



Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel

COVID-19 Response

Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture

Friday, 15th May 2020

Panel:

Deputy K.F. Morel of St. Lawrence (Chair)

Senator K.L. Moore

Deputy D. Johnson of St. Mary

Deputy J.H. Perchard of St. Saviour

Witnesses:

Senator L.J. Farnham, The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture

Senator S.W. Pallett, Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture

Mr. R. Corrigan, Chief Officer, Financial Services

Mr. D. Houseago, Group Director, Economy

Dr. M. Mathias, Group Director, Policy

[11:35]

Deputy K.F. Morel of St. Lawrence (Chair):

Thank you, Minister, for joining us for this public hearing to look at bringing the economy back on line. That is where we will be looking at and principally looking at stage 3 in that process. If you do not mind, Minister, we will start as usual by going through names and just stating everyone who is here, for the record. We will start with the scrutiny side. I am Deputy Kirsten Morel. I am Chair of the Economic and International Affairs Panel.

Senator K.L. Moore:

I am Senator Kristina Moore and I am a member of the panel.

Deputy D. Johnson of St. Mary:

I am David Johnson, although you might not be able to see me, also a member of the panel.

Deputy J.H. Perchard of St. Saviour:

Jess Perchard, a member of the panel.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Senator Lyndon Farnham, Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture. Good morning.

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Senator Steve Pallett, Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture.

Chief Officer, Financial Services:

Richard Corrigan, Chief Officer, Financial Services.

Group Director, Economy:

Dan Houseago, Group Director, Economy.

Group Director, Policy:

Megan Mathias, Group Director, Policy, with particular responsibility for public health strategy.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Is that the full team? Right, we will get going then. Minister, before going on to the level 3 side, I wanted to ask a few questions about the workplace restrictions legislation that we saw yesterday but not in depth, just some of the overall concepts of it. So, if you do not mind, we will start there. I wanted to say that the general guidance that the Government has given out says that: "Where the Government has advised businesses and premises to close, they are not allowed to open as normal." What have you found the level of compliance with this guidance, the existing guidance, to be?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Generally, it has been very good but, of course, as businesses became more keen, shall we say, to open over the last couple of weeks and, quite understandably, to try and generate some business to protect their businesses and their employees, there was some understanding that a number of businesses were intending to perhaps defy the legislation or defy the principle of what was

happening. Given the very careful nature with which we are approaching the gradual easing of the lockdown, it was deemed necessary that some separate regulations were developed to manage the workplace. It is being broadly presented as the workplace with the aim of covering all premises and areas where people are employed.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

To the best of your understanding, with the guidance that is currently in existence, what legislation, if any, underpins that guidance?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

The current guidance?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Yes.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I will have to refer to an officer to give the exact detail on that. I am sure if Megan would take that one.

Group Director, Policy:

Yes. At the moment we have got the restricted trading order in place and that specifically applies to locations where there is trading with the public, particularly retail and so on. In terms of other workplaces, it has been compliant without the legislation to date but, as the Minister has said, there is increasing signs that people are willing to be tempted to break with that voluntary consent.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Thank you. So, would it be fair to say then the reason for more legislation is because of those signs that people are willing to break with the guidance and the current consensus? That is for the Minister.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

That is part of the reason, I believe, but it has also been deemed necessary and important to have legislation in place to have the proper controls in place to manage the situation if necessary. It is legislation, I think, that none of us want or like and it will hopefully be for a very limited time. It, of course, gives the Minister for Health the powers to allow business premises or places of work to open and close to protect public health and safety.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Minister, could I ask, do you think - and feel free to ask officers to help you with the response - the current Health and Safety at Work Law is sufficiently powerful to ensure businesses comply with the Government's existing guidelines and future guidelines? It does clearly state within that law that the Minister for Health may introduce codes of practice and can enforce compliance with them.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

The answer is that I do not know but I have asked the question of officers. I have asked the lead officer working on the legislation that question and they need to look into it and come back. That could perhaps be an alternative at some stage in the future.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

There is a concern among some people that the Government could be creating laws that are unenforceable, so they are bringing in regulations but there is no actual ... just the sheer volume, the scale at which enforcement would be necessary would make it unenforceable. Do you think this is the case?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I think the same could be said of a lot of legislation. If a lot of people broke the law at the same time, whatever that law may be, it would be very difficult to police. Fortunately, in Jersey 95 per cent of Islanders are law-abiding citizens and will stick, thankfully, to the spirit of what we are trying to do and will work, and are law-abiding citizens. So, technically it could be very difficult to enforce, as could social distancing laws should people decide to protest and congregate en masse. Thankfully, we do not have any signs of that as yet and, thankfully, Islanders continue to be co-operative.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Excellent. That is good to hear. Could I ask, Minister, what consultation has been done on the workplace premises draft legislation?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

As I understand it, the industry bodies are being consulted with, have been and are being consulted with right now.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

That is one of my concerns. I know one of the larger industry bodies in the Island or business bodies in the Island sent an email to members at approximately 5.00 p.m. yesterday asking for their responses by 10.00 a.m. today, which effectively gives just one working hour for firms to consult. Do you think this is an appropriate amount of time to give businesses to consult on this legislation?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

No, I think more time needs to be allowed and I am sure more time will be allowed, but the speed at which things are moving at the moment sometimes cannot be helped. I would hope that many businesses and stakeholders will be able to get some sort of response back during the working day today and I know officers will be working over the weekend accordingly to deal with the responses.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Of course, and this is an issue that is often raised to Government, businesses have business to get on with and they are not sitting there waiting for Government to tell it to do things. Given that businesses are trying to work in difficult times, what harm do you think there would be in giving an extra week for consultation and scrutiny rather than rushing this legislation through in just a matter of days?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I think, as we alluded to earlier, my main concern is that if we do not have the controls or enforceable rules, regulations in place as we gradually open up the economy, if we were to see a growing or largescale breaking of the rules and we saw more and more business premises open before it was proportionate to do so, we could jeopardise the whole economic recovery process. It could mean we have to step back. So I very much hope that the regulations being proposed will be nothing more than a deterrent or an appropriate reminder that the States do have the necessary power to control the gradual opening up of the economy.

