



Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Review Hearing

Witness: The Chief Minister

Monday, 29th June 2020

Panel:

Senator K.L Moore (Chair)

Deputy S.M. Ahier of St. Helier

Connétable K. Shenton-Stone of St. Martin

Deputy J.H. Perchard of St. Saviour

Witnesses:

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré, The Chief Minister

Senator L.J. Farnham, Deputy Chief Minister

Deputy S.M. Wickenden of St. Helier, Assistant Chief Minister

Mr. C. Parker, Chief Executive

Mr. M. Grimley, Group Director, People and Corporate Services

Mr. J. Quinn, Chief Operating Officer

Dr. S. Turnbull, Medical Officer of Health

Mr. S. Mair, Group Director, Performance, Accounting and Reporting

Mr. D. Danino-Forsyth, Director of Communications

[15:33]

Senator K.L. Moore (Chair):

Good afternoon and welcome to the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel. Normal hearing standards do apply given the remote nature of this hearing. Hopefully we will soon be able to conduct one again in person. If you could just indicate a wish to speak by using the chat facility that would be very helpful and we will try to speak in order and not to interrupt, because, of course, that can get a bit difficult remotely. Speakers will be shown in video and if we run out of time we will send through

our questions. Without further ado, because we have got a lot to get through this afternoon, we will get started. We ought to do introductions first of all, of course. So, formally, I am Senator Kristina Moore and I am the Chair of this panel.

Deputy S.M. Ahier of St. Helier:

Deputy Steve Ahier, Vice-Chair

Connétable K. Shenton-Stone of St. Martin:

Constable Karen Shenton-Stone, a member of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel.

Deputy J.H. Perchard of St. Saviour:

Deputy Jess Perchard, member of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel.

The Chief Minister:

Senator John Le Fondré, Chief Minister.

Deputy Chief Minister:

Lyndon Farnham, Deputy Chief Minister.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Good afternoon, everyone. Deputy Scott Wickenden, Assistant Chief Minister.

Senator K.L Moore:

We got that, thank you. The officers present?

Chief Executive:

Charlie Parker, Chief Executive.

Director of Communications:

Dirk Danino-Forsyth, Director of Communications.

Group Director, Treasury:

Steven Mair, Group Director, Treasury.

Group Director, People Services:

Mark Grimley, Group Director, People Services.

Chief Operating Officer:

John Quinn, Chief Operating Officer.

Medical Officer of Health:

Susan Turnbull, I am just here in case COVID crops up in any context.

The Chief Minister:

Okay, sorry, that was slightly muffled. Susan Turnbull, who is just there depending on where you want to go on the COVID stuff, given some of the discussions had in the last 12 hours. Obviously we would not normally have quite so many but there is quite a wide range of topics that you are covering and we thought given the remote ability to do it we can drop people in an out if needed.

Senator K.L. Moore:

That is very helpful. Hopefully the Medical Officer of Health will be able to sort out her microphone issues if we get to her. Thank you all for joining us this afternoon. If we get started with the safer travel policy, which was announced last week. Chief Minister, just to start, would you outline the consequences that you see to Jersey from the advice that you have received if we do not open the border this week?

The Chief Minister:

On all of these things it is a balance of risk, as has been alluded to in a number of briefings to States Members but perhaps not necessarily publicly other than occasionally in the press conferences we have done. The balancing of the risk is balancing the impact of COVID-19 on the health of individual Islanders and obviously we consider we are in a very good place given the very low rates that we have achieved. Then the wider health impacts, which is mental health, et cetera, and then in terms of the well-being of the Island, which can include economic impacts because obviously if economic impacts are severe and people lose their jobs as a result, that in turn generates health consequences because it might mean that mental health wise from being unemployed, the consequences there, or strong impacts you have less money to spend in future on your medical services. So S.T.A.C. (Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee) take account of all of that and as we said all the way through this crisis, we have been taking account of the S.T.A.C. advice and the S.T.A.C. advice, taking all these into account and the overall well-being, in fact, is that we can open up the borders safely with effect from Friday, if the States so agree. Now, obviously to directly answer your question, the advice we are receiving to date is that if there was a delay to that there is a probable risk that we might not get the connectivity resuming that we used to have pre-COVID. Without naming specific airlines, there are obviously 2 main ones that came into the Island pre-COVID, their scheduling ... particularly one, I think, started flying on something like 15th June within the common travel area and they were very keen at that point to come to Jersey. We said at that point that the time was not right. We pushed back on that because, partially as well, we had the testing regime in

place from the beginning of the month, we have been trialling that up at the airport to see how we can manage this going forward, so it is looking ahead. The reality is, for that particular airline in question, they fly something like 1,000 routes and the announcements they have been making are that roughly they are intending to start around 50 per cent at the beginning of July and then increasing that to about 75 per cent probably in August. So if we are not there in that kind of first July tranche it is not a case it could get delayed 5 days or whatever it is, it is you might then appear in the August tranche if you are lucky or it might be pushed back to September. It will then depend on the airlines who will be wanting just to run the aircraft, get the money in and start repairing the damage to their balance sheets. Essentially if they are trying to juggle, let us say, 500 routes and one of them - U.K. (United Kingdom) to Jersey say, or London to Jersey - does not have certainty attached to it the risk is that they will say: "Well, we love doing business with you but we have to get ourselves sorted out" and they will not come back to us until sometime later in the year, if we are lucky. Then you get the issues of does that threaten the long-term connectivity to the Island, which we have enjoyed? From not only an Islander perspective but an economic perspective, we are incredibly lucky with the connections we had so to lose those then does have an economic consequence which then goes through to the other consequences I have already outlined. To then summarise it all the way down, the economic impact potentially of a delay of what might be perceived to be a few days could be significantly bigger than that. As I said, it is a very real risk that one is having to consider.

Senator K.L. Moore:

How did you weigh up, Chief Minister, that very real economic and well-being issue against maintaining the very low levels of the virus that are in the Island and protecting those Islanders who have enjoyed that safety and security in that knowledge?

The Chief Minister:

I think that is a very good question and, as I said, that is very much based on the S.T.A.C. advice that we are receiving, which is essentially one of the reasons S.T.A.C. is there to do. It is very clear that it is a balance of risk and, as you rightly pointed out, we had done very well in that, we have got a very low rate of transmission, I think we only have 2 active cases at the moment, and so we are in a very good place now to maintain that. Do not forget the strategy has always been to make sure that we do not end up with health services being overwhelmed in any shape or form. Hopefully everybody will agree we have achieved that. You have then got, as I said, the wider ramifications which are mental health issues of the consequences of the lockdown as a whole, which is one of the reasons we have been trying to ease out. Those do continue with still being notionally trapped on a rock with no way off type of thing, and I am being slightly simplistic perhaps in that terminology but that is a consideration. Then obviously, as we have said, there are economic considerations that come through as well, that obviously then does have an impact on the well-being and health

impacts because of the economic distress of losing a job, for example. As well on that, to offset any risk you might have by having more people coming in you then have to say: "Okay, we have to have some very good and robust testing regimes and tracing regimes on Island." That has been the purpose of having the trial in place since the end of May, which we have learnt from. The S.T.A.C. advice there is that we can test everybody that has come into the Island by having a P.C.R. (polymerase chain reaction) test at the airport and also then if somebody does test positive then we have a robust tracing regime and a way of making sure that those people did self-isolate. I think it is worth making the point, though, and has been identified by Dr. Muscat to States Members, is that the likely risk of having somebody come through is in the view of S.T.A.C. very low at the moment. That is taking account of what is happening, for example, in the United Kingdom. That is the medical advice and I believe that is included in the annex to the report of the proposition that we have lodged.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Can I just ask a further question on that point? Sorry to interrupt. Obviously the U.K. papers are full of the comments of Sir Jeremy Farrar who is a director of the Wellcome Trust and yesterday said on the Andrew Marr programme that the country, the U.K., was on a knife edge and expected a surge of the virus shortly. There were reports that perhaps the City of Leicester might lock itself down this week. There is concern that the risk in the United Kingdom, for example, have changed somewhat since that calculation was made by the Deputy Medical Officer of Health.

