere in the proceedings. For the purposes and recording of the transcript, I would be grateful if everyone who

speaks could ensure that you state your name and your role. If I could just begin with introductions. I am Deputy Helen Miles, chair of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter (Vice-Chair):

Deputy Lucy Stephenson, vice-chair of the panel.

Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

Deputy Alex Curtis, panel member.

Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade:

Deputy Jonathan Renouf, panel member.

Connétable D. Johnson of St. Mary:

David Johnson, Constable of St Mary, panel member.

Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North:

Deputy Max Andrews.

Assistant Chief Minister (1):

Deputy Carina Alves, Assistant Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister:

Deputy Lyndon Farnham, Chief Minister.

Assistant Chief Minister (2):

Deputy Malcolm Ferey, Assistant Chief Minister.

Deputy H. Miles:

Thank you, and I am conscious that we have got 2 officials in the room as well. So for those, if you are not introduced formally, if you do come to the table if you could introduce yourself first, please. We have only got 90 minutes for the meeting, and I will try to keep us on time, but if you could all give concise answers, that would be appreciated. I would like to welcome you all really to this, our first ... well, it is our second hearing as a panel, but it is the first hearing with you and your Assistant Chief Ministers, because obviously we did not get one in the last quarter. We have been getting up to speed with your work programme and we have had some useful briefings from you and the staff in your departments. So for us to say it is really about scene setting, it is for the panel to get a better understanding of the opportunities and the challenges that are faced across your very extensive portfolio as Chief Minister, so that we can hold you to account during the remainder of the time. The

first question, I suppose, Chief Minister, you have been in your new post now for about 5 months, what is going well?

The Chief Minister:

It was a sudden start and one that was perhaps a little unexpected for me at the end of last year. So it came upon us very quickly, and I am pleased to say we formed a Government in short order and we got straight to work. We have resolved ... I say we have resolved, we have finished off and concluded the teachers' pay dispute, lodged our Corporate Strategic Policy and we have started to make inroads into some of those already. G.P. (general practitioner) fees have been reduced, housing First Step scheme has been extended, assisted dying debate of course was brought and debated. We have made progress on the violence against women and girls work that was started by the previous Assembly of Members; and you were closely involved with that, Chair, as were other Members. That is just some of the things we have got over the line. There is lots of work in progress. We are currently working well and putting the Government Plan together for an earlier than usual lodging, and lots of business as usual going on. But generally speaking, we are working well as a team, and we are making good progress.

Deputy H. Miles:

So I guess the opposite of that question is: what is not going so well?

The Chief Minister:

I could not immediately put my finger on anything that is not going brilliantly ... that is not going well. That is not to say we do not have a lot of challenges we are facing, not least balancing the books, making sure we can curb the growth in the public sector, making sure we reprioritise our spending to ensure it is going to the areas that benefit the public most in line with our corporate strategic plan. There are also in this role - I am sure you all know in your previous roles as Ministers - every day brings a new challenge, so we are alive to that, but at the moment and, touch wood, we are working ... we are keeping on top of things.

Deputy H. Miles:

Can you tell us about your 2 main personal priorities for the remainder of your term?

The Chief Minister:

I do not really have any personal priorities. My priority is working for the benefit of Jersey States Assembly. It is a privilege to lead the Government. We have got a very good Council of Ministers and Assistant Ministers. I think the new Government is more representative of the States Assembly, and that is not a criticism of the previous Government. We are working well together. Our 3 watchwords are courtesy, respect and professionalism in everything we deal with. I think we are in

a good place to take things forward. To answer your question, rather than focus on my own personal priorities I see my role as actually managing and trying to effect the smooth co-ordination of the planning and the policy.

Deputy H. Miles:

You just talked about always working in the interest of Jersey. How do you define the public interest?

The Chief Minister:

It is many, is it not? The public interest is different things to different people. Many Islanders have different priorities, would like to see different things happen. But we are prioritising, for example, essential services and immediate challenges facing Islanders with a focus on the cost of living, housing, the new hospital as outlined in our common strategic plan. Our priorities are aligned with the long-term vision set out in the Future Jersey work and the existing report in the Island, outcomes arising from it. Alongside the C.S.P. (Common Strategic Policy), business-as-usual activities continue across the public sector with specific focus on healthcare and education and overall community well-being, which is quite broad. But those again are all taken from the visions of Jersey and the annual well-being survey that questions, I think, about 3,500 households. We are focusing our short to medium-term work on the immediate priorities which have come about due to a number of circumstances post-Brexit, post-COVID economic challenges.

Deputy H. Miles:

How are you going to monitor and measure all of those things that you have just described?

The Chief Minister:

In relation to our common strategic plan, which is the key work that is guiding our work - not all of the work, but some of the work - has set out 13 key points: 12 plus the amendment, which is now 13. We are reporting on those monthly. We are having progress on every single one of those updated monthly at Council of Ministers. We have allocated a section of those meetings purely to monitor the C.S.P. That is the main way we are keeping track of things.

Deputy H. Miles:

Can you tell us then precisely what the public can expect from your Government that will actually make a difference to their everyday lives over the next couple of years?

The Chief Minister:

If I can refer to our Common Strategic Policy and the 13 key priorities, but before I do that, I think we have said we would like to get back to basics a bit more, reprioritising the public sector spend, to ensure we are delivering ... focusing on the essential front line services, and that ranges from

health to education to infrastructure. There are ancillary challenges alongside that, such as providing more affordable homes. I am not sure I need to run through the list of 13 priorities, but we are making specific progress, early progress on extended nursery and childcare provision. That is probably a 2 to 3-year programme because we are slightly challenged by the available resources and qualified staff in that area. But that will have an impact on the community insofar as it will help people to return to work.

Deputy H. Miles:

In terms of transparency, how are you going to make sure that the Government is transparent, that you are trusted and that you are accountable to the public of Jersey?

The Chief Minister:

We take it for granted that we ... I say we take it for granted. As a Council of Ministers, we are transparent. There is no part of our policy or strategy that intends not to be transparent. We said we want to be as open as we possibly can. Obviously, there are areas sometimes you cannot compromise policy under development and so forth for clear reasons. But I think we just have to let our actions demonstrate that. Like I said, we have undertaken as a Government to be as transparent as we possibly can.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Can you, Chief Minister, outline the Ministerial responsibilities that you have delegated to your Assistant Chief Ministers and a little bit about why, please?