[11:45]

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Thank you. With that in mind, what harm do you think there would be to taking an extra week to make sure the law is appropriate and businesses have been consulted with? What harm to the economy do you think there would be?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

The economy has been harmed considerably. Right now it is in a very low place. Significant damage has been done to the economy by the actions taken to protect lives and we have all accepted that. Every day it goes on there is a potential for more economic harm to be done, but of course we must always remember that we put lives before livelihoods currently with the policy to deal with the COVID-19 outbreak. So I think the economy is at a very low place and I think doing nothing will keep it there. Every small step, every tiny, safe, proportionate step we take forward with the economy will help to save businesses, will help to save jobs and, of course, is a tremendous boost to people's mental and physical health and wellbeing. We know that the economic climate is

linked directly to people's health and wellbeing and we just have to look around the world at countries where there are poor economic climates to look at how that impacts on people's life expectancy and overall health issues.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Thank you, Minister. Obviously one of the large office spaces that has remained open throughout this period of time is the Government's offices in Broad Street. Do you think that the working practices being observed in Broad Street would fit within the new regulations being proposed?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Yes, I do. From my experiences, I have seen members of staff and colleagues in the Broad Street offices acting very responsibly and observing the physical distancing rules wherever possible. I think in every single workplace, whether it be the States or Government offices or other places of work, it has to be proportionate and viable. For example, sometimes you have to pass in the corridor and things like that, but from my perspective it has worked very well.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Just for your information, I have seen with my own eyes situations where people have been less than 2 metres apart during meetings. Would you expect people, with these regulations, to then be on the phone to the police or whoever saying that Ministers and officers are clearly being seen less than 2 metres apart, or can that be a proportionate response?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I think just walking from where I parked the car this morning through St. Helier to the offices here, I saw a number of people for a split second breach the 2 metre barrier passing each other, going in and out of a shop, perhaps accidentally and I do not think you can ever stop that. I do not think that is policeable. We have to rely on people to use their common sense and, wherever possible, just abide by the rules.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

That is sitting in an office less than 2 metres apart? I have seen that.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Okay. Well, I have not seen that. I certainly would not encourage people to sit closer than 2 metres apart, no, but I have not ...

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Of course, the thing I am trying to get at here is the proportionality because the laws being proposed would criminalise those people sitting less than 2 metres apart in an office when seen on camera which, like I say, I and other Members of the States have seen within the Broad Street offices. That would be criminalising those people.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Yes, I understand that. Like I said, nobody likes or wants this fairly draconian legislation that we are using to protect people's lives.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

So, Minister, do you think the draconian legislation is appropriately proportionate?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Under the current circumstances I think I do, regrettably.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Thank you. Just moving on slightly, obviously there is a debate happening and will happen about the potential for Jersey eliminating COVID-19 from the Island and the possibility of assuming a strategy to try to achieve that elimination. What effect do you think such a strategy would have on the economy?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I think Jersey is in a very good place with the virus, with COVID-19. It is not quite eliminated but the spread of the virus or the presence of the virus has been reduced significantly and we have managed so far, touch wood. With the good practices and guidance, with a gradual reopening of the economy, we are maintaining that position. I think, as I said before, it is a supremely difficult decision for us all as States Members to be making because there are different public views. Some members of the public would like us to stay in perpetual lockdown, some members think we have got it about right, some members of the public think we need to go much faster, much quicker, and some people just object to having their civil liberties interfered with in any way and would like to take their chances in the world, as we did before. So we have to find the right balance that protects people's lives, not just lives related to COVID-19 but protects lives and people's health from the collateral health damage that is being done outside of the COVID-19 situation. For example, I refer to a report that was released, I believe by National Health England, in the week in relation to the diagnosis of terminal and serious illnesses in the U.K. (United Kingdom). On average, I understand, 30,000 cancers are diagnosed in a month in the U.K. in normal circumstances. I believe in April only 5,000 were diagnosed, which suggests huge numbers of people, tens of thousands of people, because of the focus on COVID-19 are going undiagnosed with potentially serious illnesses. That is something

we need to understand and I have asked officers, as has the Minister for Health, for urgent statistics on the collateral health damage outside of COVID-19 that could be caused as a consequence of the restrictions we have put in place now.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

That is absolutely right and I have asked similar questions myself over the last couple of months. But if we could just go back to the economy, Minister, do you think the economy would be affected in some way by the pursuit of an elimination strategy and, if so, how?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Firstly, I think we could all but eliminate it in the Island relatively quickly. I think we are almost there now. There are very few cases. But keeping the Island virus-free is perhaps in the medium to longer term an unrealistic ambition. How long can we lock the Island down; how long can we isolate Islanders from the outside world; how long can we stop Islanders travelling away to see loved ones and friends and relatives or going on holiday or going away for health reasons? The industries we have built up over the decades, and in some cases the centuries, rely on the movement of people - agriculture, tourism, financial services - where principals and other workers within those industries need to come and go for important business reasons. When would we lock down until? When a vaccine comes out? When a vaccine comes out, even if it is 100 per cent effective, it is not going to be compulsory for members of the public to take that vaccine. So when the vaccine is available, if 70 per cent of the Islanders decide to be vaccinated, there is still an element of Islanders who choose not to be vaccinated. They will be at risk. So, as long as COVID-19 exists on the planet and is one of the list of dangerous viruses that is harmful to mankind, I am afraid we are going to have to manage that. So, yes, we could take a very short-term decision to eliminate completely the virus at the risk of causing more harm to people who are not suffering with COVID-19 but are restricted or put off from seeking help for other medical conditions. But it is not sustainable and I do not think it is, therefore, a long-term realistic option.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

With that in mind, though, still thinking about the economy and the different potential strategies, what do you think the effects on the economy could be of a second and third wave of the virus hitting the Island and requiring a kind of yo-yo situation of lockdowns followed by opening up again? How do you think businesses would cope with that uncertainty?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

It is impossible to have a second wave or a third wave because we have not had a first wave yet. We have controlled the virus very well at very low levels. It has been constant. Since social distancing was introduced we have seen a constant reduction and now it is at that constant low level

and that is why we are opening up the economy gradually. I think it would be more harmful to the economy to try and eliminate the virus in the short term. I am not sure what the short term looks like; is it a month, 2 months, 3 months, 6 months until a vaccine is available?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

