



Migration and Population Review Panel

Common Population Policy Review

Witness: Assistant Chief Minister

Thursday, 6th January 2022

Panel:

Senator S.W. Pallett (Chair)

Deputy S.M. Ahier of St. Helier

Deputy G.J. Truscott of St. Brelade

Witnesses:

Deputy R.E. Huelin of St. Peter, Assistant Chief Minister

Ms. S. Duhamel, Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance

Mr. N. Stocks, Senior Policy Officer 1

Ms. M. Clark, Senior Policy Officer 2

[12:58]

Senator S.W. Pallett (Chair):

Welcome anybody who is listening in to this Migration and Population Review Panel public hearing with the Assistant Chief Minister, Deputy Rowland Huelin. Good afternoon, Minister.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Good afternoon.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

If I could just give a brief introduction. Normal hearing standards apply today. The hearing is obviously going to be recorded and transcribed. If you wish to speak, can you indicate by using the chat function? Please speak in order and try not to interrupt. Please make sure you are on mute when you are not speaking and remember to come off mute when speaking. Please ensure clear

visual is available when speaking. Speakers will be shown on video. As normal, if we run out of time for all our questions, we would ask, Minister, if you could answer them in writing for publication on the panel's webpage. Finally, all speakers will need to introduce themselves in the usual way for the transcript. What we are going to do is we will start with the panel. I am the panel Chair, Senator Steve Pallett. If I can pass over to my colleagues.

Deputy S.M. Ahier of St. Helier:

Deputy Steve Ahier, member of the panel.

Deputy G.J. Truscott of St. Brelade:

Deputy Graham Truscott, member of the panel.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Over to your team, Minister.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes, myself, Deputy of St. Peter and Assistant Chief Minister. I am with ...

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

Sue Duhamel, Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance.

Senior Policy Officer 2:

Michelle Clark, Senior Policy Officer, Policy, Planning and Performance.

Senior Policy Officer 1:

Neil Stocks, Senior Policy Officer.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Thank you very much. I am going to start with the opening questions. In November 2020 the States Assembly approved Deputy Jess Perchard's amended proposition P.120, Migration and Population Data, which tasked the Council of Ministers with delivering a population policy for debate by 31st December 2021. It also committed the Council of Ministers with providing related relevant data and reviews to inform that debate. For the record, could you explain why the policy was not brought forward for debate within the timescale approved by the Assembly? Could you also clarify which of the paragraphs of Deputy Perchard's proposition have been met by this proposed Common Population Policy?

[13:00]

Assistant Chief Minister:

I think it is fair to say the timescale was always particularly tight and full endeavour was made to try and meet that. I think we had a logistical challenge that Deputy Perchard required us to bring it to the Assembly by the end of the calendar year and the final sitting was the Government Plan. I think with consultation with yourself, Senator, it was suggested that that would be too much on top of the Government Plan to have that meeting at the end of the year, to bring the population policy at the end of the year. It was a logistical scenario. We made every effort to lodge it by the end of the year and debate it as soon thereafter. We tabled it initially in time to meet 18th January but at your request we accepted your request to debate it on 8th February and we lodged it I think a good 8½, 9 weeks before the debate in order to give full clearance for Scrutiny, taking the Christmas holidays into consideration.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

So just the second part of that in terms of is your policy meeting all of the paragraphs of Deputy Perchard's proposition?

Assistant Chief Minister:

There were many paragraphs in the proposition that while we would say are well thought through and very good suggestions, they are not necessarily able to deliver on. One of the ones I believe is to have population targets. Through much consideration with myself, the team, Council of Ministers and beyond, including the in-committee debate if I recall when only 2 Members of the Assembly who spoke mentioned any number, it was perceived that having a number without the data would not be reasonable and fair. We have a history in the Assembly of pinning numbers. We have had numbers every 10 years, none of which of those targets have been achieved. Every one unfortunately has been exceeded and, therefore, we believe the approach is to go back to the absolute basics, the root challenge, and ensure that whenever a number comes out in the future it is based on data and evidence and facts.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay. The panel notes that you voted against P.120, the Migration and Population Data, and Deputy Perchard's associated amendment. Looking back now, would you still do the same?