The Chief Minister:

Yes. Ministerial ... we have published that. I am not sure I have a list in my ... Thank you very much. I made Deputy Alves Assistant Chief Minister because you can clearly see she is more organised than I am; that is the first reason. Deputy Binet has been appointed as Deputy Chief Minister and an Assistant Minister. We have lodged some amendments to that because there is a slight oddity where the Deputy Chief Minister cannot have any authority so they have to be appointed an Assistant Chief Minister. We are trying to rectify that. That sits alongside his delegation as the Minister for Health and Social Services and also responsible for the new healthcare facilities. We think those 3 roles, because of the key importance, especially of the new hospital programme, biggest capital project this Island is facing and is likely to face for some time. That is also, I think, helpful to his role of Deputy Chief Minister. In that role he is also providing general advice on other policy issues. Deputy Alves has responsibility for aspects of the Control of Housing and Work Law determining housing applications, for example, developing a control of housing work legislation and new policy guidelines, policy relating to promoting diversity, equality and social inclusion. Deputy Rose Binet is an Assistant Minister; a little bit of an Assistant Minister without brief insofar as she

provides a lot of advice and analytical analysis of a cross-cutting section. Deputy Ferey is vice-chair of the States Employment Board and leads on most of that work. He has also recently been made a member of the Probation Board. Deputy Gorst is also an Assistant Minister. He deals with other aspects of the Control of Housing and Work Law. The Constable of St. Helier is also an Assistant Minister because I think it is important to have a link with the Constable of St. Helier, which is, I think, the capital of the Island; so it is a very useful link. That is a high-level approach. Can you just point that out to me again, thank you? Yes, of course. Simon is also Assistant Minister for Infrastructure so that provides a link between the offices.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Thank you. There are a number of Assistant Chief Ministers, a couple in there without delegated responsibilities. How are you all working together, co-ordinating as a team, to feed in, as you say, to all those people?

[11:45]

The Chief Minister:

I think very well. Perhaps my 2 colleagues might want to comment, but I think very well because over and above our individual responsibilities, we discuss all issues together, I think, in a collegiate way, in a democratic way, and we make democratic decisions around the table. I am not sure if ...

Assistant Chief Minister (2):

I think we do work well together as a team. Obviously, we have Ministerial meetings and briefings; obviously, not least prior to this hearing. But what we have also got is having those other portfolios that we are involved with, we can draw all those streams together and bring that voice to the table. Yes, it is working really well.

Assistant Chief Minister (1):

I think it is also important that having additional links to other departments also gives us the opportunity to make those links that may have not have been made otherwise. There are often areas that I may bring up that some of the other Assistant Chief Ministers may not be aware of purely because I am in Education or I am in the Housing remit as well. So I think that is working really well, and our weekly meetings definitely give us that opportunity to do that.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Great, thank you. Just to stay, if you do not mind, on Deputy Alves for a moment, because we are interested in the political responsibility around diversity, equality and inclusion policy, because there has been a move taking that from the Home Affairs Department into the Chief Minister's Department.

Can you - probably for the Chief Minister first, if you do not mind - provide the rationale for the transfer and just update us on how that is going, please?

The Chief Minister:

I think the rationale for the transfers is that it fitted in well with a lot of the other work that Deputy Alves is doing in her experience and proven ability, if I can say that, track record on those sort of areas. I think when you look at the broader brief of the Chief Ministerial department, Cabinet Office, I think it sits more comfortably there, because it is quite cross-cutting.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Has a budget and resources moved with the responsibility?

Assistant Chief Minister (1):

So the work around the I.C.C., the International Cultural Centre, has been taken out of C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills) and brought in to the Chief Minister portfolio and therefore assigned to me. I think that is quite a key area for the diversity.

The Chief Minister:

I am not sure there were a lot of other resources that sat with that responsibility in Home Affairs.

Assistant Chief Minister (1):

The staffing resources has also been transferred over, so we have still got the officers that we had previously, which I think you probably worked with yourself. That has continued.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

So the I.C.C. budget has moved?

Assistant Chief Minister (1):

Yes.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Is there a risk in that the I.C.C. budget just becomes the whole budget for the Government for D.E.I. (diversity, equity and inclusion) work?

Assistant Chief Minister (1):

That has been specifically ring-fenced for the International Cultural Centre because we do have some staff members that have been employed to deliver what we want from I.C.C. as well. At the

moment that is ring-fenced, and it is secure for the next couple of years. Deputy Alves has taken on the role of chair of that and I understand is getting it back up into momentum.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

So there is budget for that but not really budget or resource around any other D.E.I. work within Government?

The Chief Minister:

I suppose there is a certain amount of policy under development there, and I think it is up to the Deputy to work out what the strategy is going to be, what resources she might need and then come back to us when she has got that information.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Okay, thank you. I suppose, probably taking a broader question than just working with your Assistant Ministers, but as Chief Minister obviously you have a role in ensuring cohesive working practices between all Ministers and across the Council of Ministers, particularly if you want to deliver on the 13 priorities that are in there. Can you tell us a bit about how you are ensuring that happens and taking up your leadership role there, please?

The Chief Minister:

I quickly came to realise that the role of Chief Minister is quite different than any other Ministerial portfolio because as a Minister you tend to be deeply involved in your Ministerial responsibilities, strategies, policies and delivery. While of course I have that with the Chief Ministerial responsibilities, albeit supported by a good team of Assistant Ministers, it tends to be more of a managerial and co-ordinating role, working closely with Ministers and Assistant Ministers. One of the first things we did is extend an open invitation for all Assistant Ministers to be in attendance at every Council of Ministers' meeting, and that has been taken up very strongly by, I think, nearly all of the Assistant Ministers. That has worked to keep all of the Assistant Ministers involved and updated. They join the discussions, they contribute to the debate, and they contribute to the decision-making process around the Council of Ministers' table. My previous experience on that, having been an Assistant Minister in the past and as a Minister, is there were often comments and sometimes criticism from Assistant Ministers that they felt a little bit left out. Hopefully we have gone some way to eliminating that approach. From my perspective, I will work wherever I can with Ministers to assist. I see it so much as I work for them and the Assembly more than they work for the Chief Minister's team or for me. That approach so far seems to be working well. You have to be confident in your delegations and rely on the Ministers to deliver.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Great, thank you. Just a couple of very quick questions on the Cabinet Office structure. It is something obviously we have heard people talk about a lot. What changes, if any, are you considering in respect of the structure and the function of the Cabinet Office?

The Chief Minister:

Officials are currently looking into the detail of that, so I am not ready to share that yet because we have not finally decided, but a high level is that we are considering putting some of the functions that the Cabinet Office has taken over back into the department, because we think they will sit better there and can be more efficiently delivered there. We are looking at certain areas of the Cabinet Office where we think are slightly over-provisioned but we need to deliver. So we are looking at those areas as well. The idea will be to remain with the Cabinet Office. Whether we keep it as a Cabinet Office or change the name. Those are the high-level principles and as soon as we have the detail I am happy to share that with Scrutiny.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Just for clarity, when you say some of the functions that have been brought in, what kind of ... what do you mean by that? Is that H.R. (human resources) type things, is it?

The Chief Minister:

There are a number of areas which I would rather not go into detail now because it could involve staff changes and staff transfers, and that could involve redundancies. Deputy Andrews has a question on that, which we will be answering. But we want to make sure, in line with our C.S.P. and our previous comments, that we want to make sure that our resources are targeted to the right areas. After investigation, where we feel there is over-resourcing of areas, we will adjust those to make sure that the provision is redistributed.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Finally, given the decision that has been about rethinking the establishment of the ombudsman office, is consideration being given to the administration of any other bodies that would fall into a similar category? For example, the Office of the Children's Commission and the Care Commission, they all fall under the Cabinet Office, do they not?

The Chief Minister:

We have a number of statutory bodies and organisations. The short answer to your question is no, not at this stage. But in line with the work we are doing within the government departments to ensure they are efficient and they are all running a tight ship, we will want to be reassured that our statutory bodies and other bodies that are reliant on taxpayers' money are also delivering best value in relation to some of them, such as the Children's Commissioner and Statistics Jersey, who we have a

proposition in there to amend the law, so they become a statutory body without compromising the fact that they are properly resourced to do the job. It would not be prudent not to look at those bodies in due course, but we are not planning anything immediately other than to ensure or be reassured ourselves that they are delivering good value for money and getting the job done.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Staying on the Cabinet Office, very briefly, one function is of course modernisation and digital. So a really quick question, looking for a brief answer: what plans, if any, do you have to use that department and your portfolio to improve digital services?