A vaccine may never be available. That is the reality.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Exactly. So there is no guarantee that eliminating it now will last. It could be a very fragile place to be and I do not think Island community life, Island economic life or Islanders' health and wellbeing will be helped by that position. Of course, we want everybody to live long and healthy lives. We want to protect people from illness, whatever illness, whether it is COVID-19 or heart conditions or tumours or cancers or other terrible illnesses. That is why we have first class health services and additional resources available to protect Islanders from all conditions. So I think moving slowly, carefully and proportionately forward with a step at a time with the economy, as we are doing, with the ability to take a small step forward, a small step back if we need to, rather than keep everything locked down, unless, of course, we are prepared to say we will do it for 6 months but we will need to find another £500 million to support people's jobs and businesses ... it is a very, very difficult one but my position currently on the evidence I have seen is that we need to continue taking very small, safe and proportionate steps.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

You say, Minister, that the economy is being significantly harmed now. Does this not suggest that that harm would be repeated with any future waves of the virus and could be worse because of the uncertainty that that up-and-down situation would create?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Yes, I agree that any wave of the virus would be harmful for business and if we did see a wave then we would have to act accordingly, but the measures we are taking are aimed at keeping the virus flat. They are not aimed at increasing it. They are aimed carefully at managing it at a very, very low level. If we felt there was a danger of a wave or a massive increase we would not be taking the actions that we are now. We are taking the actions a small step at a time to keep the virus levels low, as low as possible.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

In a sense, Minister, about keeping the virus level low or keeping it flat, as you said, is that not very similar to elimination?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Very similar, yes. The difference is with ... from the figures we are seeing now and the continued slow reduction, we could almost see an elimination as part of the plans we are taking now. The plans we are taking now are certainly keeping the virus low and it is allowing some people to go back to work, some money to flow in the economy, some jobs to be protected, albeit very carefully. But of course it is not allowing businesses to thrive. We are allowing businesses to just survive in many cases but no means thrive. So, what we are doing now will buy businesses some time but it is not going to be a long-term solution for protecting people's jobs.

[12:00]

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Effectively, that means we are in a situation, in a sense what you are saying, of having mixing within the Island but at the moment people are not really coming into the Island, so there is no threat from outside the Island coming in. The ports become quite a key part in this. In order to maintain this low level, would it not need a high level of testing or maintaining strong quarantine restrictions at the ports?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Yes, absolutely and I think that is where the debate will move to fairly quickly. So I think policies around how we might manage the movement of people and guidelines are being developed now for discussion at the appropriate time. But I want to make it absolutely clear that the secret to the success of both Jersey and Guernsey in controlling the virus has been that we are islands and we have the ability to control our borders and that has been, I think, at the heart of the success of the reduction of the virus. So, any moves to relax that have to be very carefully considered and managed. For example, I think it would be irresponsible to start allowing people into the Island without having really significant and rigorous health checks or guarantees that they are perhaps virus free. I am not sure if Megan is in a position to update any more on where we are with that.

Group Director, Policy:

Just to add that, as Ministers have requested, a number of proposals are being put together and being taken for clinical consideration and then put to Ministers very soon. These are exactly the areas that we are looking at about the options between 14 days self-isolation and what package could possibly replace that and what standard it would achieve. We are looking at each of those options at the moment, bearing in mind the growing demand for travel and seeing how that can be done safely. Those options are being worked on.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Absolutely, but it is interesting because as long as the ports have rigorous testing, et cetera, with very strict controls, that is very akin to elimination strategy. Would you agree, Minister?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I am not sure. I am not sure if I would because I do not fully understand the criteria of an elimination strategy. I think as long as there is movement of people or goods there is a small risk of some virus spread. Even if we stop people coming and going, as long as we are allowed to import things there could be some very, very small risk there. We are not really sure. By not allowing people to come in and out, could that eradicate all other viruses and illnesses from the Island? I am not entirely sure about that. I think we are close to eradication, so I think a sensible approach, a continued careful and rigorous approach to what we are doing now is absolutely the right way forward. A very careful consideration, very careful policy guidelines on how we allow people to move around in and out of the Island is going to have to be developed and something that the States will have to agree upon in the weeks ahead.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Thank you, Minister. I am going to hand over to Deputy Perchard now, who has some further questions.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Minister, the term “elimination” is, to my understanding, a technical term that has a specific meaning in the context of strategising against infectious disease. Eradication is a reference to the eradication of organisms, so it is not appropriate to use the term “eradication” in relation to infectious disease. But my feeling from your responses is perhaps that the meaning of elimination in the way that it is being talked about in my proposition and in Scrutiny is perhaps not aligned with the meaning of elimination being discussed at your end. I was wondering if you could tell us what the Government understand elimination to mean and if an answer is not forthcoming today, perhaps you could update us later this afternoon after consultation with your officers.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I am not sure. I think all of us might have a different understanding of the context of elimination, so I think we are all going to have to work together to understand what elimination means in this context. We all understand the meaning of the word “elimination” and if we use that in relation to COVID-19 it means putting Jersey in a position where COVID-19 is eliminated on the Island. That is my understanding of it. I would hope that is your understanding of it and other Members’ understanding of it, very simply put.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Yes. My understanding of the word “elimination” is akin to yours. There is such a thing as an elimination strategy or strategic approach that is beyond simply the word “elimination” and I was just wondering if that had been discussed. I think Dr. Mathias is perhaps ... I cannot tell, sorry, Megan. Are you wanting to speak?

Group Director, Policy:

