

STATES OF JERSEY

Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

WEDNESDAY, 10th FEBRUARY 2010

Panel:

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour (Chairman)

Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier (Vice-Chairman)

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade

Witnesses:

Deputy J.G. Reed of St. Ouen (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture)

Deputy A.T. Dupre of St. Clement (Assistant Minister for Education, Sport and Culture)

Mr. M. Lundy (Director for Education Sport and Culture)

Present:

Ms. S. Power (Scrutiny Officer)

Mrs. E. Liddiard (Scrutiny Officer)

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour (Chairman):

Okay, sorry about the slight delay. We were running from one meeting which we did to try and conserve time, but maybe we were over-efficient or under-efficient as the case may be. Before we get into the business of the meeting I have been asked by Mr. Dunn if you wish to be videoed; so what is the view?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

No, I do not.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

That is your view; okay. Well, I would like to welcome members of the public and members of the media in all its manifestations and so I will formally open the meeting now. I think you are all aware of the conditions under which you appear. We do not read the notice out now, but obviously you are all aware of its terms. If you are not, please say so and we will do that. So, just to get the meeting formally going we will introduce ourselves and then we will move to the questions. So, I am Deputy Roy Le Hérissier, the Chairman, from St. Saviour.

Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier:

Deputy Trevor Pitman, St. Helier No. 1, Vice-Chairman.

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

I am Deputy Montfort Tadier from St. Brelade.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

We do not have Constable Butcher with us today so he sends his apologies.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I am Deputy James Reed, the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture.

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

Mario Lundy, Director for Education, Sport and Culture.

Assistant Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I am Deputy Dupre of St. Clement, Assistant Minister.

Ms. S. Power:

Sam Power, Scrutiny Officer.

Mrs. E. Liddiard:

Elizabeth Liddiard, Scrutiny Officer.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Okay, thank you very much. Thank you to you all. Well, as you can see we have got wide ranging questions so we are going to try and be disciplined and put just a certain amount of time to each question, but a lot of them lead on to each other, so to speak. So, without being too disorganised we might, to use an unfortunate phrase, cover the waterfront, but we might come at it in sort of different directions, so to speak. As I said if you could give fairly succinct answers initially and then we will, in a sense, expand them. So, I wonder, Mr. Minister, could you tell us your department's priorities for 2010?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I have basically 5 main priorities for 2010. One is to ensure that appropriate provision is made for both primary and secondary education and also that funding arrangements for those accessing higher education are fair and equitable. The second main one is to establish a programme for students of all abilities aged 14 and over to pursue either the vocational or academic route. Thirdly, I want to and I aim to develop a realistic plan for all arts and heritage organisations and then on the wider remit, as part of the Children's Policy Group, I aim to work with other departments to develop a children's plan which focuses on supporting both parents and children.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Okay, you said there were 5?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, yes, I suppose the first one could be split into 2.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Okay, very quick; just like the amoeba, it keeps splitting and re-splitting.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, I was challenged when I first suggested my 3 main priorities by a number of other Ministers who suggested I slip in a fourth.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisssier:

Okay, well, it looks like, Mr. Minister, other than the children's plan, which is a new one, most of those are in fact covered by subsequent questions so we will keep ploughing on.

Deputy M. Tadier:

In the light of that because I think probably the children's plan sounds interesting - it is not something we know a lot about - could you briefly outline what you mean by supporting the parents and children and what that would entail?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, the whole point of a children's plan is to develop an overall plan, as I said, that is designed to support children and parents in their lives and it is something that has been raised through the Williamson Report as a necessary piece of work to be carried out and more recently we have as a children's policy group instigated this piece of work with the help of Andrew Williamson.

Deputy M. Tadier:

What areas of support is it looking to?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

All areas; it will be an overall plan.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Okay. Are there areas which are not currently being met then?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

No, it will consider all the services that are currently provided to ensure whether they are fit for purpose and identify any gaps in the provision and hopefully it will draw together all the elements to give us the overall plan which we could all subscribe to.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

As I understood it from the Minister for Home Affairs there is quite a brief time been put aside for Professor Williamson to do this work. What is your estimation of it - a timescale - because I mean that is going to be an extensive piece of work, is it not?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

It is an extensive piece of work, but we have got to start somewhere and I think that if we can start to understand and gain a general foundation with regards to the plan then we can move from there. The departments are all well aware of the importance and the need to have this overall plan and more importantly to recognise the services that are currently provided and how they interact.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

But the Minister for Home Affairs I think said he hoped Professor Williamson's work would be done by the end of March. Does that seem plausible to you; is that reasonable?

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

The expectation is that towards the end of February, the beginning of March, that Andrew Williamson will have produced a framework or worked with the departments to produce a framework, but my understanding is that the Minister for Health is committed to bringing the actual plan to the States by the end of the year. The plan is both about universal services and targeted services, so it would be around keeping children safe, about healthier children, about ensuring that accommodation for children is appropriate, that they are well educated and that there are good opportunities to succeed in their future lives. So, that is the universal aspect of it and then the more targeted aspect would be around how you support children and young people with special needs, vulnerable children, et cetera. So, it is tying it together, a cross-agency, and making sure that departmental policies right across the board where they have an impact on children that they are linked.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Would the plan include the recommendation that there be a Minister specifically for children?

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

The plan is operational and the framework is not produced yet, so I do not think you could predict too much of what would be in it at this time.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think we are well aware that consideration has been given to this particular issue before and it was felt that initially the improvement of what was the Corporate Parent which has now become the Children's Policy Group and the interaction between the 3 main departments is far more important than determining who is ultimately responsible.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Can I just ask you to enlarge on that because I think most people would agree, and I know it is before your time, but the Corporate Parent was a miserable failure really and the Minister for Home Affairs again said that the Children's Policy Group has been reactivated and it is meeting regularly. What sort of form does that take; how regular are the meetings?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

We have met possibly 3 times to date over a period of maybe 3 months and the important thing is that we are determined as we develop the Children's Plan to identify clear responsibilities of individual Ministers in particular areas which should ensure greater accountability and deal with some of the issues that were raised and criticisms I would suggest that were put regarding the Corporate Parent.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Following on Trevor's point, Mr. Minister, in the discussions you had what have been the issues where you have said: "We made serious mistakes about this the first time around and we are determined not to repeat them and these are what we put in place not to repeat them."