The Chief Minister:

They are at the heart of, I think, everything that operates Jersey at the moment, especially from a Government perspective. I have had a number of discussions with the senior team there, and I am spending some time next week on site with them. We are discussing what their policies are for the medium to long term because, as the Deputy will know, there are huge challenges facing us in that area, not least on cyber-security aspects, but also making sure our I.T. (information technology) estate is updated and properly functional.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Have you taken any Ministerial action to change or amend the direction of any in-progress projects within that portfolio yet?

The Chief Minister:

Not at this stage.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Thank you.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Can we move on to the Government Plan and some spending questions? You have spoken a lot, and it is in the Common Strategic Policy, about the need to “maintain public finances and prevent unnecessary expenditure”; that is a quote. Can you say how you will identify unnecessary expenditure?

The Chief Minister:

Currently the process we are going through at the moment is for every department to examine in detail what they are doing and come forward through the Executive Leadership Team of senior officials. That work is underway. But I think we are also considering whether we need to dive a little

bit deeper into some of that work. That actually, given the time constraints we are under now, we are likely to operate with the departmental recommendations, which will have been brought forward by the departments and their relevant Ministers. But I would like to see, as we move forward, perhaps to deliver next year's Government Plan and Budget, more of a third party independent approach to looking at the departments and the work they do because it is very difficult I think for lead officials in departments to be too critical of their own work or see changes where things have become ensconced. Again that is no criticism of the excellent teams we have there but sometimes I think a fresh pair of eyes is helpful. It is a bit like ... well, Jonathan, remember at school we used to pass our exercise books around to mark each other's homework. His was always much better than mine, I may add. I would like to see a more independent approach to that process moving forward.

Deputy J. Renouf:

What kind of third party involvement?

The Chief Minister:

Internal, I think. We are not going to start bringing consultants and such forth in, but perhaps it is just officials from different departments looking at other departments and having a more - I do not know - a slightly more pragmatic collegiate approach.

Deputy J. Renouf:

I mean obviously every Government talks about increasing efficiencies and so on, is the aim to go beyond what previous Governments have achieved in terms of efficiency?

The Chief Minister:

It has been quite challenging for departments to implement the financial requirements of the previous Government, which was a £10 million a year decrease in budgets. They are doing that now. We are looking to reprioritise spending over and above that to ensure that we can deliver the key priorities in our corporate strategic plan. We have also put a moratorium on growth bids, with exception of course where they are proven to be absolutely essential. We are also looking closely at the capital expenditure budgets because in the past we have had a propensity to ... when I say overload those, not overload them but put in a budget for capital that are undeliverable we have, with careful consideration and advice from officials and professionals, we deem it is realistic. We can only probably deliver between £70 million and £80 million worth of capital delivery every year. We want to make sure the budget reflects that, so we are not tying up ... we are not over-budgeting and then seeing perhaps that over-budgeting leaking into other areas of use.

Deputy J. Renouf:

You have talked about reprioritising. Can you give any examples of anything that has any reprioritisation that has occurred?

The Chief Minister:

Not as yet because we are in the middle of doing the Government Plan works, and nothing has been agreed in detail there. We will be looking to ... if you want to look at where we need to put money, look at the 13 priorities in there, some of that needs additional funding.

[12:00]

So that is where we are looking to put the money to, primarily. I think we are looking particularly closely at staff structures and management structures to make sure that we are not overstaffed in middle and senior management and understaffed in front line services.

Deputy J. Renouf:

You have talked about the need to ... that you are going to stop growth bids, except in particular cases. Can you say whether the total budget is going to go up, stay the same or decrease?

The Chief Minister:

Not at this stage, no. But I would think, given it is likely at the very best to be close to what it was, even with the savings, it is likely to increase simply because of the inflationary impact that we are challenged with at the moment.

Deputy J. Renouf:

What I am trying to get at is, there has been a lot of commentary recently, some in the newspaper, about the fact that Government expenditure continues to rise and you have spoken a language which suggests that you would very much like to get Government spending under control. The flip side of that is you could end up in an austerity kind of situation where you are cutting spending. I think it would be helpful to know where you feel that balance lies.

The Chief Minister:

I am not going to speculate on where we are going to be, and I believe the language we have used has not even hinted at any form of austerity. The words I have used, and they were carefully selected words that I selected after discussions with colleagues, is curbing the growth because in the last 4 years we have seen exponential growth in the costs of running the public sector. To be clear, that level of growth is unsustainable. So we are trying to curb the growth to put ourselves back into a sustainable position so our medium to long-term forecasts are looking positive again.

Deputy J. Renouf:

We might expect to see some growth, but not as much as you might have seen in the past.

The Chief Minister:

I would rather not comment on that. Let us do the work, and then we can analyse it when we present the results to you.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Is it your intention to continue with the whole government programme umbrella? In other words, Ministerial plans and delivery plans and so on.

The Chief Minister:

As I have previously stated, we are combining the Ministerial and departmental plans, and we are going to produce those for publication in July.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Will there be child-friendly versions published of those?

The Chief Minister:

The short answer is I do not know.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Are you going to meet with the Jersey Youth Parliament to discuss?

Deputy J. Renouf:

I have no plans to meet with the Jersey Youth Parliament, but if there is a commitment to deliver child-friendly versions, then we certainly shall. Even if there is not a commitment, I think it is a sensible idea. So we will work on that. But the simple answer is I do not know.

Assistant Chief Minister (1):

I think this is probably something that we will consider with C.Y.P.E.S. So it has been mentioned.

The Chief Minister:

There is no reluctance or barrier from the Government to do that. If it needs to be done, we will certainly do it.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Okay, thank you very much, Chair. Moving on to Population and Migration Policy. I would just like to firstly ask a question in relation to the Population and Skills Ministerial Group. Could you provide the panel with the members of that group and also could you elucidate us as to what you have been discussing as well as your priorities?

The Chief Minister:

What was the group?

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Population and Skills Ministerial Group.

The Chief Minister:

Population and Skills Ministerial Group. Okay.

Assistant Chief Minister (1):

I think that is the H.A.W.A.G. (Housing and Work Advisory Group) Plus.

The Chief Minister:

That is what it is. H.A.W.A.G. Plus we call that; sorry, just terminology. We have got so many groups and committees, excuse me if I lose track of it. We have a dedicated section of Council of Ministers allotted to this, and we have, I am not sure if Deputy Alves can ... who has been chairing that.

Assistant Chief Minister (1):

That is fine. The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning is involved in that. We have the Minister for Social Security, Home Affairs, Housing, myself, and the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development as well. At the moment they are in discussion around different policies. There is obviously a commitment to publish something annually around the Common Population Policy. The last one was in June 2023, so there are some discussions going around about ... we are meeting as a group. We have met a couple of times, we are due to meet again. The next report will probably include a roadmap for how Government will co-ordinate activity to prepare, especially for the ageing population. There has been a review around the statistics and projections that were produced in late 2023, early 2024. I am sure we will be able to brief the panel when we are at a better point to present that.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

I know you mentioned, Minister, about formulation of policy; it is obviously under way. Has it more or less been that the new Council of Ministers have started from scratch or has there been some

work that you have maybe inherited from the previous Council of Ministers that you are still working on?