Just to say we have been watching the New Zealand case, for example, quite closely and rather than getting hung up on the word, and so looking at they are also shifting as their case profile as the epidemiology changes in terms of the relaxations they are able to make, including considering the option of a bubble, as they call it, with Australia. They have not decided yet but they are looking at it, including perhaps bringing in international students and creating an exception for those. So there is quite a lot of change in one of the key cases of jurisdiction that is looking at this approach at the moment. We are just trying to understand that and think about its implications at this point. That was what was in my mind and I think my face was showing it, sorry.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Yes, that is really very helpful because I think to my mind elimination strategy is something that will need to be flexible and will be constantly developing and changing whereas the word “elimination” just gives the image of perpetual lockdown, which is not what I mean when I am using the term. I am going to move on now, slightly. Minister, I am going to ask you about the loosening of lockdown and the reception of it by the business community. How would you describe the reception to the loosening of lockdown and the reopening of businesses by the business community themselves?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I think those members of the community and sectors that are allowed to gradually reopen are more content than those that have not been allowed to reopen as yet, but we are asking them all to work with us and be patient so we can open in a managed and proportionate way and we can make sure that we are still keeping the levels of the virus at the lowest possible levels without compromising that position. I think there was understandably some disappointment from smaller retailers when we allowed the larger retailers to open and I am going to be announcing later today another slight change to that rule. We are now looking at other business sectors as we move along, from dental practices to hair and beauty, health and fitness. Other sectors and guidelines are being worked upon now so we can apply a careful, safe and proportionate approach along that route. But I would not say any businesses are pleased, because this is about survival. It is not about businesses thriving. It is about them being able to survive and protect jobs, so I think that is very much the territory we are in right now.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Thank you. How many retailers, including the food outlets, do you expect to be able to reopen during level 3?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I expect the majority of retailers of all sizes to be able to open under the strictest of guidelines in level 3.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Okay, thank you. That is really helpful. What effect do you think this will have on the economy?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I think it will have a positive effect. It will have a limited effect because the social distancing rules mean that not as many people are going out, not as many people are going shopping, so retail business will still be significantly impacted. Retail was having a tough time anyway. Even in a relatively strong economy retail was suffering because of challenges from the internet and, of course, this has just exacerbated the problem considerably, so it is going to be very difficult. Many businesses can only open because of the payroll support they are receiving from the Government, which has been well received and that has been gratefully received because it means businesses can open and start getting some cash flow and some money coming in again and protect as many jobs as possible. So that has been well received and that is different to the U.K. furlough scheme where you are either off work, if you go into work there is no support for the business but you get 80 per cent of your salary capped at £2,500 if you stay at home. Whereas our scheme will continue to support the payroll at 80 per cent, capped at £1,600, when people are working, so that is enabling people to get back to work and to protect jobs.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Yes. To what extent is the public perception of their own safety taken into account? What I am asking is Back-Benchers are constantly getting emails from a variety of people expressing their fear and concern about relaxation measures. Do you think people will go out and be economically active and what assessment have you made in regard to that?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

When it comes to self-choice and self-responsibility, we are seeing lots of different views from Islanders. I alluded to it before. We have done no exact survey, there is no exact science to it, so these are from our own understanding and our own empathy of Islanders, as politicians, where there are mixed views. My best guess there is 20 per cent to 30 per cent would like to continue with a much harder lockdown, 20 per cent to 30 per cent think the Government and the States have got it about right, 20 per cent to 30 per cent would wish us to move faster, and I think there is probably 5

per cent or 10 per cent that do not like their civil liberties being interfered with in any way, shape or form and would like to take the risk and carry on as normal. But I would like to stress that as we gradually release the lockdown and allow people to get back to work and move around, albeit under strict physical guideline rules, it is not compulsory. People still can choose to self-isolate and stay at home and make their own choices. The key right now though is we encourage everybody to maintain the physical distancing rules because the figures have shown us that was the most effective way of bringing down the virus from early on.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

You cited some percentages there and I know you described them as your best guess, but obviously that is a quantitative measure. On what evidence have you come to make that estimate?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I do not have any evidence. It is just my best guess as an Islander, as a States Member, from soundings I have had, from the many hundreds of Islanders I have spoken to, from the monitoring of social media and the monitoring of media. So, that is it. Being honest, that is a view and I am sure you will have your own views and I would hope our own estimations are similar. Having said that, though, that is about opening up the economy. I think there is a different perception about how we manage our borders. I think the majority of Islanders are concerned about that at the moment.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Thank you. Do you intend to carry out any qualitative or behavioural analysis as you enter into different stages of lockdown to see whether behaviours are in fact changing on what you hoped them to be?

[12:15]

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Again, I will defer to Megan to update us on the progress of officers' work in that area.

Group Director, Policy:

Yes. The key thing to report is that Statistics Jersey are planning and currently designing I think a mini J.O.L. (Jersey Opinions and Lifestyle). They typically do a Jersey Opinions and Lifestyle survey. That is quite a large omnibus survey usually. They are doing a smaller one. Obviously Statistics Jersey do so independently but as officers we have been asked to put in the questions we think would be useful and it does include an important element of questions on perceptions and so on.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Thank you. Do you know when that will be carried out and published?

Group Director, Policy:

I do not, but I can ask Statistics Jersey and find out.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Thank you. That would be really helpful.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Sorry, can I intervene? Thank you, Minister, for your comments. As I understand it, the degree of relaxation of lockdown is largely due to your own perceptions of reaction from the public. Do you not think that before further relaxation, greater canvassing should be taken of the membership as a whole of what these relaxations might be?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Deputy, that is not what I said. I was responding to a question about my view of public perception. We are not making decisions on anybody's views or best guesses of public perception. The decisions taken to slowly release the lockdown and allow economic activity to slowly and carefully and proportionately increase has all been based, without exception, on medical advice and monitoring of the spread of the coronavirus and evidence that the coronavirus or the COVID-19 spread has decreased significantly and is currently at very low levels in the Island. Those are the facts and the evidence with which we are making our decisions, not anybody's perception. I shared my perception as a direct answer to a question from Deputy Perchard, so sorry if I did not make that clear.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Thank you for your clarification.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

You are most welcome.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

If I could just intervene for one second, just to say Deputy Perchard has had to leave. She had notified us in advance. I do not think I made that clear at the beginning of the hearing. She has had to go so I am going to ask Senator Moore to unmute her microphone and carry on in her place. Thank you.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you for that technical reminder. It is often needed. Minister, will you be compiling an online list of restaurants that have opened during lockdown so as to avoid public confusion and members of the public contacting locations that might be closed?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

As I understand it, there is no plan for the Government to produce a list but it could be easily done if it was deemed necessary.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Has any assessment been undertaken as to assess which businesses in particular were in high demand? For example, why are vehicle rental services being permitted to remain open and what demand currently exists for such a service?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I wonder if Richard might be able to come to that list and talk about the rationale or, Megan, about the decisions around premises and types of business that were deemed essential in the first instance. In relation to motor vehicles, they were deemed essential in the first tranche of decisions.

