

Chief Minister



19-21 Broad Street | St Helier
Jersey | JE2 4WE

Senator Kristina Moore

Chair, Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel
States Greffe
Morier House
St Helier
JE1 1DD

16 July 2020

Dear Kristina,

Thank you for your letter of 2 July following my quarterly hearing with the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel on 29 June 2020. Please see below answers in relation to your questions:

Efficiencies Programme/Workforce

1) Are public sector pay cuts being considered to ensure delivery of efficiency targets?

Answer:

Public sector pay cuts are not being considered to ensure delivery of efficiency target. There is work being performed, as one would expect, and as is normal periodic practise, to the overall total staff reward package. This work has not yet crystallised into any decisions, and any eventual recommendations from this programme will be made to the States Employment Board to consider and approve.

2) Are Departments being asked to consider options to reduce head count in the wake of COVID-19?

Answer:

Design and delivery of Target Operating Models (TOMs) continues with different departments at different stages of progress. Proposals that impact on headcount will follow the pre-existing governance that assesses impact of proposals.

3) What is the impact of the pandemic on the TOM process?

Answer:

Different departments are at different stages of progress with design and delivery of TOMs. Consequently, the COVID-19 impact differs by department. In the context of delivering efficiencies related to implementation of TOMs, impacts will be assessed and reported through the 6-month Efficiencies Plan report which will be published by the end of August 2020.

4) Is the TOM structure being reorganised to create a TOM version 2?

Answer:

Review of Target Operating Models is a continuous process reflecting the changing needs of the organisation and our customers.

States Employment Board

5) The SEB was recently fined £50,000 following an accident involving a primary school pupil. Can you confirm what changes the SEB have made/will make to processes to reduce this risk in the future?

Answer:

Since the incident, the SEB has had oversight of both strategic and operational improvements in health and safety management. In our mitigation to the Royal Court we set out what these were, including: a complete review of interior and exterior door/gate hinges; improved commissioning arrangements for works on all sites, including health and safety statements, and staff training. We have also recently improved strategic capability with a new health and safety function and enhanced training for employees.

6) R.80/2019 Chief Executive Officer: Performance Appraisal was presented to the States by the Chief Minister on the 25 June 2019. a. We were led to believe that the next Chief Executive Performance Appraisal was to be released imminently? Could you confirm when the performance appraisal will be presented to the States Assembly?

Answer:

I will provide a statement on the outcome of the Chief Executive Officer's appraisal. The appraisal is due to be concluded by July 2020.

b. The strategic objectives which the Chief Executive is currently accountable to as those specified in R.80/2019 appear to have expired at the end of 2019? What are the current strategic objectives?

Answer:

The objectives remained the same, although in the context of delivery of the Government Plan, and included the addition of an economic strategy. The objectives may be reviewed in light of the post-COVID environment.

c. Have the highlighted areas for future focus identified by the independent assessor report in R.80/2019 been addressed? (Link to R/80)

<https://statesassembly.gov.je/assemblyreports/2019/r.80-2019.pdf>

Answer:

These are being discussed as part of the current appraisal cycle.

7) When will Amendments be made to the Employment of States of Jersey Employees (Jersey) Law 2005 (L.26/2005) to include appraisal and disciplinary processes for the Principal Accountable Officer? When will a revised law be presented to the States?

Answer:

We are proposing that the revised law is split into two stages with the first stage completed by Quarter 4, 2020 – subject to the agreement of the Council of Ministers in prioritising this legislation given the current backlog of legislative drafting.

Government Communication

8) According to a recent survey only 37% of the public have been confident in the Government's communication strategy during COVID-19. Do you believe communication from Government during Covid-19 has been successful in explaining the changing rules and strategy when there has been evident public confusion on both? a. How have you targeted harder to reach demographics, and those for whom English is not their first language?

Answer:

During Levels 4 and 3 of the Pandemic, the Strategic Coordination Group received daily updates from officers working across health, justice, and communications. The updates pointed to overwhelming understanding of the public as to what was required of them. This is backed up by the health data, which saw a sudden and dramatic flattening of the curve as Islanders adhered to the guidelines and stayed home. The call centre reported to the central communications team on the types of queries that were being taken and messaging was tailored, targeted, and sent out in a timely fashion to inform on these queries.

Working alongside the Parishes, the Connect Me programme harnessed a network of volunteers to provide support for Islanders who were in financial hardship or struggling with practical needs due to social isolation. Help included free food, hot meals, delivery of medical supplies and dog walking. The programme was advertised in English, Polish, and Portuguese across a number of channels, including an all-Island leaflet drop to households.

All marketing communications, including physical assets (posters, bin-wraps, banners, flyers) featured English, Portuguese, Polish, and Romanian. Radio adverts were broadcast on Channel 103 in English, Portuguese, Polish, and Romanian. Further materials were produced in British Sign Language, Bulgarian, French and Jèrriais on a needs basis.