Assistant Chief Minister (1):

I think we are considering all options at the moment. Obviously there is a lot of different things to discuss around financial security and economic participation. That is why healthy ageing and access to services, the housing choices, social inclusion, accessible environments, that is why I think that that group is a really important group. Not just for the population, but also for some of the other work that I am working on around the Control of Housing and Work Law because I think we need to have a really joined-up approach to both of those things.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

I know when I have previously looked at policies, say from last term, what I have noticed is there was not really an enablement part of the reports that I was seeing. Do you think it is going to be the case that this Council of Ministers will be different, where you will actually be enabling policies that we will then see good and positive changes for the Island, that people will see that will be very conspicuous.

Assistant Chief Minister (1):

I think being able to have such a variety of Ministers on that group does enable us to come up with some solutions around enabling that may have not been published previously, so I think everything is under consideration at the moment.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

I do have to ask, obviously we have got a very politically divergent Council of Ministers, probably most politicians are centre-right politically, but I know the Minister for Social Security has commented publicly about the high-net-worth individual regime and that she would be discussing the high-net-worth individual regime with the Council of Ministers. Is there a collective agreement in terms of how you proceed forward in regards to this regime or is this something that you have not yet discussed?

The Chief Minister:

Do you know, I think one of the refreshing things about this Council of Ministers is the divergence of views and the fact that we actually enjoy the debate about it. I know that that sounds funny, but we have some very differing views, which leads to a very good and considered debate. Yes, there are differences of opinions around such subjects, as you have just mentioned, but we debate it and we come to a democratic position on it.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

As you mentioned, Chief Minister, there may be a disagreement on this issue, but would you say there is a collective agreement among the Council of Ministers in regards to population and migration?

The Chief Minister:

A collective agreement?

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Yes, on the best way to proceed.

The Chief Minister:

Deputy, I have just said that is a work in progress, so when the Housing and Work Advisory Group Plus, as we call it, come back with the update and the report, we will discuss that at C.O.M. (Council of Ministers) and hopefully we will come to a collective position at that stage.

Assistant Chief Minister (1):

I think there is recognition that obviously there are some areas within our economy that maybe need certain skills that we do not have at the moment. I am hoping that that will form part of the population policy, because we recognise that there will always be a need for us to have certain people with certain skills on Island.

The Chief Minister:

I think, if I could just add, as you are probably all aware, in 2 short years the challenges on population has completely changed.

Assistant Chief Minister (1):

It has.

The Chief Minister:

From a concern about being overpopulation now to the biggest challenge in the medium to long-term is working-age population and the low birth rate ... reduction in birth rate, which is going to leave significant gaps, you could say, in our population if we do not address it.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

As you have mentioned about, the landscape has drastically changed in a 2-year period, and that is quite unusual. Would you say that this Council of Ministers will be more liberal, shall we say, on

migration to try and aid some businesses where there are labour shortages due to Jersey having a tight labour market?

The Chief Minister:

I think this Council of Ministers will do everything it can to ensure Jersey is properly served, the economy is properly served, the population is properly served and it remains sustainable.

Assistant Chief Minister (1):

I think the goal is to be as responsive as possible and ensure that our legislation as well can be as responsive and malleable as we need it to be.

Deputy H. Miles:

Can I just pick up? I think the question that the Deputy asked was about any change of plan to the high-net-worth policy and you talked about a difference of opinion. Do you have any plans to change the high-net-worth policy?

The Chief Minister:

Currently, no, we are not planning to remove the high-net-worth policy. There could be changes to the criteria; that is under constant review.

Deputy H. Miles:

So the policy will change then if you are changing the criteria?

The Chief Minister:

Well, no, nothing is set in stone for ever. There are no current plans to make significant changes to the 2(1)(e) policy. We are planning to continue to allow 2(1)(e) applications to proceed and be considered in the way they are. There is policy around that though about levels of net worth, amounts of tax paid, and that is under constant review, but there are no immediate plans to change that.

Deputy J. Renouf:

You have asked the question, I was going to ask.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

If we could drill down a level further on this, on to the Control of Housing and Work Law. The previous Population and Skills Ministerial Group was considering ways to provide perhaps different levers to address any forthcoming Common Population Policy, and it would just be useful for the

panel if we could dive a little deeper and understand the status of the workstream on any amendments or changes to the law.

Assistant Chief Minister (1):

There was an amendment that was approved in 2022, so we are currently working on those regulations, getting those regulations in. We are aiming to lodge and debate that before the end of this year. I know that a commitment was made to this panel in the last term, about bringing that in advance of it being debated to the panel. The panel will get a briefing on those regulations. Just to provide a little bit of background around that; it is to update the primary law which was approved in March 2022. Those regulations will support the ... so it will be around improved decision-making structures, improved transparency and improved flexibility of the Government to respond quickly to changes. With regards to reviewing the use of the controls in the Control of Housing and Work Law to improve availability of housing stock to local residents and what kind of actions are necessary, there are some things that have been looked at around worker accommodation, for example, which is a key constraint within our economy at present. There are a number of other options being considered at the moment, which I cannot really go into it to any detail because there is still a discussion, but we are looking at what we can do to respond to the current needs of the population in that respect.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

It would be good just to understand a bit more. You mentioned the timeline, I think the panel will be very happy to be briefed. But when, from lodging any regulations, do you anticipate the first changes Islanders will experience from any new subordinate legislation?

Assistant Chief Minister (1):

I think any changes that do come in place will be phased. They will not be sudden because we need to account for the risks and the consequences that each change may have. It will not be extremely drastic changes, it will be measured. The regulations that I mentioned that we are bringing in, that were approved by the Assembly in March 2022, I am hoping to have those debated before the Government Plan. I would like to bring something in around that time as well to include looking at addressing any of the other issues as well. That is the kind of timeframe. But if I can get you a more detailed timeline, I will do that.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Appreciating policy under development you do not want to perhaps give specifics, could you share with the panel perhaps the ethos of your ambition when it comes to any wider changes? Where are you really ... if you were to say this is a mark I want to leave, by leaving laws that look different, at a high level what are you feeling?

[12:15]

Assistant Chief Minister (1):

I will say we recognise that the current stock of registered accommodation, for example, which is the historical non-qualified, has not increased. If anything it has actually decreased, and we understand the pressures that that is putting on people. We also understand the differences between the different statuses that people hold. For example, you may be entitled to work, having those 5 years, but not be entitled to rent until you have got those 10 years. There are lots of different options to consider, and I would not like to make any kind of commitments or assumptions without running that past my Ministerial colleagues. But we recognise that obviously housing stock is a big issue. There is also a lot coming online as well through Andium hopefully. So there is a lot of statistical analysis to be done as well, to make sure that anything that we do change does not have a significant adverse impact to people in their living situations.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

On this fine balance of panel, the previous panel did hear that part of an ambition of work was to focus on reviewing the 2-tier housing system. Now the previous Government alerted the panel to that, so this panel now would like to know is that still on the agenda to review the 2-tier housing system?