Assistant Chief Minister:

What a very good question. I voted against the amendment?

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Yes.

Assistant Chief Minister:

The reason I voted against the amendment was not because of the principles of which Deputy Perchard was trying to achieve, which are worthy and honourable and to be accepted. It was the timescales that were involved and at the time we knew that the census was looming and we knew that the census data would not be available. Now, as you know through discussions, I have taken a slightly different view on census data as I have learnt during this process, but that was my reasoning for doing it. It was about timing and if you are going to do a job do it well and I did not want to be pushed into a corner of doing something quickly without the necessary outcomes. As I have said, I have slightly reviewed my thinking on that because I believe that this population policy is, shall we say, the starter for 10. It is not the final solution. It is something that will evolve over the years and so given that maybe I would have voted for it in the light of what I have learnt subsequently but at the time it was the right decision to vote against.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay. Just going on some of the comments you have just made, would it be fair to characterise this document, this policy as a precursor to a policy rather than an actual policy?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I think it is if you take it as a policy, as a stake in the ground, and what I do not want to see is something that gets done, gets delivered, gets debated, thank you very much, gets stuck in a cupboard and is forgotten about. That is really important, that it is something that it is the setup that evolves. So it is the starter for 10. It is a policy. Next year will be another policy or, sorry, will be a revision of the same policy and in 4 years' time, as you note, hopefully we will have the necessary knowledge, data and understanding to be able to put numbers and dates to it. So I see it as an evolution. I see it as a work in progress. You can use the semantics. Let us say it is a great start.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay. In the foreword to the policy you say that: "Getting population issues at the centre of government thinking is the only way we are going to resolve this knotty challenge." Has it actually been at the centre of Government's thinking?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Very much so. As you know, a lot of ministerial positions work in silos. This is something that has been a challenge for many years and we have worked incredibly hard in a series of workshops, one-on-one consultations with all the Ministers to ensure that they realise that the whole thing has to be in sync and joined up collectively because that is why it is a Common Population Policy. It is from the whole of the Council of Ministers. Yes, we have had to bring it together, there is no doubt about

it. We bring it together and the team has done a great job on that but, yes, we brought it to be the centre of thinking. We have had 2 workshops with the Council of Ministers, one at the outset when we started on this back in March - somebody will correct me - and we have had a follow-up I think in about October, about a month before lodging. We have had one-on-one sessions with all the Ministers in the middle to make sure that they understand their part and they understand how important it is that everybody is thinking on the same page.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Obviously you have had to pick up the reins from your predecessor in regard to bringing this policy forward, but why has it taken until the final few months of this Government's term of office for this policy to be lodged for debate? You have had 3½ years; why so far into the term?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Well, I think in fairness part of the question was answered in your question. We thought about this one yesterday and I received a full-time officer in March this year, or was it April? May this year, I am corrected. I took the reins up originally about 15 months ago. I have always described this as a meaty problem, in my ministerial report as a knotty problem, whichever one you want. It is a very complicated problem that the Island and my predecessors have been struggling with - and I understand why, by the way - for many years because it is on everybody's list. I make no bones about it. I have had to rack my brain around this and I think I now understand it, or I hope I understand it, and I think what we have produced is evidence of that. Not a simple task. We got there. We have got there, Steve. We have got there.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

You mentioned getting a full-time officer in May. Are you saying that it did not have a full-time officer prior to that? Was there lack of commitment from that perspective?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I think you will find that ... it is not for me to discuss the resourcing issues that go on but, as you know, people are pulled from pillar to post all over the place. I have to say I have had great support with bringing P.137, which is the precursor to the population policy and the associated legislation that is coming to your table soon.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay. Why do you feel that the policy became - and to quote the policy itself, it is on page 10 in the "First steps" - "inevitably limited in the scope of its ambition"? It is a quote that I think other people have brought up as well.