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

That discussion has not happened yet. It is a commitment that has been given by the 3 Ministers, who all happen to be new Ministers, that we want to ensure that we provide properly for our children and that we need to learn from lessons from the past.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

So, who will be the lead Minister in this arrangement?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, I clearly understood that the Minister for Health will play a major role in this development.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Good, anything else?

Deputy M. Tadier:

Maybe if we could just for the sake of clarity, what is the stance on the Minister for Children from the department?

[10:15]

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

It is still up for discussion.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Okay, we will keep revisiting these issues in a way. You have sent to us a list of the reviews that you are carrying out in 2010 on issues like the priority issues you have mentioned, for example, and I wonder if you could tell us, Mr. Minister, which of these reports are imminent?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

There are 2 reports that will be completed by April 2010 and that is the review of management structure across the Education, Sports and Culture Service and the other one which perhaps is more current in the public's view at least is a review of the cultural strategy and that also is anticipated to be completed by April 2010.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

One of the issues that our panel, as you may recall, raised with you, Mr. Minister, and particularly if you are looking at management structure obviously you have to be very careful that there is ruthless external examination. You did answer in the States question, but just for the record again, could you tell us what steps did you take to guarantee the ultimate independence of these reports?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Right, well, first of all I will answer perhaps the general question and then perhaps my Chief Officer will add some more of the detail. The first thing that I would say is that if any review is going to be meaningful it has got to be considered to be independent and thorough. So, with that in mind, all the reviews have been considered in that light and where necessary we have introduced independent advisers and help to ensure that we get the balance right.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

So, where you said “where necessary” did you think it necessary in the management review?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Absolutely and my Chief Officer perhaps will now elaborate on that.

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

Well, my understanding was that in your amendment that you were suggesting that much of the work could have been done internally on the management structure and we chose not to do that because quite frankly if we were to take a view of our own structure it would not hold much in the way of credibility. So, I have commissioned an ex chief officer of a major education authority in the U.K. (United Kingdom) to look at the current management structure and hopefully we will have a report on that by the end of March.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

So, it is a one person review then, Mr. Director?

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

It is a one person review, absolutely.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

He will deposit his review obviously with the Minister?

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

With the department, yes. Quite frankly, relative to the other reviews, this is quite a small review. It is something that can be done rather quickly and one would hope that it would do so. There are a number of other reviews which although the final reports are not imminent we have had fresh reports back - not necessarily the draft report - but we have had presentations back to enable us to check the facts and give some surety to the people who are undertaking the review before they start writing.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

But there are 2 issues that I would like to raise with regard to the management structure. One is that since Mr. McEwan(?) left, the numbers of directors responsible for the services provided by the department has been reduced; so that is the first thing. Secondly, we need to ensure that the management structure is right to deliver and oversee the services that we provide, bearing in mind that we have a budget of £100 million that we spend annually. Also the Comptroller and Auditor General raised some concerns in one of his reports with regard to the fact that whether or not certain departments were able to properly manage and oversee and deliver on the expectations that the States raise.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Was the reduction by default; it was not planned, was it?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

No.

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

The only reduction has been that the previous post of Assistant Director for Schools and Colleges has not yet been recruited to. If your assumption is that the management structure of the E.S.C. (Education, Sport and Culture) is top heavy and it would be helpful in advance of any report to which I will be held account I do not think that is the case; in fact far from it. The capacity of the department is tight, particularly in terms of the work that it has got to do over the next couple of years in relation to, particularly, these reviews and if you look at the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General he agreed with that. So, I think this is about once and for all laying perceptions to rest and hopefully an external review will do that to all our satisfaction.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Is that going to include the Youth Service?

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

Yes, it is. But you have already had a report on the Youth Service last year and you received that report and in that report it identified the current structure of the management structure of the Youth Service as being, to a large extent, responsible for the vast improvements to the Youth Service over the last 10 years.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Mr. Lundy, was it you who appointed the gentleman from the U.K., the former C.E.O. (Chief Executive Officer)?

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

Yes.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Okay, was there any reason that the Minister would not have undertaken that decision?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I was party to the decision.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

As you quite rightly say perception is important because obviously you are looking at yourselves?

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

Absolutely.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

You need a quite ruthless report, do you not?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, we want a fair and balanced report.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I do not mean ruthless in the sense of cutting people out, although it may happen. I mean ruthless in the sense of somebody who is prepared to go to the heart of the issue?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Certainly the department is not frightened by any of these reviews because the aim of the department and myself is to ensure that we provide the best service in the most efficient and effective manner.

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

I think the important thing for me as Chief Officer to say is that there have now been 2 reviews, both of which have confirmed that there has not necessarily been a heavy management structure at the department and, in fact, that the management structure is not of the size you would expect to do the business that the department is expected to do, and notwithstanding those reviews the perception still exists. So, one would hope that this one way or another would end that perception.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

You are referring to one of the reviews being the Youth Service one?

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

That is right.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I would beg to differ with you on those findings, but that is my opinion.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Okay, well, we certainly may wish to look at that. Okay, thank you. We are looking at arts and culture in another question; the second one that is very imminent. There are no others that are imminent within the next month or 2?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Just those 2.

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

Well, funding of primary and secondary education has begun and we would expect regular updates on that throughout the year because there is a fair amount of work to be done on that. The primary and secondary demographics are ongoing. We are monitoring that on a termly basis. Vocational provision for 14 to 19 year-olds there has already been a draft report that has been presented to the Skills Executive and of course you are already aware that out of that report some new initiatives have begun.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Okay, we may come back to that, Mr. Director, because there are questions about sixth forms and Highlands College and so forth, so that is good. So, we will probably revisit that as well.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

What we will do though, and hopefully we have done it already, is to provide you with an update of completion times of the various relevant reviews and when you may or may not choose to become involved in the process.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I was just going to say when you talk about demographics will it be considered at any depth whether the present system is sustainable with transfer at 14, and if it is dropping numbers of young people what impact that is going to have on the number of schools?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

That is part and parcel of the reviews that we are undertaking.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Okay, the next, 2B, in a way you have answered it: “What are the manpower implications of the imminent reports?” Now, I suppose there could be a massive cutback in managers or there could be a reversion or retention of the status quo obviously on the management review. Arts and heritage review: any manpower implications emerging at the moment?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

It is hard to say until the reviews are complete.