Assistant Chief Minister (1):

Yes I think it is. Unfortunately, because of the way that our ... at the moment, we have to recognise that anybody that has a British passport or that has settled status can come into the Island and settle here and live here. At the moment, the only control we really have to curb those numbers is the Control of Housing and Work Law. I think there will still have to be an existence of the 2-tier system in order to stop the potential influx of those people coming in. I think sometimes that is not always understood or recognised that that is what that law does.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Just to touch on where I think Deputy Andrews was going about the questions as to your reactivity to the economic climate, Chief Minister, you mentioned wanting businesses to be adequately provided for. What influence within any of these amendments that you are considering or changes are you taking with regards to the long-term sustainability of the Island, also with regards to infrastructure and Island identity?

The Chief Minister:

I think right at the heart of not just what this Government is planning, but what the last Government, and I would think the States Assembly, is the aim to ensure that all Islanders have access to decent standards and an affordable level of housing. Now we have to review our policy in line with the supply and demand issues and all of the other issues that impact upon that market, and that is the work that Deputy Alves is leading on now. That is at the heart of what we are trying to achieve or get some way towards achieving before a new Government is formed.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

A different subject, Minister; the Public Services Ombudsman. I understand that the previous Government was progressing this workstream for lodging this year. Can you please update us on your position in respect of continuing this work to establish the office, as previously agreed by the States Assembly?

The Chief Minister:

As I have said before, we were concerned about the cost. The previous Assembly earmarked £400,000 per annum to fund an ombudsperson, but we, upon further review, that is likely to be the very minimum required and if its remit was extended to Health, for example, then the budget would need to be far higher; well in excess of £1 million. Before we commit to that expenditure, we are engaging with the States Greffe and P.P.C. (Privileges and Procedures Committee) to see if we cannot enhance the complaints service, the State's Complaints Board, that we already have.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

So your main concern is on cost, is it, rather than the actual thrust of what the Law Commission was suggesting?

The Chief Minister:

I think the main concern is to ensure we have ... first and foremost, we want to have an improved complaint procedure. I would like to see, I think the Council of Ministers would like to see, a complaints procedure with more teeth than it has now. We think we can do that as effectively as an ombudsperson, and probably financially for better value if we look at doing that through the existing structure rather than set up a new one. That is the work we are doing now and as soon as we have concluded that piece of work we can make a final decision and then come back to the Assembly with what we plan to do.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Thank you for that. Your reply suggests that you are viewing it in a certain light only - the costs - and without regard to the overall thrust of the Law Commission, which was in relation to the seeking out of complaints by the public. I mean just by way of general information, it is convenient that the

Financial Services Ombudsman has completed his report this year, and during the year they received 562 complaints and closed 515. The complaints panel received 12, and again I am not for one moment criticising the complaints panel, they do a good job with what they have, but the whole point is whether the format of the system we have does invite the public to register complaints.

The Chief Minister:

That is one of the key issues. Part of an improvement of the existing complaints service we have is to increase its public exposure to make sure the public know there is a process that can be followed. But I never said that saving money is a prime objective. I mean that is a key objective of what we are trying to do in everything. We must always, I believe, look at everything we do, not be complacent about anything when it comes to how we finance it. I think we have a duty as States Members and Members of the Government to do that, to try and provide the best value for money. But as I said just a few minutes ago, for this Government the key is to make sure we have an appropriate complaint service that is understood by the public, is easily accessible by the public, and something that has perhaps more authority or more teeth, as we call it, than it has now. That is the prime objective. Second to that is the cost. If we can achieve that at a lower cost, then we are likely to be recommending we enhance the existing service and create a new statutory body.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Thank you for that, but going back to the more general question I have, which is one I will raise now. Considering the complaints panel, as it now is, has already been reviewed and was previously found to have been ineffective, which is what it was, which therefore resulted in the agreed decision by the States Assembly to establish an ombudsman for Jersey, how will any further review, I suppose, of the current complaints process result in a different conclusion? I say that against the background of not only the Law Commission, but the States Assembly came to that decision and proposition, and it said that now that they had the Law Commission information, that was the information they were looking for, we have had comments from the Children's Commissioner, the Care Inquiry as to the need for it, has that not all been done to public satisfaction in conjunction with the public consultation? I have difficulty understanding the review you are now conducting can actually go beyond that.

The Chief Minister:

I accept that but what I do not think we have done in the past is a proper study as to how we can improve our current system. Work is underway to improve complaints handling. There are many areas of recognised good practice that we can introduce to the current system. We can introduce quality assurance and make sure quality assurance of complaints are in place across all departments.

Deputy J. Renouf:

With respect Chief Minister, it was looked into. The possibility of increasing the hours and beefing up the complaints panel was looked into when the ombudsperson was considered and was rejected. I think the Constable's question is valid. Why are you taking a different point of view?

The Chief Minister:

I think that's the prerogative of the new Government, is it not, in line with our renewed figure in addressing how we look at our expenditure, given the fact that it has grown exponentially in the last 3 to 4 years?

Deputy J. Renouf:

Coming back to money.

The Chief Minister:

Well money is certainly a big part of it, yes.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Would it not be more honest to say quite upfront ...

The Chief Minister:

Hang on a minute, do not accuse me of dishonesty, please. The bottom line is we just take a different opinion and we are investigating it. That is really all I have to say on it.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Would it not be more credible to say that you would bring a rescindment to the proposition that was passed by the States, because that is what you are saying?

The Chief Minister:

I have already said that in the Assembly in answer to questions, and I said it again about 10 minutes ago. We respect decisions of the Assembly and if we are going to seek to change one we will come back to the Assembly. I have said that 3 or 4 times now, and I am sorry if you have not ...

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Actually, in fairness, I did not hear that said this morning.

The Chief Minister:

So I hope that is clear.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

It is clear.

Deputy J. Renouf:

I think the problem, Chief Minister, is that we have presented evidence to you and you have just said you were taking a different opinion, and you have not responded to the point about the evidence that was presented in the past to say that beefing up the complaints panel was not going to work.

The Chief Minister:

I have said we take a different view and, after discussing it with colleagues, discussing it with the Greffe and P.P.C. ...

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Yes, P.P.C. obviously are involved with the process of the complaints tribunal, as now is. I am not for a moment suggesting they do not do a good job in accordance with their reference terms, but the point is, and this is the root of the problem, or the situation, that the Law Commission advise that it is not the system we have, where they received 22 complaints in the last year, as opposed to the Financial Services Ombudsman over 500, that that accords with the ... that one of the problems identified is the system does not encourage complaints.

The Chief Minister:

I am not sure the work of the Financial Services Ombudsman and the potential work of a Public Services Ombudsman are that similar.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

I accept they are not parallel, but again the whole thread of debate has compared complaints with other ombudsmen, including the Financial Services one, and that is in the law drafting instructions which you have make the point.

The Chief Minister:

I accept all of that. We just want to take another look at it. We want to try and find something that is right size for Jersey.

Deputy H. Miles:

Okay, I am going to move this on. Did you have a final question that you wanted to ask?

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Perhaps just to flag, if I may, that the overarching objective for J.P.S.O. (Jersey Public Services Ombudsperson) is to improve high standards of public administration by responding to identified levels of core service and seeking to drive up standards. Now, that seems to me to accord with the public interest.