The Chief Minister:

That might be an opportune moment for the Medical Officer of Health to come in. Certainly the updates that Dr. Muscat was giving to Member on Thursday was, as far as I am aware, taking into account the most up-to-date information that they have had. Now, obviously if that has changed more recently then we keep monitoring it.

[15:45]

But the bit I was going to say as well is that since the end of the May when we have been testing, of around 800 people who have come into the Island, no one has tested positive and that does feed into the calculations a bit because if you consider what the rate of transmission, or the rate of infection in the U.K. was, versus where it is now, there has been a significant improvement over that period of time. It might be an appropriate moment, if you are happy, for Dr. Turnbull to make an observation around the risk that you are referring to. Susan, do you want to make an observation?

Medical Officer of Health:

Can you hear me?

Senator K.L. Moore:

You are rather muffled but we can and we can see you clearly.

Medical Officer of Health:

Okay, I will do my best. I too saw Sir Jeremy Farrar in the Andrew Marr programme and he, among many international epidemiologists, is also talking about the possibility, a strong possibility, of a surge of infections in the latter part of the year but also acknowledging that some parts of U.K. have hot spots. Leicester is such an instance at the moment and they are dealing with a sizeable outbreak by doing a local lockdown on the advice of the national authorities, which is ...

The Chief Minister:

Susan, sorry to interrupt, you are sounding very, very muffled. Can I make what I hope is a helpful suggestion that one of my officers just gets hold of you to dial in and hopefully that might be more audible, if Senator Moore is happy to wait 2 or 3 minutes for that response.

Senator K.L. Moore:

That would be very helpful. I think Deputy Perchard has a question, we will move on her, please.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Apologies, Chair, I might be jumping the gun here but just as Dr. Turnbull mentioned it I thought it would be an apt time to ask the question. For the sake of the wider understanding of the public, would you describe this relaxation of restriction to be a temporary measure while we are experiencing a lull in the rate of infection and it is to be viewed by public more as a break rather than an approaching of the normality we can expect to sustain indefinitely?

Medical Officer of Health:

I am just going to come upstairs to the Council of Ministers room so I can on to a proper microphone because obviously I cannot be heard properly so I am just going to move there and then I will reply to your question.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

That is fine, Chief Minister, I am happy for you to take that while the doctor moves.

The Chief Minister:

I think, hopefully, someone is going to ring Dr. Turnbull and then we will sort out a connection coming through, if that helps. Right, in terms of are we in - I think you have previously used the expression - a lull. It has certainly been the case that - and I have said this for many weeks in press conference and the medical officers who have been briefing States Members have also said similar things -

there is a risk that there may be an increase in the virus in the winter months. Obviously at this stage it is too soon to try predict that and what that might look like but there does seem to be a concern that is being expressed - sorry, I just realised I had my camera off there - and obviously that, again, comes down to this point around the impact of COVID-19 but also the overall impact we tend to see in winter months around general infection. Obviously I am talking as a layman here not as anybody who is qualified in the medical side. Dr. Turnbull is in the building, which I had not anticipated.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

My question was more about the message to the public at this time. I think it is fair to state that a lot of people at the moment are seeing this relaxation as the start of the end and I think it is very important that if we are thinking that there could be a second wave, even if it is just a realistic worst-case scenario ... you and I, Chief Minister, have been in briefings where the period that we are experiencing now is being described by the Medical Officer of Health and the Deputy Medical Officer of Health as a lull and I think one of the quotes that I wrote down the other from our briefing was: "If there is ever time to take a break it is now" from the Medical Officer of Health. That language, I am sure you can appreciate, does suggest that this rather a break and not the beginning of the end. People must maintain a view that we could end up back where we were.

The Chief Minister:

Thanks, Deputy Perchard. As I said, I think Dr. Turnbull hopefully can also respond on that, which might be helpful, and she is now a lot closer. She is room, I had not realised she was in the building. The analogy I have used, certainly most recently, was, if you like, a long distance race, so it has various stages in that long distance race and we have done the first 2 or 3 stages but we have a number of stages to go. Some of that may be wrapped up into the economic recovery side, which is also part of this whole thing that we are dealing with but some of it could well be what might happen again in winter. We do not yet know. Some of that, I think - thus I will be handing over to Dr. Turnbull - is what we might learn as the southern hemisphere goes through its winter season. Perhaps, Susan, you might wish to comment.

Medical Officer of Health:

Happy to do so, Chief Minister. Sorry about the I.T. (information technology) problems earlier. In terms of is this a lull, well it certainly is a period of very low prevalence of infections and it is a measure of the success so far of the strategy. What we do not know, we do not have a good enough crystal ball to be certain about what comes next but one plausible scenario is that if the coronavirus behaves at all like a pandemic flu virus, which we know the history of several of those in the past, there tends to be a sting in the tail in the winter or even the second winter after the first activity of the pandemic flu virus. We have not had a spike here, we have had a managed number of cases

during which time we have suppressed viral transmission but also geared up the infrastructure to be ready to deal with any small number of cases and make sure that they do not become clusters or outbreaks. I think it is realistic to recognise that this favourable situation that we are in this summer, right now as we speak, is not necessarily something that we can expect to persist until the vaccine is available. There was some discussion earlier about when will a vaccine be available? There may be an effective vaccine by the end of this year but almost certainly not in enough quantities to vaccinate other than the most high risk individuals, so I think it is going to be realistically some time next year before widespread population vaccination is possible. We are all exposed to lots of sources of information. We know what we know on our own Island but, going back to Senator Moore's comment about Sir Jeremy Farrar on the Andrew Marr programme yesterday, we glean a lot of our information from external sources, international experts in national newspapers as well as television programmes and most of the international experts, including the W.H.O. (World Health Organisation) personnel, are all talking about governments and countries need to be aware of the possibility that there could be further surges of infection. We are always keen to be prepared and already we are talking about measures that we can start to prepare in the event of things becoming difficult in the winter but there is no certainty about that at all but there is certainty about the very favourable situation we are in at the moment in terms of COVID risk. We are proposing a policy that may slightly increase the risk of very sporadic individuals coming to the Island who need to be recognised and isolated. We are not talking about something that can substantially increase the risk to the population with the measures that we have ready and in place, but set against that is wider risk that is recognised of the ongoing stress to the population of restrictions that prevent people connecting with their wider families, possibly serves as a deterrent to people coming to work in the Island or for the people who already do. We heard this morning of some mental health workers who have left the Island because they were expecting to have the ability to travel on and off but clearly they could not. We have lots of issues on one side of the balance, set against a very small risk at the moment of COVID infection and that is why S.T.A.C. reached its recommendation.

Senator K.L. Moore:

The Chief Minister has helpfully outlined the testing procedure that is in place. That, we are told, will be ramped up so that test results will be returned in a much quicker way than they are currently. However, the policy that is being adopted by the Council of Ministers suggests that travellers should just be requested to be careful about their activities before they receive their test results. Why did the Council of Ministers not adopt a stricter policy with regards to that time period until the test results are received?