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

Are you talking about the manpower implications of undertaking the reviews or the manpower implications of the conclusions of the reviews?

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Of the conclusions.

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

It would be difficult.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

I know it has been a lot of pressure to do these because obviously you have got to collect evidence for people and so forth. So, nothing has emerged yet?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

No.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Okay. Will all review findings be made public?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Where appropriate.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Okay, how do you define “where appropriate”, Mr. Minister?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I would suggest it would be an ongoing discussion with yourselves. Obviously there are certain reviews; let us say the review of the Jersey Library Service which is more an internal type of review that perhaps one would not necessarily publish. However, there are some major reviews that we are undertaking which will require people to be involved and to get involved in the process, including yourselves.

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

One would not expect reviews that are technical in nature to be published. So, for example the funding of primary and secondary education is not necessarily about the amount of funding that goes into primary and secondary education; it is around the formulas that are created to distribute that funding to the schools. So, one would not necessarily expect that to be published because of the technical aspects.

Deputy M. Tadier:

But, Mr. Lundy, you also appreciate that presumably there is no reason why these could not be published and that essentially it is taxpayers' money that is being used to fund these reports?

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

Absolutely not, there is no reason why they would not be published; that they be made available to you, I would assume, as far as the Minister is concerned.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

The only thing I would say, Mr. Director, on that point it is self evident that we are in a harsher financial climate and obviously how a very high spending department like your finances services has an impact on the tax bill, does it not?

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

The comprehensive spending review will consider that as well.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yes, and we are coming to that. Okay, so as I said we are going to pick up some of these topics again, just like Deputy Wimberley's speech: "I will return to that point later" but there is hope. We come to number 3 which is, in the light of our questions, we hope this is a straightforward question; this is a starter for 10: "How have you progressed with setting up the working group for Fort Regent?"

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

A letter has been sent to all key stakeholders asking them to nominate their representatives and also identify officers who will provide their necessary support to the group and the aim is for the working group to have its first meeting on 15th February and at that meeting we will determine how best to progress the work in a timely fashion.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Thank you for accepting the amendment, which I thought was particularly brilliant to have someone from St. Helier.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Good. I have got a letter from a lady here about the whole swimming pool issue and so forth which I will pass on to you for transmission to your group.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

No, that is fine; any information.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

It is amazing the number of the public who have not linked the Serco decision of the pool on the waterfront with the closure of Fort Regent. This has come as sort of a late revelation to a lot of people, so that is what it is about. I will pass it on to you.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Any information that you have obviously would be gratefully received. One of the particular pieces of work that I believe the steering group will need to do is to pick up a number of the reports that have been written and compiled on the Fort and the future of the Fort and your report will form part of that.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Good. Well, it has a good summary of all those reports basically. So, if you do tire of reading the many, many reports there is a summary there for you.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

No, I accept it is useful.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Okay, we come now then to question 4: "With reference to the comprehensive spending review where will you apply the inevitable cutbacks?"

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, I think let us get a number of things straight. First of all the comprehensive spending review is designed to do a number of things. First of all it is to look at how services are provided to consider whether those services are appropriate or otherwise and to address the deficit that is being forecast in future years. However, it is equally necessary to consider spending pressures that departments already have and that will form part and parcel of that review.

[10:30]

I am pleased to say that over the last 12 months - and I think that this panel is aware of the efforts that I and my department have made to review how we provide our services and clearly the list of reviews that we are undertaking demonstrates that - but equally we have also identified spending pressures which are and will need to be dealt with. So, the comprehensive spending review is not simply looking at savings, but equally how we deal with the spending pressures that we know exist.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I think that is understood, Mr. Minister, and I think you have put it well. You have already told is that the department is very lean and so presumably there is not much scope for any more efficiency savings or not any obvious ones, but I think we should

go back to the question about there probably will be cutbacks in the department and how is that going to affect the department?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, I think the first thing that I would say is what is the point of having a comprehensive spending review when you determine the outcome before you finish the review and the same applies with regard to any scrutiny review that is undertaken. But you raise the issue, you understand the matters that need to be considered, you undertake the review and then you consider those findings which allows you then to make recommendations and a decision. Ultimately the comprehensive spending review will hopefully inform both the public, departments and indeed the States as to what the issues are and allow proper decisions to be made regarding how we continue to fund the services that we provide. Now, it has already been mentioned that there are 2 forms that “savings” can take. One area is the efficiency savings where you are able to deliver services more efficiently therefore making real savings and certainly since I have been involved with the department I have every confidence that that is an ongoing matter that my department takes seriously and is continuing to look at. The other area which will be required to be considered by the States will be the issue of user pays which is that you pass on a cost of providing a service if you choose to continue with that service to the user. Now, you cannot view that in isolation and I believe it has already been stated by the Minister for Treasury and Resources that any of those considerations and decisions will be linked to the fiscal strategy when we consider the tax implications on our local residents.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Could I ask you if you could clarify and hopefully just dismiss the rumours going around that one consideration will be to close Youth Provision and transfer the actual activities to school premises?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Absolute nonsense; I have not even heard that comment. Certainly we are very committed to supporting our young people and I come back to we cannot view individual services in isolation with regard to the Children’s Plan and the Children’s Policy Group. The services that we provide must be viewed in the wider sense and the implications of altering or changing any of those services need to be viewed in that light.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I am really pleased to hear you say that because that sort of initiative was undertaken in the U.K. certainly in the last decade or so.

Assistant Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Can I just come in there just to say that we are looking to see if we can use the schools more, after school for various other activities, but nothing to do with the closing of ...

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

That is good to hear.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Sorry, I will jump in and I know Montfort has a related question. There is a bit of confusion in the public mind, Mr. Minister, because there was this announcement which may not have been entirely accurate, that there are going to be £50 million of cutbacks and you allegedly have all signed up for this on the Council of Ministers and quite clearly if they are of this order - even if it is not £50 million, if they are very high - there are essentially I suppose 3 solutions; savage cutbacks, big tax increases or a mixture. So, how can you as one of the big spending departments say at the same time that we must obey(?) the comprehensive spending review when, if you have signed up to such a big cutback programme, you know that at the end of the day there are bound to be consequences? They are unavoidable because they have to target - you cannot do it with paperclips - they have to target the bigger departments.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

First of all I think with any comprehensive spending review one is required to set a target and it was determined that £50 million would be the target, primarily because that seems to be the amount or the annual deficit that the States will be facing over the next number of years and if we want to, if you like, balance the books this amount needs to be dealt with. So, that is the first thing. With regards the services provided, again we need to have and there has been a commitment made that a full discussion needs to be had on any of the implications and outcomes from the comprehensive spending review and we will all need to be part of that; the department, whether it is a department or whether it is States Members individually, collectively and indeed the public. But there are some difficult decisions to be made and I accept the need that we cannot avoid the issue of the annual deficit that is being forecast at the moment and it would be wrong for us to just ignore it hence the reason why.