The Chief Minister:

I am completely aligned with that; completely agree with that and that is at the heart of what we are looking at.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

We have a different opinion as to what the public interest is then, possibly

The Chief Minister:

I think we agree on that. It is just the process we use to deliver that.

Deputy H. Miles:

We are going to move this on actually. I will move to Lucy, please.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Thank you. On to the gender pay gap now, please, Chief Minister. In recently published comments to P.13, which is a proposition on pay gap reporting, the comments suggest that the Council supports the need for action to reduce the gender pay gap but then says that you would not be supporting P.13. Can you explain that position a bit more please and how you will be addressing the gender pay gap?

The Chief Minister:

I just want to be clear that the Council of Ministers and myself agree absolutely with the principle that is being raised but we cannot support the methodology that Deputy Doublet has proposed in the proposition. The argument she makes is that gender pay gap reporting is established in other jurisdictions, with particular emphasis on the U.K. (United Kingdom), so we should make similar arrangements in Jersey. As a concept that seems reasonable but the proposition addresses, in our opinion, none of the practical implications of trying to do so, and certainly within the timeframe laid out by Deputy Doublet in the proposition. In small jurisdictions like ours, even businesses with 50 employees do not have the necessary human resource systems and personnel to generate the necessary reporting without diverting resources in that way from their actual business activities. We would need to dedicate considerable resource to go through up to 180 company returns to assess whether they were acceptable and then presumably discard the flawed returns to see if we met the

75 per cent target. We agree in what we want to achieve but we think there is a better process to do it that work for local businesses.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

What is the best process then, Chief Minister, and when are you going to do that?

Assistant Chief Minister (1):

I think that is something that needs to be further investigated. I have been in discussions with the Statistics Unit looking at maybe another way in which we can possibly utilise some of the statistics that are currently being gathered.

[12:30]

I think the Minister for Social Security has also been looking at the ... I cannot quite remember, but there is a piece of work that collects some data around this, but also looking at the disability and neurodiversity and minority pay gaps as well and how that ... I cannot remember what the mechanism was, but she mentioned to me that she was looking at maybe being able to make that a much more regular process because it is not currently happening now. Ultimately we recognise that obviously ... I think there needs to be a bit more understanding around what gender pay gap means as well because I think some people seem to think that it means that the same person in the same role with the 2 different genders are paid differently and that is not what it means, because that would actually be breaking the law because that is a law that we currently have in place to ensure that that is not happening. There are mechanisms that need to be looked into to see how it would work for us as a jurisdiction because we are very different to the U.K. and we are considerably smaller as well, so there is some work going on in the background to see how we can make this work.

Deputy H. Miles:

Can I just ask you what sort of consultation you are having with local businesses? Myself, Deputy Stephenson, Deputy Mézec and Deputy Jeune attended the Gender Pay Gap Workshop yesterday to which all States Members were invited. I think, taking away from that, there was a very clear message that those businesses want legislation and many of those businesses are doing this as a matter of course. They are publishing it. We know from the last Government that we had significant discussions with PwC who had really highlighted the intersectionality around pay gap and the like. Just really going back to your first comment, you said that Jersey is not ready for this and businesses are not ready for this. That was not the message that we had last night so that is why I am interested to know who you have been talking to to come up with your approach.

The Chief Minister:

I did not say Jersey is not ready and businesses are not ready. I said from a Government perspective, we are aligned. We are waiting to hear back from some of the key industry bodies especially in areas outside of the larger organisations in financial services where a lot of businesses, I am pleased to say, already are doing this at work. This will impact on areas in hospitality, retail, construction and other, can we just say, businesses with less sophisticated H.R. (human resources) functions. What we need to do is find a way where that data can be collected productively and in a format that is consistent so the data we are collecting is meaningful, so that is what we are trying to achieve. We will liaise with those particular industries that are impacted that may not be participating at the moment and try and find a way we can get that delivered but we are committed to getting that information delivered but just in a way that is realistic to the smaller businesses.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Just to go back, one of your first comments, Chief Minister, was around the comments paper in relation to P.13 and government resourcing saying there are no resources to do this. Yet your response just then, and also Deputy Alves' response, is it sounds like getting Government to do a lot more of the fishing of the data that does exist and trying to interpret that from there. The 2 things do not add up. Are we trying to take work away from Government or work away from businesses? What is the approach there?

Assistant Chief Minister (1):

I think gender pay gap reporting is very complicated for businesses and Government so we would need to provide a very clear methodology around that for everybody to use, and we do not currently know what individual firms are doing in order to find out what is out there. We also need to recognise that a lot of the payroll software as well is not the same as the U.K. A lot of the payroll software in the U.K. will probably have this inbuilt now whereas for us, because we have a different social security system, it is not as easy to pull up that same information. I think, obviously, we need the time to really be able to find out what individual firms are doing and what we can come up with that will work and be cost-effective as well. We did say in our Government comments that, potentially, it could be up to £500,000 to come up with a mechanism to be able to do reporting when, ultimately, we feel as a Council of Ministers that that £500,000 could be put into things that will directly address the causes of the gender pay gap, such as things that we have mentioned earlier like nursery placements and things like that. We agree that this is important but we need to find a mechanism that is going to work and really find out exactly what is going on in the firms.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

I appreciate that response from you, thank you, but it sounds like the Government takes the burden off this workload rather than saying to businesses: "You have a role to play in this and we should be working on this together." Is that not a fair interpretation?

Assistant Chief Minister (1):

Yes, I think absolutely but, ultimately, who is going to police the data and make sure that the methodology is done properly? It is going to have to sit with Government. We cannot really put it anywhere else.

The Chief Minister:

Government would have to legislate.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

I wonder if I could put one final question before we conclude, if you are happy with that. At the event that the chair mentioned last night, which was brought together by I think initially 32 business leaders, predominantly women, but it is growing from there, I will warn you, Chief Minister, there is a real campaign group growing there.

The Chief Minister:

Yes, I can see that.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

There was a very clear message that, at the current rate, it is going to take 45 years to close the gap and the question was put to the audience: "Are you happy with that on your heads and not doing anything and it is not going to change?" I want to put that question to you, Chief Minister. Are you happy that, at the end of your Government at the rate that things are going now, it does not sound like anything will have changed?

The Chief Minister:

First of all, I would be really interested to see the analysis we have to the 45-year claim. Of course we want to try and change things. I do not know how many more times we can say that we are all aligned with the gender pay gap. In this specific instance, there is no point putting something in place that we do not feel will deliver the information we need or will go in any way towards a closing of the pay gap for some of the reasons that Deputy Alves has explained. We want to work with Deputy Doublet to come up with something hopefully in the next few weeks or months that we can work with which will be a good compromise that will start getting smaller businesses involved in this but, importantly, will provide consistent information that means something.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Thank you.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Chief Minister, could we move on to the public sector workforce and some questions around that if we can start at the top perhaps? The chief executive is currently, I believe, on a period of absence. Can you update the panel on what is going to happen with that role? Is he going to continue in the role and, if so, for how long?

The Chief Minister:

Just to be correct, the interim chief executive's contract ended on 17th May and we are very hopeful he will be starting on a new contract in the not too distant future. As I have said before, we are just waiting for all of the details to be confirmed and, as soon as that is done, I will confirm that. I am always hopeful but I think it would be in the next few days.