The Chief Minister:

I will again give the high-level comment and then hand it back to Susan, if that is okay, from the point of view of giving the medical perspective. Certainly the advice we received was, again, about

balance of risk. So my understanding is that firstly people with symptoms should not be travelling. Therefore, what you are dealing with is people who are asymptomatic and I cannot remember the percentages but essentially it has been demonstrated that people who are asymptomatic are only responsible for quite low percentages of transmission anyway. Then you are in the position of the risk of someone travelling who is asymptomatic in that period of time. Secondly, then that they do spread it. Thirdly, obviously people then identifying it. It is at that point that you then make sure you have the relevant and appropriate testing regime in place. Obviously what you are talking about is a gap of ... and we hope to improve it but let us take a 24-hour period, it is a relatively short period of time and we are hoping to reduce that down to 12 if not shorter so you can then go back and trace back any people they have been in contact with. Again, it is about the balance of risk. I think Dr. Muscat did give an analogy or an illustration, it was something like, in his view at that point in time, it might be one extra case per month or 2 months of people travelling, that is obviously based on the volumes. If you need the specifics, I am sure we can break that down for you. Dr. Turnbull, do you want to add anything to that?

Medical Officer of Health:

Thank you, Chief Minister. It is about proportionality. So we are talking about preventing and dealing with a case every one month, 2 months set against the restrictions of imposing strict quarantine on potentially many hundreds of people as against that one case. The view of S.T.A.C. was that that was disproportionate to the risk we were talking about to have stringent quarantine on such a widespread basis.

Senator K.L. Moore:

If I may, sorry to interrupt you, Doctor, but we do need to keep the answers a little more concise. You have said to Members that there are risks, that those who are vulnerable and have been shielding will isolate themselves again due to concerns that they may have about people circulating in the community. So how do the Council of Ministers and the medical advisers wish to reassure members of the community that this is a safe process?

Medical Officer of Health:

My response to that is that what is being proposed is only increasing the risk of encountering somebody with COVID infections by a very tiny amount and not to any extent that would require anybody who has stopped shielding to take extra precautions. It really is not; it is a very small risk that we are talking about managing.

The Chief Minister:

I think it might be helpful as well, the Chair of S.T.A.C. was saying it earlier, the other risk is trying to get people back to more normal approaches to life, if that makes sense. There is another risk

which is avoidance. In other words, as people stick more and more to their present routine, they are less inclined to go out to their old normal routine. That in itself has some health and mental health consequences. I do not know if Dr. Turnbull perhaps wants to add to that?

[16:00]

Senator K.L. Moore:

Shall we perhaps continue because I am quite mindful of the time.

The Chief Minister:

Yes, can I just say, apologies, I do have to leave at 5.05 p.m. or something because my next meeting is at 5.15 p.m.?

Senator K.L. Moore:

Sure, thank you. Will any penalties be in place for visitors who do not accurately complete forms on arrival or maintain isolation measures, for example?

The Chief Minister:

The principles - I am just looking, I do not think we have Steve on line ... the detail might be one to hand over to Charlie Parker but the principles are that in order to access the testing individuals will have to sign a declaration, which obviously determines that it is truthful what they are doing, and I know that some of the self-isolation rules under that are still in force. Charlie, do you want to add to that.

Chief Executive:

Yes, so the arrangements are such that we will be able to, through the test and trace follow up, understand where people are. We have declarations that have to be signed beforehand as part of the new I.T. system that is going to sit above all of this and be able to give us all the relevant detail. Then we have obviously the legal process that is available in the Island if we wish to pursue people. My understanding at the moment, though, is that we - for any mercy flights or anything like that where we would have people coming in on Island - have had no issues with anyone who has not adhered to the current service level agreement that we have around this.

Senator K.L. Moore:

What responsibilities will hoteliers or bed and breakfast, guesthouse owners, have for any visitors who are recently arrived and waiting for their results?

Chief Executive:

We are following the same principle, which is that we will be obviously aware of where everyone is going to stay. We will be doing what we do now, which is random sampling so that you follow up and there will be an expectation that those people who are providing accommodation for visitors will be keeping a record. Clearly the thing for us is, as I think the Chief Minister has been saying and has been said by Dr. Turnbull, we are not expecting people to travel who are either vulnerable and/or in a position where they may well be potentially susceptible to COVID. The expectation is that you will have fairly low levels of prevalence of what might come in, as has been articulated, and then we will do all the follow ups. However, we will also provide additional support if in the extreme position that someone does arrive and tests positively we will create a facility where people will then be able to go and spend their 14 days in self-isolation. We are covering all of the options that I think Islanders would expect us to provide, enhanced track and trace, clear data analysis to enable us to keep a very clear and unequivocal register of who is coming in and out. There will be expectations placed on accommodation providers and we will be providing specialist facilities for isolation and then, on top of that, we will have all of the other support services that we will provide through the random checking process where we will pursuing those people who are coming on Island to make sure that any enforcement is done appropriately.

Senator K.L. Moore:

What budget is being attributed to these measures, please?

Chief Executive:

Just at the moment we are using the COVID budgets that we have set aside. We are looking thought, and this will come back to the Council of Ministers, much more long term. I think Dr. Turnbull made the point which is really important, there will be some time before there is a readily available vaccine that will be able to be available to most Islanders so we will anticipate that the test, trace, track arrangements will have to be a more longer term arrangement that will fit within a government department. On the back of that we will be bringing a business case forward, deliberation for the funding of that. What we have not decided is whether that is funding that will come from the COVID money because it is one off but over a longer period, that has not been finalised, or whether that would form part, for example, a government plan decision, but that will be determined by the Council of Ministers imminently.

Senator K.L. Moore:

What sort of figures are you talking about there?

Chief Executive:

I cannot give you those figures off the top of my head at the moment. As I said, the business plan is being worked up as we speak. There are 3 main drivers for that, one is the type of testing which

we think is going to change, so the costs of tests will come down and the turnaround in the arrangements for that will be different so therefore that will reduce some of our costs. Secondly, we are going to grow our test and trace capability beyond that that we have now. There are different models that we could do so you would not have a standing set of arrangements for the whole of the time. If your prevalence is very low, you would flex that so you might, for example, if there was a certain number of increases in cases, double your team, for example. We need to look at the best model for how we flex the arrangements. It certainly will not fall below where we are now. A large number of our people who are involved in that have to go back to their business as usual jobs. At the moment we are involved in training, supporting and transitioning people into new arrangements. Then finally the other cost that will come is that whatever we have to do for on Island testing. I think we said previously to you at Scrutiny, one of the things that is really critical here is that the on Island testing does not fall away for residents, whether they are Islanders who are working in potentially vulnerable situations, essential workers for example, care homes, et cetera, or for the household surveys that we have been doing. We will be keeping those going and what we then will be looking at is where the technology changes around some of that testing but we have to factor that into the business case as well.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you. Will that on Island testing be in actual fact scaled up during this period because we have heard over the weekend, for example, from hoteliers who are concerned about their duty of care to staff members in this scenario?

Chief Executive:

There has been no ... in fact the exact contrary, we will be scaling up, we are scaling up and that is a prerequisite for the way in which we provide and overall approach to dealing with the risk, in the same way that we will obviously be dealing with all of those issues that we have been working on to ensure that the health service does not become overwhelmed if there was any upsurge. We have all of that in place, which we did not have in quite the same way, although we had very good plans, at the beginning of the pandemic. There is an awful lot of mitigation frameworks and strategies that are in place and also we have the ability to dial up and dial down, I think is the term I keep using. Whether that is on testing, whether that is medical colleagues who will come back into play who have been trained. Whether that is the way in which we do our test and trace. Going back to your concern about hoteliers, I have not had that, in fact I have had far from that, hotel owners have been very positive about testing arrangements that we have been putting into place but clearly if there is further information where there is a gap we will address that.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Clearly, other than the connectivity for the Island, which is very important, this is an important step to get the tourism season started in some respect. Will the Government be providing any loan subsidies or incentive to either the airlines or the hospitality sector as a whole to encourage travel and increased hospitality?