Group Director, Policy:

A decision was made in the context of businesses that could be essential as we were going into lockdown and it was not about necessarily the demand but about whether they would be potentially needed to enable essential work to carry on. As you saw, the list was quite long and that was deliberately to ensure that there was not an unnecessary block of essential work. For something like vehicle rental, it was in case vehicle rental was required for any of the purposes of the essential work or for urgent removals. So, there is that sort of "just in case" it was included. It was not a demand as such.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Okay. It was sort of thinking of we have got essential workers still flying in on the airline service that was being provided and rather than taking the bus, they might want to hire a vehicle?

Group Director, Policy:

Not particularly to do with those that flew in but the fact that we were aware that people might not want to take public transport. It was a very broad decision like that. It was not about demand.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Islanders need access to their vehicles to get around for whatever reason in relation to their daily lives during lockdown, whether it be to get to work as an essential employee or to deal with an emergency, and it was felt that garages that sold and maintained motor vehicles were essential in that capacity.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Did you receive many applications from various business sectors requesting that consideration was given to them being placed on the list?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I certainly received very many emails at that time and so did the Economy team.

Senator K.L. Moore:

How did you manage that list and communicate your decisions back to those various groups?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Richard, do you want to take that, or Megan? Are you there, Richard? You are on mute, Richard. I know a lot of the work the Economy team were doing was around the fiscal support to businesses but we still had a lot of communication with businesses through those channels.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Maybe, Minister, you could tell us at what level these decisions were made about which business was on the list and which was not.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

It went through the process of competent authority, Emergencies Council, Council of Ministers.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Are votes taken in that meeting on decisions when perhaps there are different views around the table? How are those decisions arrived at?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

It is practice for all decisions to be voted upon and recorded accordingly and, to the best of my knowledge and memory, all of the relevant decisions were made like that.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you. Moving to the level 3 restrictions that were introduced on Monday, you told us that some conversations were conducted on Liberation Day and the Saturday before, but generally do you feel

that enough time was given to businesses who had to make decisions and preparations for reopening between the announcement and the actual opening?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I think as much time as we could give was given. I know some businesses would have liked more time but there was no necessity or requirement for businesses to open on the day but from the day. I know a number of businesses opened on the day and some still have not opened now. They are still planning and deciding what is best for them. So, when we announced the dates it is a given that all businesses will not open on that day but from that day and I welcome that. I welcome a staged opening, a sort of staggered opening because I think that is just a more sensible approach rather than everything happening at once. We would like to have given more information but the current circumstances do not allow for that, unfortunately.

Senator K.L. Moore:

I imagine you are leaving the communication of whether businesses are open or not down to the businesses themselves to do their own P.R. (public relations) but it does feed back to the previous question in the earlier section about whether it would be a reasonable offering of Government to maintain a list. No doubt you are all, just for your own enforcement reasons, aware of which businesses are open and which are not.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I think that is a good idea and something perhaps we can speak to Jersey Business about and the officers that are monitoring and enforcing it. Thank you for that. We will take that on board and speak to the comms team. Perhaps we can start to put a list up there to help Islanders and businesses and others, so, thank you.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you. That is really appreciated. What consultation have you conducted with businesses since the introduction of the phase 3 measures?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Our Economy team is now working daily with businesses. I am determined to get Richard in here.

Chief Officer, Financial Services:

I will try again. Can you hear me now?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Yes.

Chief Officer, Financial Services:

Excellent, okay. Sorry about earlier. There was a problem with my headphones. The Economy team are working very closely with Megan's team around the business liaison as we have moved to phase 3, talking to businesses that are in scope for reopening in phase 3, giving them as much advance notice as we can of their inclusion within a particular phase and then also discussing at a more practical level what guidance and support and principles they should be following to ensure a safe and orderly reopening. As the Minister said, we are giving businesses a date on which they can choose to reopen rather than a date on which they have to open. I think, as we have seen in the town centre this week, one large department store opened quite early in the week once the safe exit strategy moved to level 3; another one has chosen to stay closed for a few days while it prepares itself for an orderly reopening.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you for that. What has been the general feedback that you have received?

Chief Officer, Financial Services:

Generally, it is positive. People want to get back to work in a safe and an orderly way. So there is a degree of positivity around a careful release of the restricted measures, but equally there is a great deal of caution in businesses around protecting their staff and their customers and also recognition in some that they cannot immediately return to a profitable or breakeven level of trading and some of those may choose to remain closed. We have seen, for example, one hospitality business make a very clear decision that they are not prepared to reopen just yet, while competitors in their space or competitors with some of their outlets have indeed chosen to reopen at the earliest possible opportunity.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Have you received many requests for further information? There is a vast amount of information available on gov.je but we, for example, have received a request about whether there will be a need to place Perspex between tables in an outdoor eating area. If you could give us a quantum of the requests that you have received it would be helpful.

Chief Officer, Financial Services:

Megan, have you had anything being fed into you as part of the safe exit for specific businesses around steps they could take?

Group Director, Policy:

Not from specific businesses but a lot of those requests are going to the Environmental Health team. We do a weekly snapshot monitoring where we feed back all the important feedback and helpline feedback to just get that sense of what has happened. Obviously it has only been a few working days since these measures came in and we have not had that yet, so I have not got the overall picture as yet. But I think from colleagues, not as many as we perhaps were expecting but people should very much ask for clarification and we are very happy to provide it.

Senator K.L. Moore:

It is Environmental Health that people should address if they have questions about how they should implement the measures?

Group Director, Policy:

For the vast majority of questions like the one you suggested, absolutely, for that implementation.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Did you have something that you wanted to add, Director General?

Chief Officer, Financial Services:

No, it was very much that point that businesses that are looking to have questions answered or to be supported in that way just to channel those questions into us. The Chamber of Commerce and the Institute of Directors have also been conduits for some of that feedback. What we have found is a lot of the feedback is in businesses that are in future waves for reopening to try and understand when they might be able to do that and what sort of principles we might be applying to them in advance so they can be as well prepared as possible.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you. Have union representatives been involved in any discussions leading up to the drawing up of these measures?

[12:30]

Chief Officer, Financial Services:

Not from a Government perspective. We are contemplating ... in the private sector there is a much less unionised environment. I think the unionised environment on Island is very much around the public sector. Areas like financial services, for example, are not particularly unionised these days. They were many years ago. From a Government perspective, yes, our H.R. (human resources) team are consulting with the unions around safe return principles and making sure that there is a

good understanding of what steps will be taken to protect our own staff in the front line as appropriate.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you. The Business Liaison Group, is that still meeting? I think it had a period of some weeks where it did not. Has there been any feedback from that group?