Deputy J. Renouf:

You will be able to confirm that he will be staying and for how long.

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Thank you.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

How long do you think he is going to be staying for?

The Chief Minister:

I think it is ultimately up to the Government and up to him. I would like to see him stay for at least until the end of this Government and into the new Government so we can see a transition into the new Government. I think that is important for the stability continuity of the Island, so those are the hopes really, but of course it is providing everything goes well. He performed his duty well, he is happy to stay and the Government is happy with him.

Deputy H. Miles:

At the moment, we do not have a chief executive officer in post and those responsibilities are presumably being taken by the Assistant Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister:

Yes, the assistant chief executive.

Deputy H. Miles:

Sorry, the assistant chief executive. You are saying that you are optimistic in the next few days that there will be some kind of contractual agreement.

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Deputy H. Miles:

If that optimism is not realised, what will the process be?

The Chief Minister:

Can I answer that question should that optimism not be answered? It is difficult to speculate about that now.

Deputy H. Miles:

What will the process be if we find that the chief executive officer chooses not to return to the organisation?

The Chief Minister:

The process would be to start the process to appoint another new chief executive.

Deputy H. Miles:

Would we restart the previous process or would this be a new process?

The Chief Minister:

Yes, we would. I think it would be sensible to restart the previous process but, obviously, we would have to take advice from officials on that.

Assistant Chief Minister (2):

Obviously, we have continuity with the deputy C.E.O. (chief executive officer) taking up the mantle leading on the C.S.P. priority, so there would be no disruption to service.

Deputy H. Miles:

You referred to the term "deputy C.E.O".

The Chief Minister:

Assistant C.E.O. but, yes, Deputy.

Deputy H. Miles:

The Assistant C.E.O., okay.

Assistant Chief Minister (2):

Yes.

Deputy H. Miles:

Previously, we had 2 or 3 assistant C.E.O.s.

The Chief Minister:

I believe we have 2 assistant C.E.O.s and one of them is deputising for the chief executive, if that is the correct terminology.

Assistant Chief Minister (2):

Yes.

Deputy H. Miles:

Can we take it that there will be an announcement within the next few days?

The Chief Minister:

I would hope so. We are just waiting for the details, and these things can take a little bit of time.

Deputy H. Miles:

How long are you prepared to wait for a decision, Chief Minister?

The Chief Minister:

How long am I prepared to wait? I think we have demonstrated our confidence in the current applicant to wait this long on the grounds that it should be resolved fairly imminently. We are just waiting for certain information to come through so that details can be finalised on the contract so we can make the announcement. We will wait as long as it takes, but I am confident we will be able to make an announcement very soon.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

While the interim chief executive has not been in post, does he have any access to government email systems or government buildings?

The Chief Minister:

Not as far as I am aware. I think he is in communication sometimes with former colleagues until he starts afresh, which I hope will be 1st July. If you remember, the original contract was he was on secondment from his former place of employment which was a bank, so his contract was a 9-month contract which is by 17th May. Built into that was the fact that he would return to the bank to tie up the business end, and that is what he is doing now before starting the new contract.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Thank you for that. You are talking quite a bit about changes in the organisation of government in different departments and so on. That obviously will raise concerns among the workforce about their positions and so on. What are you doing to ensure that there is stability and a smooth transition, if you like, through these changes that you are talking about?

The Chief Minister:

I am trying to avoid giving too much detail in a public hearing so we do not start concerning people unnecessarily because it is a professional piece of work that is going on in collaboration with employees and departments. Of course we have the process in place to ensure that we provide as much support as possible to any employee should they be impacted by changes.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Moving on, talking about the use of consultants, there was a report recently, R.30, which looked at the use of consultants in the second half I think of 2022, which is the most recent data. What have you taken away from the recent data on the use of consultants? What is your take home, Minister?

The Chief Minister:

My take home is we have become too reliant on them, we are spending too much money on them, we are over-utilising them and we need to address that.

Deputy J. Renouf:

How do you judge what is a worthwhile use of a consultant? When does it become appropriate and when does it not?

The Chief Minister:

There is no one size fits all answer for that. It depends completely on the circumstances, but I believe we have a culture almost as a first line of defence of calling in consultants to review things. I believe we have significant talent in the public sector where a lot of that work can be done internally,

should we be successful in reprioritising some of the work which, in turn, would also free up people to do more of that.

[12:45]

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Chief Minister, to take maybe a specific area, you mentioned reviews but the cost of reviews by consultants, I would argue from reports, is dwarfed by the costs of consultants on many of the capital and change programmes including in digital. Would you then suggest it is the Government's ambition to reduce consultancy spend but increase staff numbers because, clearly, the Government does not have capacity in areas you mentioned such as the cyber programme and the digital change programmes? Would you look to take a model that reduces the reliance on consultants through increased hiring of permanent staff?

The Chief Minister:

In a word, no. We do realise that you cannot employ qualified staff in every aspect of the work that we do in Government and so consultants will always be necessary at certain levels. We just want to reduce that. All departments are critically reviewing the need for consultancy services so we want to make sure that, when we do bring consultants in, we absolutely do need to bring them in.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Do you think you can make a meaningful dent in that figure without addressing the fact that some of the largest consultants depend on capital programmes on change that the Government routinely goes out for? There are elements you have mentioned that can come in-house within existing capacity but can you make a meaningful dent?

The Chief Minister:

I believe we can, yes, and I can just elaborate on that if you like. Part of that is connected to the capital expenditure programme because when we budget for capital projects, we bring consultants in to start work on them so we end up spending consultancy fees on capital projects that never reach fruition as just one example.

Deputy J. Renouf:

I am just interested in this point. If you were briefing the Civil Service on what you are looking to get rid of or what you are trying to stop, what would you be saying to the Civil Service?

The Chief Minister:

Again, there is no one size fits all answer to that because it completely depends on the work that they are trying to address, but the message is we need to be less reliant on consultants.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Have you set a target?

The Chief Minister:

No, not as yet. That is down to the executive team and the chief executive, and when they have carried out their critical review of consultancy they will come back with some recommendations.

Deputy J. Renouf:

We are trying to get out of you how you will judge success at the end of 2 years.

The Chief Minister:

I will judge success by seeing a reduced usage and a reduced spend on consultants without compromising any of the key work we need to use consultants for. We are grateful for a recent C. and A.G. (Comptroller and Auditor General) report because this was picked up on by the Comptroller and Auditor General if an action plan to address the recommendations in the C. and A.G. report is in development. We have given officials until the end of the year to bring that to fruition.

Deputy J. Renouf:

The States Annual Employment Board Annual Report was published in April. What are you doing to take forward items from that that were raised as urgent?

The Chief Minister:

Can I ask the vice-chair to address that?

Assistant Chief Minister (2):

Yes, sure, so the annual report was produced and, largely, it is a factual report about what the activities of the S.E.B. (States Employment Board) had been in the previous year, but the main areas that we are focusing on is health and safety and better reviews of case management. In relation to health and safety, we are making sure that we have approved new health and safety provisions within the service and a new suite of minimum health and safety standards and making sure that that is cascaded through the organisation. Combined with that, we are looking at better review of our case management in terms of suspensions, tribunal cases and disciplinary procedures to make sure that the proper managers are trained in how to handle conflict within the workplace and that people all have access to a fair and transparent process for dealing with issues as they arise in the workplace.