Deputy M. Tadier:

But the idea just because there is a deficit - and that is clear, that is a well known fact - does not necessarily mean that there is a corresponding saving that can feasibly be made. It may be that we have basically got less money to run society than we need and so it does not mean that just because there is a £50 million deficit that there are £50 million of real savings. So, the question I would ask, and it very much relates to the one that the Chairman asked, is I think there were 2 types of cutbacks. There are cuts which, if you excuse the gruesome analogy, that “cut into the fat” and there are cuts which will “cut into the flesh” and so presumably you have already told us that your department is a fairly lean department. So, the question we are asking is are those cuts going to be painful ones?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Hang on, let us just get one thing straight. The comprehensive spending review is being undertaken because we are aware that there is a deficit. Equally and alongside that there is a fiscal strategy review which picks up your point which says that we may require a greater contribution from the taxpayer to continue to provide the services that we do. So, you cannot look at it in isolation, however you do need and we do need to have a target. This is not necessarily a target simply for our department; it involves all States departments. The one thing that I will tell you is that currently 92 per cent of our budget is spent on education. Now, there is a debate to be had whether or not that money is spent and prioritised and allocated in the right manner which is why we have instigated the review. But to try and second-guess or suggest or identify any area currently that may or may not be continued is extremely

difficult. We need to carry out this piece of work and I understand your frustration because everybody would like answers before we deal with the question.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

It is very hard to see other than, as I said, saving paperclips and maybe a bit of postage given what you tell us about how tight you are where real savings can be unless all the chips are down and you could look at things like the structure of sixth form education, you could start closing down Parish primary schools that we all know politically you would be up against it. We are going to raise sixth form education later; we all remember the last attempt to change it.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I would just like to say, and my Chief Officer will come in in a minute, but just to reinforce the point, a number of our reviews are looking at how we provide education, how we fund education, how we support those in higher education. All of that work will enable us to understand the delivery and provision of those services which will enable us then to move on and consider whether the method of education and provision that we currently provide is fit for purpose, which is picking up your point again and it includes looking at secondary education and the provision of it.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

What are the untouchables; which are the things which you know would be a disaster to touch?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

In my view I am still keeping an open mind. I mean you may laugh but ...

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

It is very difficult, we acknowledge that.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I do believe that and I am seeking and I am wanting to ensure much effort is being placed on ensuring that these reviews will provide sufficient evidence and information that will enable us to go: "Yes, this is the correct way forward" or: "No, we need to change it" and it is only when we have that information in front of us that we will be able to make informed and proper decisions which everybody will be able to understand.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

So, surely higher education is one that you could say is absolutely untouchable? We cannot see a worsening of that position. You have made it quite clear that you would fight for it?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes, I would agree. I have made an absolute commitment and my Chief Officer will confirm this, but I am not, absolutely not prepared to see the financial assistance provided to students devalued further. That is not an option.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

We welcome that.

Deputy M. Tadier:

But would it be helpful if we were to have a list and you could jump out at whether they are untouchable?

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

If I just clarify the approach that the department is taking in relation to the comprehensive spending review; you have seen 10 reviews. Most of those reviews feed into the comprehensive spending review in one way or another. There is one fundamental review there which is the options for the Island's secondary education system. Now, the other reviews, funding of primary and secondary education, vocational provision for 14 to 19 year-olds, on top of that you have a review of inclusion, okay; these are all interlinked. It is a very complex hybrid system of education that you have in Jersey and it is precariously balanced because quite clearly children and young people who are in fee paying schools the States is paying 50 per cent of the cost of educating them in the secondary schools, 50 per cent of the cost of educating them in their own secondary schools; in primary it is about 25 per cent. So, if you tip the balance you could increase the costs. So, the challenge is to look at the system as a whole to see if there are ways of improving the breadth of the curriculum, improving inclusion, improving vocational opportunities for young people and doing it in a way that is more efficient. Now, it is difficult to predict the outcome of that until all those reviews have fed into the major review about the secondary education system and it is only at that point in time when you can consider the options because of the complexities and take a view as to whether any of the solutions are suitable, feasible and politically and publicly acceptable.

[10:45]

Deputy M. Tadier:

Following on from the relationship between the private and the public sector and fee paying, I should say, we were told in an informal conversation by someone who will remain nameless, but nonetheless it was a credible individual, that basically if his children were in the Island today he would opt to put them through a fee paying sector school purely because he says that it is a bargain in a sense, so presumably it is over-subsidised or the actual fees you would pay are under-representative of the value you get back.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

That depends on the principles that underpin the provision of fee paying education on the Island and the principles that have underpinned it to date have been to ensure that it is accessible to the majority of people who might wish to make that choice. If you change that political assumption, the principles underpinning it, quite clearly you can change the structure of the system, but those are political decisions.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes, but this is a slightly different issue, but presumably what we want is for education and consistent quality of education to be accessible to every student, whether that be in the fee paying sector or not and so I guess the question I would ask is there room, as you have said before, for the tipping of the balance so that perhaps

funding from the State would be less for these schools and a contribution from private parents would be greater?

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

One would assume that out of any review of the secondary education system that a number of options would be put forward, and then obviously those options would be considered in the appropriate form by the Minister and brought forward from there. But as to which would be most acceptable, quite clearly that is a political decision.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I was going to ask the same question as Deputy Tadier but then really perhaps you have answered it already, but if that political will was there you are saying the department would be willing to look at that?

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

Well, the department does not have a choice. If the political will within the department is there to do something the department does it.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

It is not something that is an untouchable though, in your view?

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

Well, the untouchables are determined by the Minister.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

So, it is not untouchable in your view?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, we have already instigated reductions in the financial support provided to our fee paying colleges.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Just a final point on that; within the suspensions review we heard from one of the headmasters at the fee paying schools how he felt that students with special needs, difficulties, were better off in States schools because the funding support was not there the same for them, so is that a sort of counter dynamic; is that another tension for you?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I would not agree with that statement. Obviously our States schools do provide, I believe, excellent support for those with special needs. I accept there will be individuals ...