Chief Officer, Financial Services:

That has really evolved now into a direct discussion with the Institute of Directors and with Chamber of Commerce and with other combined stakeholder groups, people like the Law Society for example, around what are the interests that are coming from their members. Rather than having just a few select firms in the room, it is a much more representative view of the problems that certain sectors are facing. Of course, the whole of the Economy team, and in particular the Minister, remain very open to representatives from those groups if there is anything that is concerning them.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you. I will hand over now to Deputy Johnson.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Good morning. Can you hear me? I appreciate you might not be able to see me but hopefully you can hear me.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

We can all hear you, Deputy. It looks like you are in a dark room though.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I wish I was. I am sorry about that but I have been told to put my camera on even though it is not showing me. I have a number of specific questions on the challenges presented for business in the context of adhering to the guidance, but do you have any general comments of your own as to what the main challenges will be?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Sorry, David, I am not sure I understood the question.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Let me go straight into the specific questions I have on the challenges presented by the guidance. What guidance are you providing to businesses on, for instance, organising queues and staggering entrance, or do you leave that to the individual businesses?

Group Director, Policy:

In terms of the detail of how to organise a queue and so on, no, we have not, at Government level, provided guidance on that. There are quite detailed ideas provided by some of the representatives from organisations in the U.K. and elsewhere and I believe Jersey Business has been providing additional support to retailers over the course of this week. But, no, we did not try to get down to that level of detail in the overall guidance put out.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Do you provide any resources to advise businesses if they so ask you?

Group Director, Policy:

As mentioned, we have been asking Jersey Business particularly to provide that more detailed, tailored advice to individual businesses.

Chief Officer, Financial Services:

Deputy, there are a number of areas of good practice that we have seen from the grocery retailers, the supermarkets during the lockdown phase. I think many people have experienced that at a practical level and will take some of those learnings as business owners into their own reopening: the way that the queueing systems are organised, stickers on the floor of the retail space around 2 metre distancing, availability of hand gel when you walk into the premises and so on and so forth. So I think there are some good principles established and good behaviours there and obviously we are looking to see those replicated wherever possible.

Group Director, Policy:

It might help, just as Richard was talking I remembered we are looking to identify some positive case studies of businesses that are willing to share their models, again, as further assistance.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I am sure that will be helpful. These are fairly specific questions. Will any assistance be provided to businesses to help use such matters as smartphone apps to allow customers to view menus, order meals online and make contactless payments, all with a view to reducing social contact?

Chief Officer, Financial Services:

I think all those measures that business, for example in the lockdown phase, were adapted very quickly. For example, in the restaurant sector you may recall one prominent restaurant owner with a social media post who talked about the damage on their business. They have adapted very well to the challenges of lockdown and 2 metre social distancing preventing them being able to open in

the conventional sense and adapting to the takeaway market and contactless payments and the handover of those takeaway products. Business has been very innovative in the way that they have approached this. There was a good example of 2 businesses next to each other down at the Weighbridge where one was serving food and the other one would serve drinks combined to a shared set of tables. We have seen quite a lot of innovation there. Again it is organisations like Jersey Business, Chamber of Commerce and others that help to be the catalyst for that sharing of good practice, and we would love to share that wherever we can as well.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

On a different tack, the social distancing requirements may mean that some businesses will not be able to operate in a way that guarantees profitability. Are there measures in place or contemplated so that businesses can be guaranteed some financial support from the Government if they are resuming activity but limited by lockdown procedures to the point where they are unable to generate profit by themselves?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

May I come in on that one, please, Deputy? Again, I alluded to that earlier. I think absolutely key to enabling businesses to open in a measured way at a reduced rate of business that they would normally require to be profitable is the fact that the Government support packages are in place. Most importantly the payroll support. So, unlike the U.K. furlough scheme, employers now are able to open because they are getting payroll support. That is why we are seeing the availability of business opportunities in terms of alfresco restaurants and retail for Islanders to participate in. Not all of them are doing it profitably. They are doing it to keep their business going, to protect their staff jobs, to keep staff busy and to try and retain some sort of normality, not just to generate some business but for the health and wellbeing of Islanders in general.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

It may be a decision for them only as to whether or not they operate given what they perceive as the lack of profitability, if they do?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Yes, it is. Absolutely.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Thank you for clarifying. Again, on 3 points ...

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Sorry, could I just add? There is a detriment test, so obviously the detriment test in relation to payroll is they must have seen a minimum of a 30 per cent drop in turnover compared to the previous year. So if a business starts trading up back to normal standards then they will not qualify for the payroll support. But I do not think we have seen many, if any, businesses trading at anything like their normal levels as yet.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Again, they are very specific points. In the case of an outlet with outdoor seating location, which maybe does not have physical capacity for a one-way system for staff and customers, would it therefore be recommended that the outlet does not reopen?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Outlets have to be able to abide by the guidelines. The guidelines are the guidelines. They have to ensure physical distancing and I think some areas with very, very small alfresco areas might have found it impossible and decided not to open. Some small businesses are applying for increases in their alfresco area where they can maybe utilise some nearby public space to offer the service. But it is largely helping the vast majority of alfresco areas, especially in coastal areas where there is plenty of space to provide an alfresco service and ample physical distancing.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Moving on to not just outside outlets; there will be many smaller outlets where their physical locations do not permit patrons to queue or avoid contact with other staff. Will there be any guidance provided to overcome these situations where, as I say, there are difficulties in the queuing for patrons and overlapping with staff?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I think the guidance does cover that. But there are certain extraordinary or very rare areas, when one is walking round a reservoir or down a country lane where people come face to face and then they have to make their own arrangements to physical distance. In general, the guidance I think is very good and very clear. So far I have been very impressed with a lot of the businesses' innovative approach to social distancing. It has been quite remarkable. In actual fact, in some circumstances I think it works better than before, having that sort of order in a restaurant. But of course I shall probably be chastised for saying that. But I have been, like I said, impressed with the way businesses have responded. They have done it brilliantly well in many circumstances.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I appreciate that. My final question in this area relates to the specific area of food vans, trailers and carts. Again, are there specific restrictions and guidelines advising those people how they should interact with customers or is it subject to the more general guidelines?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