Deputy J. Renouf:

When I was in Government, there was certainly a sense that there was too much micromanaging through S.E.B. of individual issues, even down to individual personal cases and so on. Is that an area you are looking at?

Assistant Chief Minister (2):

We are not looking too much on individual cases but certainly we want to give managers the tools that they need to be able to manage their staff appropriately while having a good handle on disciplinary action and cases that go to tribunal because some cases can last a long time and, obviously, there is a cost to the public purse there. We are really keen to make sure that any process which is put in place is fair but is also as expedient as it can be as the capital circumstances allow.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Thank you.

Deputy H. Miles:

Thank you. Again, for you, Chief Minister, I wanted to talk about the response to the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry so really taking you back to 2017. Have you been updated on the Care Inquiry workstream and, if so, can you tell us about the outstanding priorities and how you are tracking the progress on them?

The Chief Minister:

No, I cannot, I am afraid, at this stage. There is work in progress. Just bear with me. Out of the 7 recommendations, 3 of them are complete and 4 are being worked on. I have the key action points here. The Children's Commissioner is complete. Children's voice work is complete. Independent inspection work is complete. Workforce is work in progress. I do not have any more details on that.

Deputy H. Miles:

Just given the time, I was going to stop you where you said the work around children's voice is complete. Certainly a particular action was around the Voice of the Child but we have a new Children's Commissioner now who has been to talk to us and, in fact, she is talking to the public as we speak I think on Radio Jersey this lunchtime. We have had feedback from her that children in Jersey continue to feel that they are a nuisance, they are not trusted and they are invisible. I was just wondering, given that you consider that action to be complete, how you feel about her comments.

The Chief Minister:

I am due to meet the Children's Commissioner regularly. We have had an initial meeting and she had not been in post long enough I think to have come to that conclusion but we are prepared to listen. Of course, if any new evidence comes along that we are lacking or not addressing certain issues, we will work to address them.

Deputy H. Miles:

Clearly, we all have a responsibility as a corporate parent so what are you doing to help enhance and improve the understanding of the corporate parenting role across the Assembly?

The Chief Minister:

I will be inviting the Children's Commissioner to address the Council of Ministers on a regular basis with key issues because I think there has been a gap there certainly from the previous Government. In relation to corporate parenting and the general duties set out in the 2022 law, a Corporate Parenting Board has been established and a programme of work is in development now. I need to be updated on that programme of work because I am not at the moment. We will make sure that those recommendations are implemented where possible and keep States Members updated.

Deputy H. Miles:

Thank you. Recommendation 7 of the Jersey Care Inquiry talked about the "Jersey Way" in very negative terms and one approach to tackle the perception of that negativity was to establish a Public Services Ombudsperson for Jersey. That was also suggested by Clothier. Obviously, you clearly stated today that you are not supportive of the way forward that has been proposed by the Law Commission and others over the public sector ombudsman. How do you rely on that decision with appropriately responding to recommendation 7?

The Chief Minister:

Two things. First of all, I have said we are not completely opposed to that. We are just taking another look at it to see if we can do it in a better way that is more in line with Jersey.

Deputy H. Miles:

I will not rehearse our view on that, that this work has been done, but please continue.

The Chief Minister:

The second part of the question was?

Deputy H. Miles:

It was how are you going to align that decision with appropriately responding to recommendation 7?

The Chief Minister:

There is still a chance we could take another look at the work done and come back and say: "No, we are going to proceed with it that way." If we do not, we need to ensure that the complaints processes are effective enough to satisfy.

Deputy H. Miles:

The recommendation.

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Deputy H. Miles:

Another recommendation around recommendation 7 was consideration of the dual role of the Bailiff. Will your Government try to balance the public perception of conflicting roles in various Jersey Institutions which have very historic roots and therefore very traditional roles? If so, how are you going to do that?

The Chief Minister:

That is an issue we have not debated at Government level as yet and, obviously, that remains a debate for the Assembly. Whether we bring that debate as a Government or it is done beforehand as a private Member, I am not sure, but that is something we will discuss in due course later this year, and then we will leave it to the politics I think. I am not sure if I can predict how the Government will feel about it. I think there are mixed views.

Deputy H. Miles:

Do you think your Council of Ministers will be in agreement?

The Chief Minister:

It is hard to say.

Deputy H. Miles:

The Assistant Chief Minister thinks not, clearly.

Assistant Chief Minister (1):

We all have very differing views on that. I think some of us have made it more public than others, yes.

Deputy H. Miles:

Thank you for those answers. We have 5 minutes left and I just really wanted to talk about the legislative programme, so really what was on the list. Is there anything in particular that you wanted to highlight to the panel about what was coming forward for your legislative programme?

Group Director of Policy:

Hello, I am Paul Wylie. I am the group director for policy in the Cabinet Office. The Council of Ministers have been very clear that they want to continue to publish a legislative programme in advance. It is beneficial internally because it allows us to prioritise so, hopefully, it is beneficial for Scrutiny, the States Assembly and the public to know what is coming. What you will see in the departmental plans which, as the Chief Minister said, will be published in July, is that full list of the legislative programme and, crucially, when we expect to lodge it within 2024.

Deputy H. Miles:

The list we have at the moment - and if I just flick through it to see whether it matches yours - is the Comptroller and Auditor General (Jersey) Law.

Group Director of Policy:

Yes.

Deputy H. Miles:

I think we have had a briefing about that, have we not? The Inquests and Post-Mortem Examinations (Jersey) Law 1995 and the Marriage and Civil Status (Jersey) Law 2001 seem to be associated with each other. Can you just tell us more about the rationale for the amendments that are being considered for those?

Group Director of Policy:

It is a more detailed conversation that time allows but we are continuing to draft on them and they will be part of the legislative programme.

Deputy H. Miles:

The Charities (Jersey) Law 2014.

Group Director of Policy:

Yes, that will be.

Deputy H. Miles:

Finally, and one I am particularly interested in was the guardianship for missing persons. You did note in a letter to us that that was a key legislative priority. Can I just ask what exploration has been

had for what existing legal devices there are to help such families rather than go down the road of legislation?

Group Director of Policy:

Absolutely, so do you want to jump in?

The Chief Minister:

That is something that is very close to something we have been working with at the moment, subject to a court hearing imminently, and the courts have the powers to handle it. I think we will wait to see the outcome of that before we decide whether it is necessary to amend legislation.

Deputy H. Miles:

Thank you very much. That was really the core of the question. We have covered a lot today in lots of different areas. Does the panel have any final questions or anything that they would like to follow-up with the Ministerial team just to clarify any of the issues that we have covered today?

[13:00]

The Chief Minister:

Can I just say that sometimes it is difficult to give too much detail in a public hearing because of policy under process and the impacts that come of it so we will be very pleased to provide private hearings on confidential matters at any time? Please just make the request. We also undertake to keep you briefed as appropriate and apologies in advance if we miss anything. It is never intentional but so you know the offer is there at any time to provide any further detail.

Deputy H. Miles:

Then on that basis, with about 30 seconds to 1 o'clock, thank you to the Minister and the Assistant Ministers for attending our hearing today and for addressing all the panel's questions. Thank you as well to the supporting officers who have contributed and to members of the public who have watched online. I declare the meeting closed.

[13:01]