The Chief Minister:

Two aspects on that. Number one is we are currently looking at the co-funding payroll scheme and, rather than just cut off at the end of August, how we might taper that through into the winter months. Senator Farnham might want to talk about that a little bit. The other thing which we are actively considering is some form of thing that we can do under the fiscal stimulus element. I do not want to give too much detail on that at this moment because it is literally probably 10 days away from being finalised. Obviously as soon as we have got that we will make sure that we come to you to give a briefing and then to States Members but the intention is to get some immediate cash into the economy in some shape or form and that potentially could also be used in support by locals in the hospitality side of things. Widening out could be used in that methodology but it is not something we have directly considered, although oddly enough have thought about. Lyndon, do you want to come in on that or shall we hand over to Charlie?

Deputy Chief Minister:

Just quickly, I think that the measures of support to the hospitality sector are in line with what has been offered right across the sector, including States guaranteed loans and payroll support deferrals of social security and G.S.T. (Goods and Services Tax), et cetera. It is very clear that the hotel sector will require further fiscal support through the winter, in my opinion, because even as we do begin to relax the borders and allow some level of tourism - I would be surprised if it would reach 25 per cent of the levels we were at last year. That will enable some of our key hotels possibly to survive but they are certainly going to need further support as they go into the winter. As the Chief Minister said, we are working on that now.

The Chief Minister:

I think it is worth adding obviously that, just to be clear, we are not looking to be providing any funding to, for example, British Airways or easyJet - those are the 2 main airlines who come into the Island - but, as you are aware and has been publicly alluded to previously, we are considering some support to the airline that has been doing lifeline services to the Island and that decision is going to be finalised imminently.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you, Chief Minister. Sorry, I pressed the wrong mouse. Just to clarify if I could on what has already been said, the risk of COVID is likely to increase when the border is opened but by a very

small amount. Could we make the risk smaller by isolating passengers as they wait for their results when they arrive in the Island?

The Chief Minister:

Again, it might be something I will get Susan Turnbull to comment on but my understanding is that it is about proportionality. Because of the very low risk to Islanders it is not proportionate in current circumstances to do so. Certainly that is the advice in the overall context of how it has been taken. Susan, do you want to add?

Medical Officer of Health:

Hello, again. Just to agree with the Chief Minister, we are talking about bringing the risk down to a very low risk and the potential to further reduce that risk is therefore even lower. It is a proportionality issue about the hundreds of people who would be subject to isolation who need not be against the one every couple of thousands who may be positive and needed to be managed. We believe that in the current circumstances that is a reasonable and very effective level of risk reduction. Contrasting that with most of the rest of Europe, who have abandoned any quarantining restrictions at all and certainly are not testing, we are taking extra precautions compared with most of our neighbours because we are an Island and because we want to be careful. So we are looking at a balance between what is reasonable to do to further reduce the risk from a very small risk to an even smaller risk but we certainly do not recommend that it would be in Jersey's interests at all to be requiring isolation pending a test result.

The Chief Minister:

Charlie, do you want to add anything to that?

Senator K.L. Moore:

If I could just move on to the next question. Other countries in Europe that do not apply the quarantine for various reasons have other safeguards in place to justify that decision so our safeguards are somewhat ... sorry, I have lost the word. But they are not exact requirements, they are not compulsory standards but you asking people: "If you would be very kind, please be careful." What other safeguards could you consider?

[16:15]

The Chief Minister:

Again I think it is probably between Charlie and Susan but the fundamental principles are by having the testing at the airport or the harbour, by having a strong testing and tracing regime, that is a pretty good safeguard and also going back to the balance of risk that we estimate to be the case ... just to

give an example, certainly my understanding for France is that they are offering, if you like, if one wishes to one can go into a voluntary quarantine but there is no consequences if one does not go into that quarantine. In effect there is not a quarantine period for one of the most populist countries in all of Europe and they will not be testing at the border. From our perspective, we are testing at the border, we will make sure we are turning around that result very quickly and we think that proportionately the risk therefore is sufficiently low not to warrant having that quarantine while one waits. It is about proportionality, it is about them ... as I said, it is always that balance of risk but that is the advice of S.T.A.C.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Naturally we have our connectivity and the regular routes in and out of the Island that the Islanders are very keen to maintain, however some nations are looking to travel bridges or traffic light systems to find, locate, agree countries that are safe to travel to. Of course we have a direct flight to Majorca coming up this month and many Islanders with strong connections to Madeira and many people who would enjoy visiting that country as well, are there any plans to encourage further bridges to safe countries?

The Chief Minister:

The short answer is what we are trying to do is get the borders open in the controlled way that we are trying to do. Now, if there is, as you say, an air bridge to Madeira I am sure that would not be an issue whatsoever, I do not know what the commercial position is of that but the other side is there are also discussions around I think you have referred to it as a traffic light system, if one is aware of individuals coming back from areas that are of greater risk there is scope within the policy to have a different approach. I think that was alluded to, which is a fair comment, in a public briefing that was alluded to in the States briefing this morning. It will be very much understanding where somebody is coming from, what that risk profile is and they might well be taken off into a different queue to be dealt with separately.

Chief Executive:

Just to follow up ...

Senator K.L. Moore:

We will move on now to Deputy Perchard.

Chief Executive:

If I could follow up on that?

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you.

Chief Executive:

The point I was about to make, Senator, is that under the changes that we are bringing in with the new system you will be able to track people from the origin of their travel as well as from where they have just in effect got their last flight from. Part of what we are trying to do is get a much stronger data set that will enable us to track if someone has, for example, come from a place where there is real difficulties. We would be taking a view about how we would deal with those much earlier. The nature of what the Chief Minister was talking about in terms of spotting and identifying that risk, under the new system that is currently being built and is being tested, excuse the pun, before being finalised and put into place in the next couple of weeks is going to give us that much richer set of data, which in turn will give us more information which will help us with those sorts of mitigation arrangements. I hope that will give you some assurance that we are looking at the total arrangements around journeys, much more detailed data on individuals which then, in turn, will enable us to be able to have a lot more information to be able to judge how we manage our risk profile.

Senator K.L. Moore:

We are going to go to Deputy Perchard now.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Thank you, Senator. I am just going to move on to some questions around the emergency response structure. Chief Minister, in your opinion, based on your experience so far to date, how has the current emergency response structure helped you or hindered you when you have had to make fast and effective decisions?

The Chief Minister:

I suppose overall the structures work very well, we have made decisions quickly and when we have needed to to the extent that the competent authorities was called in at either 8 o'clock or 10 o'clock at night at some point or other so obviously demonstrated it could be summoned quickly and it could make those decisions quickly and the officers implemented them. Let us be clear, though, obviously the law that we are operating under was due for review I think it was this year, it is the Emergency Powers and Planning (Jersey) Law and that will be something that will be looked at next year now with the delay that COVID is causing, whether some changes come out of that is another matter. We will be going back as things ... I will not say calm down but as things move to different priorities, as it were, and just in terms of preparation, just to see what we could have done better or what we need to learn from what we have been going through. As I keep saying, if you look at it on the basis

we are in a good place, overall the structures of the organisation have worked well and obviously that covers the new structures that have been brought in over the last 18 months.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Within that structure, does S.T.A.C. still report to the Tactical Co-ordinating Group?

Chief Executive:

So S.T.A.C. right at the beginning did not exist in the way which it currently does now and S.T.A.C. reports in at 3 levels. One is to the decision-making arrangements, i.e. sort of competent authorities and Emergencies Council. Two is the Minister, whether that is the Minister for Health and Social Services or if it is to the Chief Minister or whatever. We are dealing, for example, at the moment for a safer travel policy, that involves also the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture. Three, it comes into the Strategic Co-ordinating Group. So S.T.A.C. reports at a number of different levels and also deals with a number of different Ministers, it is not something that is set in stone because it is not appropriate for it to do that in that way.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Thank you for that clarification, that is really helpful. I think it is currently published that it reports into the Tactical Co-ordinating Group but it is helpful to hear that there are different levels on which it operates. What dictates the level at which it operates? Is it to do with the particular Ministry that is relevant, is it to do with the particular content, what dictates and who decides where S.T.A.C. goes to give any particular reporting on any issue?