I wrote to the Scrutiny Liaison Committee on 19 June outlining, in part, how regular briefings were established, how such information was made accessible on both traditional platforms and digital ones, and how information needed to be in language that was accessible to the full range of Islanders.

9) What score would you give yourself and other Ministers for the level and effectiveness of communications through the crisis?

Answer:

To date, we have dealt with the crisis and the risk of excess deaths exceptionally well. We compare favourably to other jurisdictions, including our near neighbours, and I believe we should be judged by our outcomes.

10) Will you hold further public question and answer sessions, such as the one held on Twitter on March 31st?

Answer:

Yes, we have a number of public engagements planned. These will form part of the implementation of the Government Plan Communications Strategy and involve social media, radio phone-ins, Town-hall style meetings and webinars.

11) How will the communication strategy be updated following the learnings from the Covid-19 response?

Answer:

The Government's 2020 Communications Strategy will be published after the summer and will include plans for Government Plan, Economic Renewal and the risks of the pandemic continuing to affect global trade and travel. The Director of Communications is reporting to the CSSP on his progress in updating this strategy based on his team's learnings from the response.

Office Strategy

12) Due to COVID what changes in the timeline are predicted for the Office Strategy?

As a result of the Covid-19 crisis, a review has been undertaken of the principles of the Strategic Outline Case for a new office building, that was approved by the Council of Ministers in October 2019. That review has suggested that the case to deliver a new office for public service remains valid.

However, it is likely that the economic impact of Covid-19 Plans could affect property prices. Plans and timings to exit leases and dispose of any properties will be reviewed to mitigate against this risk wherever possible.

Despite Covid, the procurement programme for a developer and site has not been delayed.

13) Will the requirements for this project be altered to reflect the global change towards remote working practices which are being realised following the pandemic? what resulting efficiencies would be possible for Government?

Yes, the scope for the project will be reviewed. As suggested, the Covid-19 crisis has shown that we can be more agile as an organisation in the ways that we work. A corporate agile working strategy is currently being developed to consider ways of working in the longer term.

A more permanent shift to working from home might mean that colleague-to-desk ratios are different from those anticipated in the Strategic Outline Case. In turn, this might mean that we can extend the scope of the project to other departments and partners that were not previously in scope. If we can take advantage of this opportunity, additional efficiencies could be possible through savings on rental costs or increases in income through disposals of additional properties.

Furthermore, the ways in which we run customer services might change. We know that customers want ease of access and convenience. The Covid-19 crisis has shown that customer-facing services can continue to be delivered effectively without the need for them to be face-to-face. The Customer Strategy put forward a move to more online services, which fits with the OneGov 'Digital by Default' principles. More online services could allow us to use focus our resources on different areas of customer work, thus making more efficient use of how colleagues are deployed.

The specification and requirements will continue to be developed as the programme progresses, through engagement with colleagues and partners.

14) Are changes being made to the Office Strategy to support the recent surge in cyclists?

Secure cycle racks and shower/changing facilities are planned for the new building, although the exact numbers will not be specified until later in the programme. This will allow us to monitor the trends with respect to ways in which our colleagues travel to work for the most appropriate configuration of facilities for staff.

Migration Reform

15) When can we expect a proposition to be lodged?

Answer:

We are aiming for 22 September 2020.

16) What communication have you had with stakeholders, such as the hospitality sector, over concerns raised about the UK's new points-based immigration system?

Answer:

As you will be aware the negotiations between the UK and EU on the future immigration controls have been ongoing and changeable. JCIS carried out a survey with local business stakeholders at the end of 2019 on the UK's proposed immigration scheme and the MPDB and JCIS regularly spoke with a number of stakeholders, including the hospitality sector, in its considerations. Throughout these communications employers have stated the importance to their businesses of being able to continue to access EU workers after the transition period at the end of 2020. These concerns have been fed back to relevant Ministers and are being considered as part of future immigration and migration policy.

17) Do you believe that the Board's recommendations are simple and easy to understand?

Answer:

The Migration Policy Development Board brought together the views of Ministers, States Members and stakeholders to produce a number of detailed recommendations. As I said when I published the Board's report whilst the recommendations were not policy, and did not commit the Council of Ministers to a particular course of action, the advice of the Board provided a good foundation to inform our considerations of this important topic.

18) Do you have any concerns with what is being proposed by the Board? a. What risks do you believe the proposed policies run in forcing individuals or families to leave the Island?

Answer:

The recommendations of the Board are not policy and do not commit the Council of Ministers to a particular course of action. It seemed to me that the Board had sought to have regard for the impact of its recommendations on individuals and families and had sought to be proportionate in its recommendations. Although it is likely that some difficult decisions will be required to produce a migration policy that reduces the Island's reliance on net inward migration it is not intended that a future policy would force individuals or families from the Island.

b. How will you factor in the concerns raised by Corporate Service's Population and Migration report?