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Yes, I know. I am sorry, the headmaster from one of the fee paying schools was making a point that the students were better off in the States schools than could be provided for in the private.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I cannot comment. All I know is that generally those with special needs are provided for and accommodated within our States education system, and I suppose that because of that and because of the effort that has been placed on that particular area in providing that support that we have the expertise and knowledge which supports those individuals and we are therefore better placed to provide and meet their educational need. Just picking up on a point you made earlier, you spoke about consistent quality of education and the comment of this particular unnamed individual. I would challenge anybody to suggest that the quality of education provision within our States education system is unable to be measured successfully against the fee paying colleges and I think that whether it is results, whether it is the outcomes of the various individuals, that as they complete their education I think that that comment ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

But you must acknowledge, Mr. Minister, presumably if the standard of education in the public sector were better or at least as good as in the private sector then why would there be any reason for anyone to send their children to a private school and pay twice?

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

If you were to look into research as to why parents make choices such as that, it is usually because they wish to have their children educated with the children of likeminded parents. It is usually a social choice as much as it is an education choice. Some parents will chose particular schools because of the tradition and history of those schools. Often fathers, grandfathers, et cetera, have attended those schools. There are many reasons for those choices. But you have a highly selective system and one of the reasons why the particular head teacher was referring to the States provision as being good for young people with children with special needs is because, quite clearly by virtue of the selective system, that is where most of the children are going to be and that is where the resources have been located to support those children. But if you go back to your big question which is around the future of secondary education and where would you seek to consider change, the first thing you have to look at is the curriculum and that is one of the things that we are doing. So, you pointed out that there are, if you include Highlands College, 6 post-16 providers on the Island; that is true. So, what you have to do then is to see if those 6 providers are able to provide the breadth of experience in terms of the curriculum that you would want all the young people in the Island to be able to access, that would be part of this review and then out of that of course you will look at the issues around inclusion and if you have a selective system one of the challenges of that is that you tend to locate, as we have discussed, children and young people who have the highest needs in the smaller number of schools. So, you have a small number of schools carrying the inclusion agenda for the whole Island. Then you have the access to a vocational curriculum, okay. If your 11 to 16 schools, for example, with the 14 plus transfer and it is 16 are delivering a curriculum which is geared to sending children and young people through to Hautlieu or to the fee paying schools later on, then have they got the same opportunities to provide broader vocational subjects to the pupils that are there. So, it is a very complex piece of work and it would be a folly, I think, to anticipate the outcomes before we get there, but the Minister has quite clearly said that all of these issues have to be considered and brought into the mix when determining the future.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yes, thank you, Mr. Director. I do get the impression in the way you describe it that you almost conceive of it as a system which if the structure were to stay it is unreformable; is that correct?

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

If the structure were to stay then it would cost what it costs today.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yes, okay. I wonder just quickly on the cutbacks and then we will refer to them; you mentioned, Mr. Minister, user pays and obviously that is, in a sense ... I mean some people would see it as stealth tax user pays, others would see it as people rightly paying for the services that they use. There is only limited user pays, except of course through fees to schools where parents choose for various advantages to pay fees.

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

Well, that is an important point because if you take the 2 fee paying provided colleges then the total amount, I think, of money there is just over £13 million and the parents are contributing over £8 million of that; so that is an important point.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, but do you see user pays as extending throughout the system? Would you apply it to other areas like the library service? I mean, Highlands does user pays at the moment to a point with its courses and very interestingly of course a major competitor has just emerged to Highlands which is going to pose issues for you, I would have thought, particularly on the schools agenda. So, do you see an extension of user pays as a viable policy in all sorts of areas where it is not currently applied?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think again that “the jury is still out”. I am sorry to repeat myself, but there are many ways of providing services and one is user pays and one is that it is paid by through general taxation. I think we must not lose sight of the fact that in most cases the user will equally be a taxpayer and this is why it is important and the comprehensive spending review has been linked to the fiscal strategy review because we cannot and it would be totally unrealistic if we start promoting a whole range of user pays which would be inappropriate or probably better dealt with through general taxation.

Deputy M. Tadier:

As a general point, I think you made it very well that obviously there is a risk of double taxation because everyone is a taxpayer and pays for a certain amount of services. If you brought forward a user pays system in any department or any area presumably in terms of equity you would also need to bring in a non user does not pay system so that people who will never use the service can get some kind of refund back from the tax that they have put in and that seems to be the logical counter-balance?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Taking your example, we do have some of those types of systems with regard to higher education. We have a user pays type approach.

Deputy M. Tadier:

But you do not have a non user does not pay.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Where individuals who earn over a certain amount contribute for all of their child's higher education, but I do not think it is a necessary discussion for today, but I think it is a discussion that we as a government need to have.

Deputy M. Tadier:

But how do you deal with the position where somebody says: "Well, I have got no children. I do not use any of the services that the Education Department provide, but nonetheless I am having to pay top whack on my tax rate for that."

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I am not prepared to go into this discussion today. I mean it would be an interesting discussion to be had, but I do not think it is appropriate.

Deputy M. Tadier:

It is probably too broad for this panel, is it not?

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

The economic argument around that would be around the externalities. The fact of the matter is that everybody in society benefits because there is a good education system and everybody in society benefits because people go into law, go into medicine and go into other professions and that is generally the rationale for it. If you were to go "non user, non pays" who would pay for States education?