Chief Executive:

S.T.A.C. is a standing body that deals with a whole raft of issues. By way of example, S.T.A.C. would have considered some of the ethical issues facing medics, if you remember some weeks ago, that came up and was the subject of deliberations with Scrutiny and Assembly Members. On the other hand, it may well be dealing with tactical or other operational requirements. The S.T.A.C. system sits within the context of the health services response to be able to deal with major events, such as that that we have been experiencing. It comes in at a number of levels, as I have said to you. I am not sure that it is all at the tactical group but it feeds, for example, into the health gold command structure. There are other relationships which Susan can identify and articulate as well. We have some terms of reference for S.T.A.C., which are made available, and we use S.T.A.C. in the way that provides the medical evidence to help support or guide policy changes. But on the back of that S.T.A.C. also deals with departmental issues for the Health Department which may be particular to a very different set of issues other than the broader advice, for example, that we have been discussing in today's meeting. Susan may be able to give a bit more information on that.

Medical Officer of Health:

Thank you, Charlie, I will just come back in on the microphone because I am not near a camera. S.T.A.C. is something that is set up on an ad hoc basis according to the type of incident that is facing us. For instance, if we were in a situation where there was a major incident because there had been a nuclear accident on the French coast, a S.T.A.C. would be convened by myself as Medical Officer of Health and on to that I would convene relevant experts. So I would have environmental health experts on radiation, I would probably have somebody from the Met office to advise on the way the weather was travelling, would have somebody from Jersey Water to advise on water pollution, that sort of thing. It would be bespoke to the type of incident and it would be designed to acquire and collate the expert advice to feed into the gold command that would be leading on the major incident. COVID is a different type of situation but convening a S.T.A.C. was an appropriate thing to do to make sure that we had the right senior medical expertise as well as environmental health, as well as nursing, as well as statistical, as well as epidemiological, what else? The Economic Adviser is part of S.T.A.C. We have a whole range of different types of expertise to collate advice and then feed it in to all of the bodies that Charlie mentioned earlier but because we are not dealing directly with a gold command and a red hot major incident such as a nuclear disaster it is in a different format with a more regular pace of meetings. We have meetings as often as they are needed. There have been up to 3 a week at times so it is bespoke to the situation is really the summary point.

The Chief Minister:

I hope that helps.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

So S.T.A.C. does have direct access to you, Chief Minister? That is a yes or no question.

The Chief Minister:

The short answer is yes but principally the Minister for Health and Social Services deals directly with S.T.A.C. There are times when Patrick Armstrong, as Chair, does come and brief us on certain matters.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

The advice from S.T.A.C. in relation to borders, was that advice given in response to a question from C.O.M. (Council of Ministers)? For example, did the Council of Ministers say: "We would like to open the borders, when can we do it and how can we do it safely?" and then did S.T.A.C. respond or did S.T.A.C. come to the C.O.M. with proactive updated advice suggesting you could go in that direction?

The Chief Minister:

It is more the latter. Essentially in terms of discussions, there will be discussions with individual Ministers and then depending on the nature, and I am trying to think on the borders, I cannot remember if it is competent authorities or Emergencies Council was given the briefing around the trial that we agreed to run up at the airport with effect from, I think it was, 29th May. Then from the outcomes of that trial and also the conjunction of as events started to change around, airline started to fly, firstly within the common travel area and then within Europe, that was then a proactive way of looking at what the Island needed to continue to do, particularly again given the profile of the diseases in the Island, i.e. the low level of risk.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Okay, so given that it was more the latter, does there exist, therefore, a list of steps included in a move towards what Government has been calling a return to normality that S.T.A.C. are lining up in some sort of timeframe for the rest of the year?

[16:30]

The Chief Minister:

I would suggest that was identified in the safe exit framework.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Right, so the safe exit framework is being used ... sorry, continue.

The Chief Minister:

It was a combination but if you look at the overall path, if you like, that is outlined in the safe exit framework. In other words, we know what has to happen so the exact timing of that then is determined by a variety of things, including - when I say events - where we are in terms of medical assessment of the profile of the disease, low rates of transmission, et cetera, and then taking account of the overall well-being aspects towards the Island. They will all be elements that get fed into that consideration. I do not know if Charlie wants to add to that.

Chief Executive:

The Chief Minister is absolutely right. The way in which S.T.A.C. operates is that it is constantly looking and providing advice in relation to the policies that have been set. However, it will also specifically be asked sometimes about that. When we were looking at testing regimes, what is the best way of doing it? They have gone through and given their view. It just depends entirely on the way in which, at any particular point, S.T.A.C. are considering things. So when we were looking at the nature of on Island testing, S.T.A.C.'s views were sought but it was in the context of a wider policy around testing, which we have been developing and has been the subject of presentations to

States Assembly Members on a regular basis. All of these things we have tried, as I said right at the beginning, to ensure has medical advice to substantiate and back up some of the decision-making but there is also a policy framework of which S.T.A.C. contributes to that but also S.T.A.C. is giving a view on and that is how and where I think it has been operating over the last period.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Moving now to the Emergencies Council, please could you remind us, just for the benefit of us and the members of the public who are listening, which ministerial Members are on the Emergencies Council?

The Chief Minister:

I will refer to my notes just in case I miss somebody. Essentially it is the 6 Ministers that sit on the competent authorities plus the representative from the Comité des Connétables, which in this instance is the Constable of St. Lawrence. I cannot find it in my notes.

Chief Executive:

You also have extended the invitation to ...

The Chief Minister:

Yes, I was getting to that. What I was going to say is it is myself as Chief Minister, the Connétable of St. Clement as Minister for Home Affairs, Deputy Kevin Lewis as Minister for D.F.I. (Department for Infrastructure), Senator Farnham as Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture, Senator Gorst as Minister for External Relations and Deputy Richard Renouf as Minister for Health and Social Services. Then at varying times obviously the Minister for Treasury and Resources and the Minister for Education are invited in. One is for signing off or at least having advance warning of any money we are desperately trying to spend and obviously, very seriously, the Minister for Education for the obvious impacts that have been taking place in the schools. If relevant, which has only been a couple of times, Deputy Martin has come in for Social Security matters that might have been, for example, around the C.R.E.S.S. (COVID Related Emergency Support Scheme) and things like that. Generally, the competent authorities are those 6 Ministers I have referred to, or the first 6, and they form the Emergencies Council with Deidre Mezbourian, the Constable of St. Lawrence, the Chair of Comité de Connétables and then obviously with the Bailiff and the Governor attending as well, and then obviously relevant officers.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Thank you, Chief Minister. How does the Emergencies Council ensure that it captures or views the issues that arise in the pandemic through the lens of other large portfolios that may not be

represented on the Council, such as Housing and Environment and Planning that may, of course, have intrinsic link to individuals at this time?

The Chief Minister:

It is worth making the point that has also been alluded to in the past that all major decisions do go up to C.O.M. for notification. Essentially where it has been obvious that there has been a particular impact that competent authorities ... essentially competent authorities as a grouping but everything is done within the individual ministerial powers so if there has been a housing aspect then it may not have been necessary for the Minister for Children and Housing to come in. I cannot remember if he has come in at one point or not but certainly I have been kept apprised of measures put in place where he has been acting on certain things. If you use the Nightingale as an example, Planning and Environment in this instance have not had to come through the competent authorities side or Emergencies Council other than I am aware when the Nightingale was put through that Deputy Young as Minister for the Environment but wearing his planning hat did give essentially exemptions for permissions for the Nightingale to go in place. It is essentially on a needs must basis I would suggest might be the best way of putting it. We have kept the core as the competent authorities, with the other invited Ministers in, and then when it has been necessary other Ministers have been involved. As I say, I was looking for my notes, there is a list but all the significant items have gone to C.O.M. for either noting or endorsement.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

With the significant items that have gone to C.O.M. if there is ever a disagreement within the C.O.M. has there ever been a time where those significant decisions have been pushed back to the Emergencies Council for changes before going back to C.O.M.? Is there any back and forth in that way or is it just one-directional?