Answer:

I am grateful for the CSSP's report and the comments raised will form part of the Council of Ministers' considerations on the future migration policy.

19) Do you believe that there are risks in merging the department responsible for social security with that which is responsible for customs and immigration? How will you mitigate them?

Answer:

The recommendations of the Board are not policy and do not commit the Council of Ministers to a particular course of action. I do not envisage a merging of these two departments, but there are likely opportunities to improve processes and data sharing in a way that offer a more streamlined service for those wishing to live and/or work in Jersey.

Technology Transformation Programme

20) How is the Technology Transformation Programme progressing?

Answer:

The TTP in total encompasses ten key initiatives (of which six are explicitly included in the Government Plan 2020-23) that will enable the GoJ to substantially deliver the outcomes we have identified in our ambition for One Government. These are necessary to address historical under investment in technology and also to enable modernisation of the GoJ.

Three initiatives were scheduled to begin in 2020:

1. Integrated Technology Solution
2. Cyber Security Programme
3. Microsoft Foundations

All three initiatives started as planned in January 2020 however each has been impacted by Covid-19 and has required re-planning. In all cases, the re-planning has enabled the initiatives to continue to progress and maintain key dates.

21) Will the programme need altering to reflect the challenge of employees working from home?

Answer:

The answer is largely no as the programme was already set up to increase remote working in support of the Estates Strategy.

The most immediate impact has been on the MS Foundations Programme. COVID-19 caused the programme to revise its plans rapidly in order to support the rapid rollout of Microsoft Teams to over 2,000 colleagues to enable them and their teams to continue to collaborate and communicate whilst working remotely. Had we not already had piloted MS365 and had the programme mobilised then this would have been a much more difficult task. The Cyber Security Programme has also enabled more secure home working by targeting the initial activities of our new Managed Security Service Provider (MSSP) on our Azur estate.

In the longer term, home working will be better enabled by planned activities within the Technology Transformation Programme, for example:

1. Replacing JD Edwards with a modern cloud-based system will enable all staff to access the system and undertake the required activities remotely. (NB. Some finance staff have had to come into the office even during level 4 as they were unable to undertake their duties remotely because of the limitations of the current system.
2. Similarly, replacing NESSIE with a modern cloud-based system will enable Customer and Local Services staff to operate remotely. (NB Whilst CLS staff were able to work remotely through the deployment of additional technology as a front end to NESSIE does not work as well as a full cloud-based solution).
3. Once the Scanning Programme is completed, it would be possible for appropriately authorised staff to view medical and tax records which are currently held on paper and, therefore, require a physical presence in the office.
4. Once the rollout of MS365 is complete, we plan to review the way in which telephony is applied and, subject to further validation, move to the use of soft phones. This again makes home working easier as it is not necessary to re-direct phones as is the case with the current physical set up.

22) Have any points of interest been identified from Covid-19 in relation to the Technology Transformation Programme, for example public use of online government services?

Answer:

The main area that has seen a big rise in activity has been the gov.je website. This was particularly true in the early phases of “lockdown” where we experienced high demand from people seeking information as to what was being put in place e.g. when text messages were sent to Islanders about important announcements.

Whilst it is difficult to assess the impact that Covid-19 has had on online tax returns, we anticipate that around 35% of tax returns will be completed online by Islanders this year. It is quite probable that Covid-19 has accelerated the take up of this service and Revenue Jersey anticipates that this number should rise to 50% next year.

Ministerial Responsibilities

23) Following the publication of updated Ministerial Responsibilities (R.10/2020), what effect do you believe that the transfer for fifteen duties will have on your role as Chief Minister? a. Do you believe that the authority of the Chief Minister has been weakened or enhanced following these transfers?

Answer:

As is demonstrated by your question, there were too many items falling under the responsibility of the Chief Minister that risked diluting the focus of the role. The transfers were therefore about ensuring that I can more effectively deliver on my responsibilities to provide strategic leadership to the government as Head of the Council of Ministers.

b. Can we expect further transfers of Ministerial responsibilities from the Chief Minister to other Ministers to be made during your remaining term of office?

Answer:

None are envisaged at this time beyond those highlighted in R10, but these matters are always maintained under review. It is also worth noting that some of these R10 changes have recently been made, including around competition and intellectual property transferring to EDTSCM and MER.

c. Who recommended these transfers and selected the relevant Ministers to receive these responsibilities?

Answer:

I make portfolio decisions myself, consulting with the relevant Ministers as appropriate.

24) When can we expect statutory responsibilities outlined in the latest Ministerial Responsibilities document, such as Postal and Competition Policy (signed last Friday?), to be fully transferred to the new Minister?

Answer:

During July 2020 (see also answer to 23 (b)).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John Le Fondré', written in a cursive style.

Senator John Le Fondré
Chief Minister