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Just to summarise, and you may not agree with the summary, but I get this feeling that the Minister in his corporate role has signed up obviously to this quite drastic cutback programme, yet you as a department are part of the comprehensive spending review and you seem to be fairly, not convinced, but you obviously will require a lot of convincing and a lot of evidence, were people to come forward with quite radical cutbacks in your services, you seem to expect that there will not be such calls which of course poses the eternal dilemma, well, where on earth will the cuts take place?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I did not say that. I think you are trying to put words into my mouth.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I would never do that. You know that, Mr. Minister.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think I have been quite clear all along that the whole point of carrying out these reviews which form part of the comprehensive spending review will help to inform myself, the department, the States and the public generally about opportunities or otherwise of dealing with the deficit that we know exists and as far as I am concerned, and I believe it is my responsibility as Minister for Education as well as an elected Member of States, to maintain an open mind and seek the evidence. Once I can see the evidence, once I can appreciate and understand the implications to any particular

issue then we will be able to make the decisions necessary wherever they may be appropriate. But I also will balance that with, and it has already been acknowledged by the Council of Ministers and the States generally and the public, that alongside the issue of having to try and, if you like, balance the books with regard to the States income and expenditure, we have ongoing and quite immediate spending pressures that have been identified and equally need to be dealt with. Perhaps that is the more difficult issue that as States Members and as an Island we are going to have to face, that how do we balance the need to on the one hand ensure that our income and expenditure is managed, but at the same time deal with some of the spending pressures which we know exist.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Which are the spending pressures in your department?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, I think I have probably been speaking about them for nearly 12 months now and it is the issue of higher education and how we fund and support those in higher education, and equally there is an ongoing issue of likely increases in university fees imposed by the U.K. which will need to be dealt with.

[11:00]

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Can I just ask a question on that point, slightly off field, but does it concern you, as I am sure it must, if you hear about parents who have to consider that they are better off separating to get their offspring into higher education because I have certainly come across a couple of cases where parents have reached that conclusion and that is very sad, as I am sure you would agree? Is that something that is considered by the department and probably by the Council of Ministers because it does seem to be perhaps a growing problem?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Certainly the department, and myself included, recognise that there are issues, as you have pointed out, that need to be dealt with, that there is a perception that an inequality exists in the current provision for those accessing higher education and being supported financially by the government. Married couples would suggest that the divorced and separated parent is being favoured and gains a greater benefit than the married couple. This is one of the issues that we are addressing within our current review and we are looking towards other jurisdictions to see how they have dealt with this problem.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Is the idea of strengthening Highlands College to making it perhaps more of a university, is that idea being pursued as a way to cut costs of sending students away?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Absolutely, we are looking at all sorts of different ways of supporting our young people in higher education or further education and Highlands will be required and does play quite a large part in that process.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Is there a possibility for a market in the university in the sense that we can start bringing other students to Jersey to paying fees to our college?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think that again it is something that needs to be explored and I do believe that discussions have already been had with our counterparts in Guernsey and the Isle of Man to see whether or not working collaboratively together we can maybe reduce the financial cost to parents who are required to contribute to their child's further education.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I am sure if T.T.S. (Transport and Technical Services) can work together with Guernsey, then the Education Department can as well?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, I must admit I have been very encouraged. I have met with the Minister for Education of Guernsey and the Minister for Education of the Isle of Man and certainly I came away with the view that there are opportunities for us to work closer together as we deal with some of these common problems.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

There obviously was a report years ago, which I admit I have not read, but I am trying to get a copy to read from Dr. Goldstein, not just to improve the opportunities for Island people, but is there potential worth considering - of financial benefit to the Island - by considering a full-blown university in the future?

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

The Island could not sustain it. I mean a full-blown university you are probably looking at between £50 million and £100 million a year at least and that would not even be one of your top players. Universities do not tend to make their money out of tuition, nowadays they make the money out of research. So, you have got to be able to have the top people in at least one or 2 areas who are going to do the research that will bring the funding in. That is not necessarily feasible. What we are trying to do is to develop locally foundation degree courses that underpin the economy, the skills that are required and give people the opportunity to at least start off their studies here, if not finish them. One of the other things that we are exploring, but it is very, very early stages, is the possibility of having a consortium of universities in the U.K. who would operate as if they were a university for the Channel Islands. So if most of our students would go to, say, one of so many universities could we then strike up an interesting agreement with them that would obviously reduce the cost to parents and to the States? That is another thing that we are considering and, in fact, we are meeting with Guernsey and the Isle of Man this Friday to discuss options.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

We might come back to that and for the moment then I will put a line under the comprehensive spending review because clearly there is still a lot to be revealed, so to speak.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, I am sure that we will be discussing it as the review is progressed.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I hope so. Now - as the Assistant Minister has very patiently waited - in the light of recent reports and findings relating to the Heritage and Arts Trusts - and I have to admit a bias because I am on the National Trust Council - how are you going to proceed?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, just to give you a little bit of background, following the Comptroller and Auditor General's report on the Jersey Heritage Trust being published, 2 further reviews are being undertaken. BDO, the company, have been looking at the financial management of Jersey Heritage Trust and helping to identify the full cost of the services provided. In partnership with the Economic Development Department, a company called Locum has also been engaged to look at the commercial opportunities that may or may not exist and are available to Jersey Heritage Trust with the aim of identifying areas of improvement where applicable. In addition, the department will benefit from advice from the Museums, Libraries and Archive Council who have been in contact with this independent body that advises the U.K. Government in that particular area. All of that information will enable us, I believe, to make, again, properly informed decisions about what is required to ensure a sustainable future for the promotion of heritage on Island. Unfortunately the 2 principal reports - those are the ones from BDO and Locum - have taken longer to carry out than expected. However, I am hoping that by the end of the month their work will be complete and following that I aim to move quite quickly because I have made a commitment to bring a proposition to the States so that the States can determine the level of support and services that they require the Jersey Heritage Trust to provide. I will say that I do intend to publish both of the reports that have been commissioned and use the findings and recommendations contained in that report to shape the proposition that I will bring to the States.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Have you seen the draft findings of those reports?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I have had one meeting so far with BDO and the point of that meeting was to ensure that they were looking at all the areas that I felt were important.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

They have not reported back to you, though, privately, so to speak, have they?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

No. They are in the process of meeting, I believe, with the Jersey Heritage Trust with the aim of finalising their report. I should say, in truthfulness, I have met within the last week or 2 with BDO to give me a further indication of some of the thoughts that they have because, as I say, the timescale is such that I need to be bringing and dealing with the Jersey Heritage Trust issues as soon as possible. So, yes, I have had a meeting. I do, I suppose, have a slightly clearer idea of what actions may or may not need to be taken and I suppose much of the information I have received today

reinforces the recommendations made in the Comptroller and Auditor General's report.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

So, Mr. Minister, putting aside arguments about things like should ducks have been remodelled or should they not, does that mean essentially that the argument of the Trust and associated bodies that when you put everything aside they have a genuine case, is indeed what you are being told?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think 2 things are very clear, and these are all emphasised in the Comptroller and Auditor General's report, due to the decline in tourist numbers there has been an impact on the services provided and the financial implications to Jersey Heritage Trust and that has meant that the funding that they have generated in total, bearing in mind we provide roughly £2 million and they generate additional income of about £1.5 million, that that is not sufficient to fund all the services that they are currently providing.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

So the inevitable question there then is either they are going to get more money, which presumably could be your proposition, or they are going to have to cut back?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Absolutely. I mean, if you brought it down to 2 issues it is exactly that and equally will involve or could involve a review of the services that they currently provide in the same way that the department is reviewing its services to ensure that they are fit for purpose and appropriate and meet the needs of the Island, both now and in the future.