The Chief Minister:

It tends to be one-directional, for want of a better expression. Competent authorities have essentially said this is what we need to do and then it has been flagged up. As I said it has been done through the individual ministerial powers so it has not been a collective decision, if that makes sense. There is not a decision by the competent authorities, for the sake of argument, or by the Emergencies Council. You will find it is a decision by the Minister but with the endorsement usually of the competent authorities or of the Emergencies Council or of the Council of Ministers. I am trying to think if there has been any disagreement where things have gone. Generally, the Council of Ministers has usually endorsed actions that have been taken. If there has been any Ministers who have not been comfortable with it that will be in the minutes. In general, on occasion we have quite robust discussions around Council of Ministers but in general all the way through Ministers have been supportive.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

What is the plan going forward? Now we are in a very different place to where we were when the Emergencies Council was first convened, what is the plan for the Emergencies Council? Will it stick to its current role?

The Chief Minister:

In essence we have said we are keeping a watching brief, so the Emergencies Council now meets somewhere around the week of 20th July, which is a little bit of a discussion around if there are any lessons to be learned or issues identified and also to start thinking about planning for winter. At present it is not scheduled to meet in August but that can always change, and it is scheduled to meet in September, again early at present. That could change, around again understanding any preparation. Essentially I have tried to bear in mind where the competent authorities/Emergencies Council started and they have been very much focused on dealing with the health aspect of the crisis. For consistency and continuity, I have kept that but as we move into the financial impact or the economic issues that we have to deal with that is very particularly a Council of Ministers matter. I hope that gives you the distinction. Essentially the health issues we have had to move fast and swiftly, if that is not just repetition, when we have needed to. Therefore, having the competent authorities body has been particularly useful but for things like the economic side that have wider impacts, it is absolutely right that should go to the Council of Ministers and that is the decision-making body.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Will the Council or relevant group, whether that be the Emergencies Council or the Council of Ministers, be putting together plans for dealing with a worst-case scenario winter where we see an uptake in the number of cases?

The Chief Minister:

Yes, the short answer is that is already in train essentially. As we have said we need to allow a little bit of recovery time, for want of a better expression, from the various doctors who have been working quite literally 7 days a week and many hours each day. We are working on it and those plans then come to fruition during the next few weeks. Bear in mind that we are always learning from the research that is coming out and from the experiences that different jurisdictions are finding and I suspect from the discussions we have had with, for example, the Medical Officer of Health, there may be some issues we want to learn from as the Southern Hemisphere goes through its winter season. There may be issues that come out of that that we need to learn from. At this stage that is a little bit too early to tell but I will hand over to Charlie to give some details.

Chief Executive:

In that same way that before we went into more restrictive arrangements, a P.C.G (Project Co-ordination Group) was stood up from the middle to end of January as part of the development of our planning for how we were monitoring COVID-19, particularly when it was emerging in China. Various aspects of our work, the first S.C.G. (Strategic Co-ordination Group) was in early February. Helplines were put in place, Member briefings, et cetera. We are currently also preparing for example our health planning for both the winter months and to take account of potentially any wider implications that may come from coronavirus. That work is already in train. We obviously have the advantage of the Nightingale and we also have all the training and development that is going on with personnel if we ever need to deal with larger numbers, et cetera, from additional ambulance drivers to additional nursing capability and staff. All of those plans are done. They are all there and they can be activated quickly should they be necessary. In addition to that you will have heard some of the other thinking around economic recovery, what that might mean for some of the payroll arrangements, et cetera, so there is a continuum that will just roll forward and then we - I use this term again - dial up or dial down the necessary arrangements. In terms of our planning we have already started that.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Chief Minister, when we consider the winter and a possible surge, although we very much hope that does not happen, do you anticipate the same measures that we already use to deal with that will be imposed or is there discussion going on about different approaches we could take in the face of a winter surge?

The Chief Minister:

I think it is probably too early to be definitive on that. My expectation is that at this stage if things started kicking off again you would then look at the measures we have already done, particularly the legislation and things like that, and I am sure some of it could come back based on the S.T.A.C. advice. I am not clear on at this stage, and that is part of the discussion we will have at the Emergencies Council in the week of 20th July, is whether all those measures would come through because obviously some of that research has changed. I will give an issue but please take the view that this is a personal view. It is a personal question and I do not know if it factually accurate or not. For example, would you necessarily close the schools to the degree we did given the evidence seems to be coming out that the original thing that is valid under flu conditions of spreading does not seem to be the same under COVID-19.

[16:45]

That for me would be something we might raise and that will then be based on the medical advice that is happening at the time. The point is all the measures we have put in place have worked very well. The question then comes down to what are we looking at, what is the rate of transmission coming through and what have we learned in terms of the research that has been coming out and how we address it? That is probably it, otherwise I am in danger of repeating myself. I hope that gives an indication.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Thank you, Chief Minister. Obviously nobody expects you to predict the future, you will be pleased to know, but do you have plans to share with the public plans for dealing with a second surge should it occur alongside the communications around the hopefulness we have around it not happening? That is something that Islanders are mentioning more and more. What happens if this happens? Will you be publishing and sharing the plans and, if so, when?

The Chief Minister:

I will hand over to Dr. Turnbull on that one but my principal thing would be if we were to see resurgences coming through across Europe and the United Kingdom then we would then start alerting Islanders to an increase in risk. Susan, do you want to add to that?

Medical Officer of Health:

Just very briefly ...

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

I do not need the technical detail. The question is: would you be willing to publish plans for dealing with the worst-case scenario and if you are willing to publish those plans when can we expect them?

The Chief Minister:

What you are saying is if there was ... you are trying to say would we publish them, for the sake of argument, next week saying this is what would happen if something kicked off in November. I have to say in my expectation ... go on.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Sorry, I can come back. You answer and I will come back.

The Chief Minister:

My expectation would be that you would not necessarily ... that is a discussion I would expect to be taking place in Emergencies Council but my expectation at this stage would be that you would not necessarily publish them. I think it is a discussion at Emergencies Council. You would not

necessarily publish them 3 months in advance of something hypothetically happening. I think you might if you could see things ... you would have them ready but if you could see things starting to occur across Europe or whatever that might be the time you would then start alerting the public and part of that I would say - this is again a personal view, we take the advice - is effectiveness of messaging. In other words, if you put something out now people potentially have forgotten about it when it is necessary whereas the releasing of those plans a very few weeks in advance start adding to the urgency and the imminency of anything you might need to be taking. I do not know if Dr. Turnbull wants to add to that.

Medical Officer of Health:

Thank you, Chief Minister. Just a brief comment that policy colleagues are working with S.T.A.C. and we are looking at developing a framework of principles for a re-escalation framework so that work is underway so we have it ready in the event of needing it.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

That is very re-assuring. When will that be ready?

Medical Officer of Health:

People have just started working on it so I am afraid I cannot give you a definitive answer to that.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Do you have a target deadline?

Medical Officer of Health:

I will have to ask the policy colleagues, sorry.

The Chief Minister:

What we can do, Deputy Perchard, is go and find out an estimation but I would suspect, and this is a guess, that it is probably going to be let us say the end of July or sometime in August probably that would come together. It would need to go then on a health basis probably up to Emergencies Council just for endorsement or approval essentially and then at that point we could talk about publishing it if that gives you an indicative timeline.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Thank you, Chief Minister. I am going to check in with the Chair now. Senator, would you like me to continue or would you like to move on?