The guidelines for the service of food are detailed and it applies to those outlets as it would to a restaurant, a café or takeaway. They are all covered by the same guidelines and requirements.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

The point I am really getting at is hypothetically if 2 people working inside a food van, et cetera, and were standing at the required social distance, although that itself might present a problem, will this meet requirements?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I believe it would, yes.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I think that concludes my areas of questioning on the challenges faced by the guidelines, Chairman.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Minister, having looked through the guidelines and implement and brought them in, do you think the new measures will be sufficient to encourage the public to visit businesses? Do you think there will be a sufficient level of public confidence to bring people out?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I think the guidelines and the measures are very reassuring. The short answer to that is yes. But again, it is going to be down to individual choice. Some members of the public will feel comfortable; some will feel less comfortable and decide not to go out. So I do think the guidelines are good and I hope that Islanders will follow them and businesses will follow them as sensibly as possible.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

When a member of the public or, in fact even perhaps more importantly, a worker has concerns about the conduct of a business, how would they make these concerns known to the appropriate agencies?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I think Megan can answer that. The police are perhaps at the front line of offering advice or in serious allegations of a breach. If members of the public see there is a clear and present danger

materialising then the police are always pleased to investigate that. Perhaps Megan could explain the helpline, the communications links that are available. They are very good; I have just forgotten their name at the moment. It is an acronym. You know how I am with acronyms.

Group Director, Policy:

There are a number of ways that people can contact and hopefully it does not matter which one you come in at because it will be directed appropriately within the Government. So there is the 1.G.C.T. (One Gov COVID-19 Team) address, which I think the Minister was mentioning. Environmental Health have a not isolating email account and having caught up with the health and safety colleagues yesterday, they are also setting one up recognising that people may come into each of these different ways and may come into the standard coronavirus help desk as well. Each of those methods are possible.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

1.G.C.T. was the one I was struggling with. But basically the message is go to gov.je and you will have to navigate quite easily.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Are you satisfied that if a worker had concerns that they will be able to report this and would not receive any comeback from their employer?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Yes, I would hope so. I would hope the relationship between employer and employee, and in most cases it is sensible.

[12:45]

We have seen again some really superb examples of employers and employees supporting each other through this. I am not aware of any examples where that has not happened although I am sure there have been some challenges there. But there is protection in place. I think we can then fall back on the Health and Safety at Work Law, again, where it is the responsibility of an employer, under Article 3 of that law, if I remember rightly, to ensure a safe environment for their workers. We might need some further legal opinion on that but that is my understanding. I invite any officer to add to that, if they can.

Chief Officer, Financial Services:

I would just endorse that entirely. I think it is impossible for Government to say that in every case, particularly in a small business employing one or 2 people, if they make a complaint about the

working environment, maintaining their confidentiality there may be more difficult because there would be an implied notion that one of the 2 employees has said something. It is much easier in a larger organisation and it is much easier if it is a member of the public, a customer of that business, that is making the complaint as well. Very difficult to say that in all cases it would be impossible for an employer not to work out that one of their employees has raised a complaint of some sort. But from a Government perspective it is about maintaining confidentiality and it is about investigating the issue at hand.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Just one technical question, and it might be the case that we even answer for the situation today and the situation if the working premises law were to come in. If a premise employs or engages third parties, for instance, cleaning staff from a separate company or contractors from separate companies, does the liability sit with the company purchasing those services or with the employer of those cleaning staff, for instance, to prevent them from becoming infected to ensure they are in a safe working environment and also able to do their job?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I am sorry, I do not know the answer to that question, Deputy. I think we need to take an opinion on that but we can find out.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

I have used the example of cleaning staff but it could be contractors from third parties in all sorts of different ways.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I think I know the answer but I would like to just check the facts first.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

No problem, thank you. At this point I will hand over back to Senator Moore.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Can I just remind you that Senator Pallett is also on the line and he is very good at answering questions as well?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Senator Pallett can jump in at any time.

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

He is listening intently.

Senator K.L. Moore:

We have got a quick section now on financial support and let us go back to that Perspex screen example that we were talking about earlier. If a business is demonstrably having difficulty in funding any of the additional measures that they are required to in order to operate, is there any source of funding available to them to help?

Chief Officer, Financial Services:

The bank loan guarantee scheme is intended for a whole range of purposes but it is to create working capital and businesses to help them trade through this challenging period, and if that means making adaptations to premises or to their business model, for example, creating a website, they should find support through that avenue. Again, we would encourage that they go to Jersey Business in the first instance, particularly for smaller businesses where they may be less familiar with approaching banks with funding requests. They have maybe not borrowed historically in the past and they can help to ensure that that business is, I suppose, “match fit” to go and talk to the bank about what their business plan is and how it will help them trade through this difficult period.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you. We have had a brief chance to look at the latest figures from Statistics Jersey about the economy this morning. That showed that there has been a further increase of 80 people being made redundant in the past week. Could you update us on the payroll situation and whether there has been an increase of businesses applying for that scheme this week?

Chief Officer, Financial Services:

There have been further applications this week. The figures that I have been told informally, and will obviously be the subject of reporting next week, is that payroll-related payments made under phase 2 totals approximately £15 million as at today. So that was more claims that arrived during the course of the week. I think the Customer and Local Services team were dealing with some of the more challenging applications, let us say, under the phase 2 scheme during the course of this week, so some were pretty much straight through processing. There were some where numbers had been transposed incorrectly in the application, so they have required some additional intervention and discussion with the business involved. I think there were one or 2 where they have not filed their April social security schedule within the timeframe that they should have done, so they are being asked to file that on a retrospective basis so that payments can be made. The figure as at sort of middle of May is approximately £15 million has been drawn on phase 2 payroll support.

Senator K.L. Moore:

If I remember correctly, that sum is considerably less than what was allocated. So does that show that Government would be prepared to perhaps extend the time period that the payroll scheme is made available to businesses for?