Assistant Minister for Education Sport and Culture:

One other little point is the fact that 2 of their sponsors for 2010 have both pulled out, the over-60s Gold Card and the Flash Card day for the children.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

They have been pulled?

Assistant Minister for Education Sport and Culture:

Yes, unfortunately.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Assistant Minister, the Jersey Heritage Trust is running its own shops now but is it still franchising the café?

Assistant Minister for Education Sport and Culture:

I think they are discussing that at the moment.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

That is going to be dealt with by one of these reports?

Assistant Minister for Education Sport and Culture:

I am sure it will be.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Because if it were meant to be ...

Assistant Minister for Education Sport and Culture:

We have not had the Locum report or any word from them yet up to now.

Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Just picking up another point, perhaps moving on from the Jersey Heritage Trust, there is another, I feel, important piece of work going on at the moment and that is being developed from our Council for Culture conference that we held, I think, in November last year and that was a commitment - another commitment I mean, I seem to be good at those - to review the cultural strategy, bearing in mind the failings that we all know are linked to it, including the fact that although the States approved a cultural strategy they did not discuss or decide or consider financial implications of that strategy. So, a piece of work is being carried out at the moment working very closely with all of our cultural organisations to identify opportunities for the Heritage organisations to work in partnership with each other to help shape the future provision and, equally, to maximise the value - and this is where we come back to money, I am afraid - of the finite resources that are available and that can be properly provided to those organisations. We are being helped in this regard by Stephen Harrison, who was one of the speakers at the conference, who used to be, and correct me if I am wrong, the Cultural Director for the Isle of Man and helped develop their strategy, which I believe we can learn a lot from.

[11:15]

His input was gratefully received. He is considered to be independent by all organisations and equally knowledgeable in his field. I am hoping that as a result we will have a much clearer picture of what needs to be done and how best to shape the overall cultural provision ...

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

When do you hope that piece of work will be researched and be concluded?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I am hoping about April time.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

There was a lot of faith put into the cultural strategy but there was a lot of controversy because, as was mentioned at the conference, you have got some very, very active pressure groups in that area who are not unafraid of expressing themselves. You also seem to have inherited, I hate to bring it up but it has to come up, this issue, for example, of the St. James and the St. Luke's old vicarage.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Absolutely.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Will you have a role for St. James in the future, other than supporting the Island scaffolding industry?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

You have probably got the idea already that in the last 12 months very few stones have been left unturned.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yes.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I must admit, I am extremely encouraged and been supported by the department as we look at many of these areas. One of the areas, as you quite rightly say, is the issue of performance basis, how the Opera House is funded and managed, St. James, the Art Centre and whether or not the facilities that we have are appropriate, fit for purpose or, indeed, whether or not there are better ways or opportunities to consolidate that performance basis into a purpose-built facility. St. James will obviously feature in those discussions. The Art Centre has been carrying out a piece of work quite recently looking into the future, 25 years into the future, and considering what facilities they may or may not require. All of that information I am hoping will be, again, fed into the general discussion that we are having about how best we can maximise the use of the facilities we have available and ensure that we have in place facilities that can provide for the next 20 to 25 years. I do not want to focus just on the short term. I think that the important thing for the department and the important thing for the Island is let us look at the medium to longer term, which is something perhaps the States is not necessarily good at.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

There have been some exchanges in the press recently about the role of the Jersey Arts Trust; how does the Jersey Arts Trust fit into the cultural strategy?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think I have been extremely encouraged over the last 12 months. I know that they have been through various changes and I believe they have come out the other side as a much leaner, meaner machine, if you like. There are 2 principal individuals that support the work of the Jersey Arts Trust who are extremely committed to developing and promoting arts on the Island. I have been very impressed with the fact that for relatively very little money what they can achieve and, I suppose as a result of the discussions that I have had with them, we determined that we would increase their budget specifically so that they would have more funds available, not for administration but to go to support individuals who are committed to developing their skills in the arts and other areas.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I want to continue but we had better carry on because we have only got a few more minutes left. I will ask Deputy Tadier on Social Security and return to work.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I would probably like to talk to the Minister later on then about the arts. I have some ideas on it ...

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Absolutely, please feel free. You know where I live.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Okay, so to do with people returning back to work and the liaison with Social Security. We have had a couple of constituents, I certainly have and I believe that the Chairman is aware of that as well. They are people wanting to return to education, so they may be adults, usually, and there seems to be problems with the mechanism to be able to do that. I can give one example; I know of a guy about 30-35 years-old who is a builder who wanted to get into bookkeeping and he seems to have been discouraged from doing that either by the Social Security Department or Education saying that: "Well, no, basically you have got a job, just carry on being a builder, mate."

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, I am sorry to hear that and I think it would be useful if you directed those people to me so the department could properly look into this matter. My view of the relationship between Education, Sport and Culture and Social Security is that it is a strong one, whether that is at officer level or, indeed, at the higher ministerial level because via the Skills Executive I sit with the Minister for Social Security and the Minister for Economic Development. We form the Skills Executive supported by the Skills Board and with regard to the advanced work and changing career pathways, much effort has been placed into ensuring that individuals are able to pursue those particular avenues. So, I just ask, please, tell him to get in contact with me.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Sure. Obviously we are not here to discuss specific cases but how does your department work with Social Security?