Senator K.L. Moore:

Shall we move on to the next section of questions? Deputy Ahier has been waiting very patiently and has a section on the Government Plan.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Concerning the Government Recovery Plan 2021-23, what opportunities have been made available to States Members, relevant stakeholders and the general public to influence the 2021 plan and help shape some of the policy targets within it? Will that include public-facing initiatives such as parish meetings?

The Chief Minister:

You will be aware, Deputy, we are very keen to ensure we get appropriate public engagement in there and I think there are discussions happening at the moment around on the M.O.U. (Memorandum of Understanding) as to how we can get that to operate. Within the deliberations Dirk, as the Director of Communications, can give you a bit more of what we are intending.

Director of Communications:

We have pulled together a strategy of how we engage the public on the Government Plan going forward. We are looking at physical events given the guidelines that are currently in place. One of our focuses is going to be on non-digital audiences. While we go out for public engagement we want to receive intelligence and data that we can look at in a quantitative sense, we also want to make sure that Islanders we are engaging with, many of whom will not have access to electronic devices ... we are looking at working both with the radio stations and with the *J.E.P. (Jersey Evening Post)* so we can put out open-ended questions for people to respond back, either through a template that we will provide to them so we can do a question and answer session on the radio, for example, or have a leaflet inlaid inside the *J.E.P.* or we will open up more the discussion reform pages and receive letters back in from the public. We are working with policy officials and Statistics Jersey right now to drill down for what sort of intelligence and data that would give us but the main philosophy is that we open it up as widely as possible so we are not just picking up digital audience, we are not just picking up children and young people but also we are picking up the less electronically savvy audiences across the Island.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Chief Minister, there were 2 new deal packages that were announced, one by Reform Jersey and the other by the Deputy Chief Minister and the Minister for External Relations. What consideration have you given to them?

The Chief Minister:

I thought you were going to quote the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, which would have been an interesting political meeting of minds there. The point is that all these things are being considered in the mix and will be run past our chief economist to give us the best advice we can and what is the most appropriate form of economic and financial stimulus. Where we are at present is dealing with ... there are some very short-term measures we want to take and as I said at the beginning I am expecting movement on those within about the next 10 days and we will make sure we get the briefing to you or through Scrutiny and States Members before it goes public. That is to try to get some things in place between July and August. Then the longer-term measures that I think you are referring to, they are in the process as I understand it of being evaluated by the economists to see what their impact might be and if it achieves what we are seeking to do. I think it is worth making the point, and this is one of the deliberations within both the Government Plan and the comments around the fiscal stimulus - and there are obviously overlaps between the 2 - is timing because the considerations at the moment ... and we will know more as things evolve over the next few weeks. Without being funny about it, obviously the borders issue could be one of those factors. It is what the timing is of any potential recession, so in other words there will be impacts now of COVID-19 but there might be impacts next year for the financial impact globally of COVID-19 that will then potentially hit the Island. It could be the middle of next year; it could be later. The experience from the 2008-2010 financial crash was that the impact came down later than it was hitting in other jurisdictions. There is just an issue around there of getting our timing right around the fiscal stimulus side and that then comes through on the evaluations from the economists.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

What is your preferred planned route to economic recovery?

The Chief Minister:

Could you repeat the question?

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

What is your preferred planned route to economic recovery? Do you have a personal preference?

The Chief Minister:

Do you mean in terms of the measures to achieve economic recovery?

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Indeed.

The Chief Minister:

At this stage I am not going to go into the detail. We know from past experience that what is still called the 3 Ts, measures that are targeted, timely and temporary, are important. I think I can say at this stage we are looking at balanced measures and more extensive measures than perhaps were considered last time. That is also indicating the potential size of the problem we will be facing. As I said, short term we want to get some cash into people's pockets to spend in the economy and we are looking at measures to do that. Medium term, one of the measures we are already doing has been around the change in the current year basis taxation that does have a short-term benefit to, for example, self-employed. That is potentially October or November of this year if the Assembly approve it. Then you might then look at measures within an element of packages around easing payments that we take off people or alternatively getting more money in to their pockets. Then on top of that you also have the capital side, so the capital programme that is already built into the Government Plan will act as a support measure for the construction industry and that in turn helps the wider economy. What I would like to see personally, and is being evaluated so we will again see, is where there are some things we might need to do not just for the larger players in the economy and also the people in the construction industry and the people who work for them but where there are some experiences from other jurisdictions where some of the smaller players on the construction side receive support. For example, Ireland is an example that has been used and that was very successful. That is just an evaluation that is coming through. It is not a guarantee that is where we will end up but it is part of the thinking we are going through. In summary, an element of packages, short term we are trying to get in play rapidly, medium term is starting to happen and is also reflected by the deferral from the G.S.T. and social security packages already. The co-funding scheme as you come out of COVID-19 becomes, if you allow it to carry on ... the payroll for the co-funding scheme is part of that stimulus package. Then obviously looking at the longer-term that might, for example, be capital projects.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Talking about construction, what will the costs be to the new hospital and has COVID-19 been used as a cover to conceal costs and intentions for the project?

The Chief Minister:

Certainly not to my knowledge. You might want to elaborate on what you mean by being used to conceal costs.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Is it true to say that the cost of the new hospital will be a great deal larger than the £466 million that was originally expected to be spent on the hospital at Gloucester Street?

The Chief Minister:

Put it this way, at this stage I would hope not. There are a variety of factors in there in that what is being looked at is the footprint that is required and then with the Jersey Care Model coming through that impacts on the overall size of the hospital that could be required. I am at this stage not expecting a significant change in the envelope. If anything I would like to see it lower than what it was but at this stage, I would not be foolish enough to guarantee that. It might well be that Charlie wants to add to that.

Chief Executive:

Just to come in behind that, there will be obviously, depending on whether there is a global recession, potentially implications on a whole host of costs that might be associated with the hospital. Construction costs, steel, all of these things, if there is inflation that is much more rampant you would have to factor that into your financing and contingencies budget. At this moment in time no-one could ever say on the back of a global pandemic where there are ramifications for macro-economic predictions that there would not be ramifications for any economy and potentially that may manifest itself in some construction costs.

[17:00]

However, as the Chief Minister says, the ambition has always been to ensure we are very challenging about all costs, very clear about what is the hospital meant to achieve so therefore what is its size, all of which requires the input of clinicians but is also being supported at an earlier stage than previously in the previous hospital programme with the development partner sitting very early on to help drive down costs that will not be necessary. I hope that gives it a sense that we are going to be very clear about that but obviously I could not predict what the wider ramifications may be if there was a global recession.

The Chief Minister:

It is worth adding that the evaluation process that went through to select the final parties, very particularly the due diligence was raised to make sure as to who was more robust in the potential of a recession arising out of COVID-19.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Is it possible that you are using the cover of COVID-19 to clandestinely close some units at the hospital?

The Chief Minister:

Certainly not from my perspective. I think that is very much more a matter for the Minister for Health and Social Services I would suggest. My take from dealing with the health team is they are very

focused on getting the best services they can deliver for the Island but I think they also recognise that there are some that perhaps Islanders get better servicing from arrangements with other jurisdictions. Certainly your original question is not within my understanding. Very much one for the Minister for Health and Social Services.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

A topical question now, Jersey Water has confirmed to us it will cost £30 million to enable every Islander to have access to mains water. Given the health concerns around bore holes and wells will you commit to this being an objective for the recovery plan in 2021?

The Chief Minister:

Can I refer to my question for you earlier that I think was in the States Assembly, if I remember correctly?

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

It was on 16th June, yes.

The Chief Minister:

My position has not changed.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

In your response you said: "I can certainly see scope for phasing in some form of funding." Has this been discussed by the Council of Ministers?