Chief Officer, Financial Services:

I think we need to see a full month's data first and foremost to understand the extent to which the budget is being consumed. It was an allocation of funding and of course any repurposing of that or extension of time will ultimately be a matter for us to take to the Minister for Treasury and Resources with a consolidated set of recommendations from Ministers with specific portfolio interests there. We do hope to have further discussions over the course of the next week around the scheduled end date for payroll support with a view to that being extended. So a recommendation going to the Minister for Treasury and Resources, ahead of the month end, around the current 30th June expiry date, and with a view to extending that further. But Senator Farnham might wish to comment some more on that.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Thank you, Richard. I just want to move to assure the business sector that we are acutely conscious of the challenges that are going to be faced ahead of 30th June, which is why the payroll scheme we have budgeted to the end of August. We are not going to allow a cliff edge to occur. We will provide support for business right through this. We do not know what that looks like yet because we are talking about officers are working on options for doing that. But the fact that these schemes are undersubscribed at the moment, because we budgeted at the highest level that we thought, means that we potentially have, subject to the relevant political approval process, money to assist business further into the year if they need it. I would suggest at this stage that might have to be, in some circumstances, targeted at specific sectors very carefully.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Such as? Which sectors in particular are you thinking about?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I think what I would refer to as areas of general commerce. The tourism sector has been without doubt hit the hardest not least because of the timing. This has come right at the beginning of the summer season where many of those businesses have made significant investments in their businesses in their properties. Retail has also been significantly impacted and other areas of general commerce as well. That is an example of where we are. But further analysis will be required.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you, Minister. In your engagement with businesses and various members of the public, what indications have you received from those who have not taken up the payroll scheme as yet as to why they have not?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I am not sure I have come across anybody who said they have not taken up the payroll scheme. I think most businesses I have spoken to have taken it up. We were getting a number of calls from people where there had been a slight delay because the form was filled in incorrectly or something like that but that was very quickly and efficiently dealt with by the team there. I have had some very nice and reassuring messages from the business sector that it has been a real lifesaver for their businesses and their employees' jobs, so it is working well. I have not heard anyone that says: "We could take it but we are not taking it." There have been some appeals by some sectors that were not included and they would like to be. The most high profile of that of course is Jersey Gas.

Senator K.L. Moore:

In your understanding, the maximum number of businesses that are likely to apply for the payroll scheme have already done so and it is very unlikely, therefore, that more will join the scheme?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

It is hard to say. As Richard said, I think we need to get a full month's data in to analyse. Of course, as we get deeper into the pandemic, deeper into the economic challenges, there might be some businesses that have decided they can manage March and April but will need to come on in May. Equally some businesses who we have allowed to open might go above the 30 per cent detriment clause and not qualify because they are doing okay. It is hard to say but I would suggest that the levels we are seeing in April will be fairly typical of May and June, but again, as Richard said, we are going to be analysing that very closely.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you. I am going to hand over to Deputy Johnson again.

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Sorry, before you do that. Unfortunately, I have to go to another Scrutiny panel meeting regarding mental health so I have to give my apologies and duck out at this point. My apologies.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Thank you, Steve.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Sorry, I appreciate we are fast approaching our allotted time span so I have 2 very quick questions on enforcement, if I may. Will you be conducting spot checks on large retailers, or indeed anyone else, to ensure that they are providing staff with the correct safety provisions and guidelines?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I believe that is being carried out, yes, very much in an advisory capacity initially. The last thing anybody wants to do is try and be overzealous or start criminalising businesses. It is purely to check and offer guidance and support but of course without removing the serious nature of the importance of having these physical distancing guidelines in place. A number of premises right across the spectrum of businesses that have been allowed to open are getting regular friendly visits from the police just to offer guidance and double check everything is in order.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

On a similar theme, and hopefully in the context of friendly visits, has any work or will it be undertaken on enforcing the 10.00 p.m. closing time?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Yes, I am sure it would be. But again it has not been an issue and we are not aware of any businesses that have tried to flout that request.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Is any enforcement or monitoring going to be taken by the police or the Honorary Police or will it be some other department?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

In the first instance, it will be the States and Honorary Police that will be monitoring that.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

My only other question on enforcement was regarding assistance to businesses on social distancing and floor markings but I think we have already well covered that. So I will end this particular chapter, thank you.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

To round it off really, I was just wondering, as one last question: how is the department liaising with Parishes to help them with the businesses in their Parishes, partly because some alfresco areas are on Parish land, particularly in St. Helier, and obviously Parish Halls are places that businesses may turn to for advice, et cetera? I was wondering how are you interacting with Parishes on this?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

The Parishes have been absolutely brilliant as a hub for the Parish. They are distributing advice and guidance. Sorry, I am being interrupted by a box that has appeared on my screen. I am trying to ignore it. In relation to St. Helier, St. Helier have been extremely helpful and I think very pragmatic and alive to the risks but also alive to the fact that they want to help protect businesses and jobs. So I suspect there are conversations ongoing now in St. Helier and other Parishes between businesses who might wish to extend their alfresco areas.

[13:00]

I understand that Parishes are going to be as co-operative as sensibly possible with those sorts of requests. So my understanding is that it is very good. I speak to a number of Constables on a regular basis and we have a good close and productive working relationship. Unless the officers want to add anything, if there has been any further interaction at officer level.

Chief Officer, Financial Services:

Certainly not from the Economy team side. Certainly if we heard of any problems we will be happy to try and, within the influence that we have, broker a sensible conversation. I would imagine that interests are very much aligned at the Parish level in seeing an orderly return to economic and social activity, subject to the prevailing restrictive measures being met. I would hope that we are all generally pushing in the right direction and at the same pace.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Brilliant. Thank you very much. With that I will draw to a close, spot on 1.00 p.m., which is probably the first time I have ever done that on time in my short political career. If you could carry a message back to Senator Pallett that he really did dodge a bullet there because I was about to come in with some questions for him when he said he was having to head off.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I am sure you can save those to the next hearing, Deputy.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Absolutely. I certainly will. But thank you, Minister, and thank you, officers, for taking the time with us. Thank you for accepting the questions at the beginning about strategies, et cetera, and the workplace requirements. But it has saved you time because now we do not have to ask you back for a briefing on that particular matter, so that is why we thought we would put it in.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Can I finish, Chairman, by thanking you all for the scrutiny you are providing and can I thank officers - both Scrutiny officers and my officers - for the work they are doing behind the scenes and thank you especially to Megan who has joined us today, who is taking a break from an extremely busy programme of work to be with us? So, thank you all and we will see you soon.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Thank you.

[13:02]