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

The key thing, I think, is around Careers Jersey. For any of the people that you are talking about they would go to Careers Jersey which, of course, is located at Social Security and is part of the Skills Executive. It would be interesting to know the individual circumstances because sometimes people will go to Careers Jersey and seek advice and not necessarily get the advice they were hoping to get because quite clearly it is going to be based on their educational qualifications, their skills, et cetera, et cetera. Careers Jersey would do a skills analysis and so would probably be advising someone as to whether a particular course was realistic. I do not know whether the particular circumstances that you are talking about are like that. What we do know is that there has been a real concerted effort to ensure, particularly during this economic crisis, that people are in either work or training and the results really speak for themselves. I think there are over 100 additional students at Highlands College this year. I do not have the exact figure on it but I think the number on the advanced work scheme is quite similar and we are very comfortable with the number of young people who are on the advanced work scheme who are subsequently finding placements in employment. I think those schemes which have been funded through fiscal stimulus funding have been extremely successful but quite clearly you are not always going to be able to meet the needs of every person. If there are individual circumstances with which you have concern, well, I think professionally the most

appropriate place for them to go to is Careers Jersey because if they have got issues then obviously they will bring them to the department.

Deputy M. Tadier:

It is on a slightly different subject, but if somebody does want to return to university or they want to go to university as an adult and they have never been before, there seems to be an issue about the subject they are studying. How would you decide whether a subject is viable for funding or not?

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

All subjects are viable for funding, there is not a choice. I suppose the advice would be around whether or not Careers Jersey thought they could get on that particular course. Again, it depends on the age. If they are going as a mature student they could apply for a grant because we grant funding for a first degree, but if somebody was coming in and saying: "Look, my mathematics is ... I have not done it since O level and I want to do a maths degree", then the likelihood of that person getting accepted on a maths degree without a foundation course in maths is pretty slim. So again it could be around the nature of the advice and the skills and the qualifications of the person. There is no particular course we would not fund because we fund the first degree recognising that a degree now is more of a generic qualification than probably it ever was before.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Well, they would not necessarily apply for courses which are not degrees. So if somebody, say, wants to study art foundation at university or even in Jersey ...

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

Well, yes, they can study art foundation in Jersey. But there is a fundamental entry requirement, I think, for most courses. So if you are someone who is saying: "I have never done any art before and I want to do an art degree", it is probably unlikely that you are going to get advice that would send you in that direction unless you have got a particular hidden talent that has only just come out. No, I think it is about the suitability for the course and the likelihood of somebody getting on to the course, is what I am saying. There is no course where we would say: "Okay, that is a course we would not fund."

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

I am told there is a mismatch in the Centre. Some people are applying for income support or job seekers' allowance and obviously by definition they are meant to be job seeking, but the rules have been stretched so that job seeking could be seen to embrace attendance at a full-time course because you are doing it with the hope of eventually moving to work.

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

It does seem ...

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

But that involves some kind of what you might call elastic interpretation of the rules and that really the thing needs to be clarified further. Is that correct? Is my understanding correct?

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

I could not comment on that particular dilemma. What I can say is that the advanced work scheme was introduced to ensure that people who are drawing that allowance are taking steps to find work. Advanced work is about being in training. It is about mentoring and it is about work at the end of the line. Yes, we would expect anybody who is on that scheme to be seeking some sort of employment and we would be monitoring that as well.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

But say they said: "Look, I want a change of life. I have been a bank clerk all my life and I have got one kid and I want a change of direction, I want to do a qualification in fine art." Would you stretch a point for somebody like that?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Sorry, just to come in there, I think that both departments, I include the Economic Development Department as well, are working together under the banner of the Skills Executive and supported by the Skills Board to identify areas within the economy where there is a demand for staff. That is one point. Secondly, we need to ensure that the job seekers know about the vacancies. There is another element that says: "Well, okay, if we know that there are vacancies and we have people seeking work then we need to enable them, if they do not have the relevant skills, to develop those skills so they can access the job." So that is where the emphasis is being placed.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I agree with you but, I mean, I do not want to over-push it but there are a group of people who say: "I do not want to be put in a tight economic box but I will [for the sake of argument] do a degree in history and all that, it will make me generally a better educated person and I will take my chances with the Jersey labour market but I do not want to be put in a little box by the Skills Executive."

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

Yes.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

They are the people for some reason ...

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

If somebody does not have a first degree ... anyone who does not have a first degree has commitment to fund. If somebody comes forward and says, you know: "I want to do a fine art degree, I want to do it either in Jersey or in the U.K." and they have got the qualifications at the level to get on that degree then they could apply for higher education funding. If they apply for higher education funding then all their other funding, their income, is taken into account. So, that is where you would get over the situation where somebody might be on income support and then apply for higher education funding. If you are going to get that grant you have to declare your income.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

But it would be good if you could look at it to see if there are any anomalies and people who are not directly looking for specified courses and jobs but wish to take further education can still benefit. There seems to be some grey area there.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Okay. If you are aware of any individuals I would direct ...

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yes, Deputy Tadier may wish to in that case.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I would direct them initially to Careers Jersey because there is much work and very close co-operation with ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

I suspect that these people ...

[11:30]

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Well, they have been there ... anyway, sorry; we are reaching the end now. We did have add-ons but in fact, if I may be presumptuous with the panel, we seem to have covered the university in Jersey, the Jersey International Business School and its impact because that has sort of come big time out of the woodwork, the role of sixth form reform, which we did discuss earlier on. Higher education fees, very quickly, Mr. Minister, because we have decided as a panel we are not going to deal with it in an itchy-bitsy way we want to deal with a coherent policy, when is your whole review going to be finished on higher education fees?

Deputy M. Tadier:

By April.

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

If I can help the Minister with this, there are some drafts that are coming forward that the review is in 2 sections. One is around the fairness, with respect towards the separating of parents, and we have got another review, the more general review, and while the review is not due until December we are hoping to have some preliminary papers presented within the next 3 to 4 weeks.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

So, the equity part might be a freestanding part and available to sort of scrutiny.

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

That would be an option for the Minister to consider.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

That might be a possibility, yes, to divide and presumably the bigger one is the whole issue of how we relate to the U.K.'s funding system, how we are going to find funds and all this sort of stuff.

Director for Education Sport and Culture:

And how you future-proof this because this is set to happen again in the next few years that the higher education fees will increase and you have got to have some strategy in place to be able to manage that into the future.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Okay, good. Deputy, any comments?

Deputy M. Tadier:

No.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Okay, well I would like to thank you all very much for coming and we look forward, obviously, with great interest as to the comprehensive spending review and the contribution to the £50 million and how those 2 things are reconciled. There is a great challenge there. So, thank you very much indeed.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Thank you.

[11:32]