The Chief Minister:

What has been discussed ... as I said we are starting to look at the fiscal stimulus measures that one could look at and at the moment we are just focusing on the very short term but I have not forgotten the question. I had not anticipated it coming back today but I do anticipate that I will be raising it at some point and we can see what we can do. But, as I said, I am very happy to have that discussion at the Council of Ministers at the appropriate time. We are looking at a capital programme and to me it would make sense to see if we could include that in, even if it was just on a very phased basis. I will note, and it was purely from a discussion with the Minister for Infrastructure separately, the other programme one needs to have is the separation, oddly enough, of surface water and foul water. In other words, that is quite crucial to make sure the system is not overloaded before you add more people into the system. I suspect that might be one of the discussions that needs to take place but as a principle I am fully supportive of it.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Many people will be pleased to hear that response. During the in-committee debate on the economic recovery several States Members called for a move towards a living wage economy. Do you intend to include this as part of the recovery plan or similar economic strategy?

The Chief Minister:

The short answer again is that is very much up for discussion and my political antennae at this stage was suggesting there is a lot of political support for it but, as I said, my take would be that would be something that should go into the Government Plan.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

What key thoughts and ideas do you believe stood out for you during the in-committee debate and which in your capacity as Chair of the Economic Recovery Council do you expect to pursue as part of this work?

The Chief Minister:

Just to slightly split terminology here. It is Senator Farnham who is Chair of the Economic Recovery Council. I am Chair of the Political Oversight Group the Council reports into. Senator Farnham might be able to give you some ideas of the work the Council has been doing. I think they are on either their second or third meeting. The Economic P.O.G. (Political Oversight Group) has its next meeting I think at the end of this week, something like Thursday or Friday, subject to when the States finish. To date the P.O.G. to an extent has been considering the various factors that need to be considered in terms of economic stimulus and that is in keeping with economic advice coming in both from the economic adviser to the Island ... sorry the chief economist for the Island and also for the external representative or the one who has a strong economic background. But, obviously, separately it is around also co-ordinating some of the inputs around the fiscal stimulus that I have alluded to already.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Sorry, Chief Minister. Which thoughts do you believe stood out during the in-committee debate for you personally that you thought should be pursued?

The Chief Minister:

It is difficult to go back and say exactly what stood out particularly. I think there were many comments that were very valid. I think things around environmental initiatives will be quite important. I think things around the impact of technology will be critical in the Island but also things around what I will call rebuilding the economy and understanding how we can work differently also will be quite important going forward over the next months and years. Do you want Senator Farnham to make a comment?

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

I will pass back to the Chair. I am not too sure how much time we have left.

Senator K.L. Moore:

We are rather mindful of the time, Chief Minister, and we would like to ask a long-term efficiencies set of questions if we could, please. We will keep you for a little longer. The Constable of St. Martin has some questions for you.

The Chief Minister:

Can I just make the comment that I did at the beginning so apologies? My next meeting, representing the Island on an A.P.P.G. (All-Party Parliamentary Group) call, starts in 6 minutes, I think, or 7 minutes.

Senator K.L. Moore:

I am very sorry but some of the answers have been excessively long and we have perhaps been a bit too patient with you all so I would be grateful if we could move on to the Constable of St. Martin.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Good afternoon to you, Chief Minister. Moving on to the efficiencies programme and workforce what impact has the COVID-19 outbreak had so far on the efficiencies programme?

The Chief Minister:

In terms of the efficiencies programme to date £23.3 million of the programme is on schedule to be achieved during the course of this year but as you would expect there has been an impact from COVID-19 on a number of the schemes in place. Of the £16.7 million that is left roughly half of that ... you will recall there were some figures that were estimated that could give rise out of ... affect the tax rating ... sorry, ways to generate essentially through compliance better or more efficient tax collection as opposed to putting taxes up is what I am trying to say. It was generating more revenue through ensuring better compliance with our existing rules. That, given that we are seeing a dip in tax revenue, is probably more at risk at this stage but it does not mean that the work to implement those compliance measures will not be taking place. It is just that because we are seeing a fall in tax revenue potentially it is unlikely to generate the revenue we were expecting in this year. We can say those measures that have been delayed or cannot be implemented this year can be implemented, we still believe, within the period of the Government Plan. Therefore, they are not lost and they were not realistic. It is just that they were not done in anticipation obviously of a global pandemic kicking off X number of months after the Government Plan was approved. It is probably worth also making the point when we are talking about delays that within the workforce, and it is

quite an interesting stat, there has been just under 500 people have been either redeployed essentially in terms of a pool of people have been brought in to assist with dealing with the COVID-19 crisis. One hundred and thirty-one were redeployed from government departments and 61 from States-owned entities and there are some other stats that go with that; the total is 475. That also has had an impact then on a generation of a variety of issues around business as usual, part of which will be the efficiencies programme.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

You have covered some of this but what progress had you made in ensuring the delivery of the 2020 efficiencies programme before COVID-19? For example, will any targets outlined in R.130/2019 be met? For example, is the programme expecting to collect the additional taxes that were proposed? You have explained that with COVID-19 you will not be collecting so many taxes.

The Chief Minister:

I think I have just answered that question.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Yes, you have. I just realised as I was saying it. The December 2019 Labour Market Report indicates that since December 2016 there has been an increase of 4.8 per cent in public sector jobs. Can you clarify how this increase in jobs has been accounted for in the efficiencies plan?

The Chief Minister:

Can you just repeat that question? The sound slightly went towards the end.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

The December 2019 Labour Market Report indicates that since December 2016 there has been an increase of 4.8 per cent in public sector jobs. Can you clarify how this increase in jobs has been accounted for in the efficiencies plan?

The Chief Minister:

I shall hand that one over to Charlie, I think, in terms of dealing with the specifics. From 2016 you said there was a 4 point something per cent increase in jobs.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

4.8 per cent, yes, in public sector jobs.

Chief Executive:

I am not sure whether that means that is government public sector jobs or whether that is jobs in the public sector across the Island. I am sorry I am not privy to the detail of it. However, I would remind the Scrutiny Members that when the Government Plan was put together for 2019 onwards there was a recognition that we had to fund a number of jobs on a permanent basis that had not been funded full-time on a revenue basis before. Those were key situations. Most notably we used the Brexit as a good example of that, so we always recognised there was going to be a certain number of additional posts that would be funded through the Government Plan. We also have recognised that over the period we will reduce, and we have started to do that, our consultant numbers and we longer-term, depending on what the efficiencies programme will entail, may see head count reduce as well as of course the bigger set of issues that we referenced last year, which is the large number of people who will come through retirement figures over the next 5 to 10 years. That is a significant number of people, which then we made very clear at the time meant that we felt we could do the balancing of the books without taking large amount of head count out. Without seeing the detail of what you are referring to I am not sure the issues I can answer in more detail at this moment.

The Chief Minister:

Apologies for interrupting. I do have to go almost literally in about 30 seconds. I was wondering if it was possible for you ... I think you alluded to sending the question through to us and perhaps we can do that. Do we want to try one final question but I do apologise on that front but that was what we were saying at the very beginning?

Senator K.L. Moore:

We did hear what you said, Chief Minister, thank you. Perhaps you could tell us more about the important business of the All-Party Parliamentary Group. I presume it is the one for the Channel Islands.

The Chief Minister:

It is the one for the Channel Islands attended by the Chief Minister of Guernsey, myself, I think representatives from the other islands and ordinarily we would be in London attending. I think it is their first virtual one and we are expecting a number of politicians, all of whom generally are friends with the Channel Islands, to be attending.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Jolly good. We will thank you for your time this afternoon. Perhaps next time we will police with greater rigour the length of your answers and those of your team but thank you all very much for your answers this afternoon and with that I will close the hearing. Thank you.

[17:15]