Assistant Chief Minister:

I would have loved to have sat down a year ago and been able to come up with something absolutely definitive that would keep the onlookers and observers totally happy. We have a situation, the results of the survey, which I am sure you have read through. I will paraphrase this and I make no offence to anybody who is listening to this if they think they are being pigeonholed in this. That is not my objective at all. But if you are over 50, born in Jersey and live out of St. Helier - I think to put it that way - then your goal, your response is to have zero net migration, zero inward migration. If you are under 50, or more under 40 actually, and you were not born in Jersey, you want more population because you want more business opportunities, more culture, more sport, more exciting things to do. Therefore, we have to work out those conflicts, so trying to work out that has been the challenge. Can I show you this? This is my well-thumbed piece of paper and people can watch this. We have 3 things to balance: our economy, our community and our environment. None is really more important than the other but all must be in sync with each other because without a thriving economy we cannot fund our community, the essential services that we have to deliver: social security, health services, education services. We have got to do all of that without destroying what we all love and cherish in this Island, which is our environment. Trying to get that balance right I feel it would be impossible and negligent of us a team to try and put anything more concrete without putting the foundations in place in order to make those informed decisions to ensure that we deliver on that harmoniously.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Following on from your use of the word “balance”, your foreword to the policy states there is no silver bullet and as a community we must confront these challenges together. What is the Government’s role in dealing with the challenges? How does this policy address them?

Assistant Chief Minister:

You make a very interesting point there, Senator. If we can go back to the statement I made beforehand - when I hate to use the word “pigeonhole” - we have got to all, the whole Island, engage. Now, the words in the Common Strategic Plan, which is really at the core of this particular policy are: “To progressively reduce Jersey’s reliance on net inward migration within the common agreed strategic policy.” So to progressively reduce Jersey’s reliance, that is what we can do and there is lots in there to do that and we can come back to it. However, unless the Island itself wishes to play their part in reducing our reliance then I am afraid this will never be successful. So this is a callout to ask for the Island to play their part, and I can expand.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

That is a really interesting point. You say the whole Island needs to engage but looking at 2 elements of that, what role do businesses have to play and what role do individuals have to play so it is widening that out?

[13:15]

Assistant Chief Minister:

Okay. I hope we are not going to get into the weeds too quickly but I am sure you have discussed and looked at the dependency ratio that ...

Senator S.W. Pallett:

We are going to bring that up later, yes.

Assistant Chief Minister:

I know you will be but I think it is relevant to this particular answer. The dependency ratio, as you know, for those listening is the numbers in the Island under 16 plus and over 65 who are “financially inactive” divided by those people in the working population. We have an ageing population that is growing. We cannot get rid of it; it is growing; it is there to stay. However, if we reduce the numbers of people who are active then the dependency ratio gets higher. Now, the only way that we can counteract that as opposed to it getting worse, which will be financially very bad for the Island, including huge increases in taxes, et cetera, which would not be palatable because that would create other problems, is to be more productive. We need to ensure businesses work far better, both existing businesses and existing industries work far better, be it through the adoption of technology, to increase that productivity and, alternatively, to encourage our entrepreneurs to diversify businesses to more productive businesses. So if we are looking at the financial aspects we want those people to be doing really, really well so they pay far more tax per person in order to fuel the bucket for the community. That is the essence of it. Also, do not forget, we cannot solely be relying on those people who are financially active because our society needs ... without a doubt we have to have those people who are not financially active but provide invaluable services to this Island to make our society go round. It is a very complicated subject.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Specifically, what do you want from each and every Islander, if I had to pin you down to one thing that you want them to give to support this population policy?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I think to start with, baby steps. To start with, acknowledge how complicated it is and I think acknowledge that it does not matter what Government do and however many times we have these

meetings, Steve, as we are joined up in trying to get this over the line together, which is really good news, just start thinking about how they can play their part. One of them is skills. We will talk about education later but we need to encourage an attitude of lifelong learning, so people are not just productive but productive in exciting, interesting things that they can do going forward, so changing careers, changing jobs, because it is a positive thing to do not because they are forced into doing it because of being made redundant because of change of business circumstances and then having to go and learn a new skill to get a new job in a panicked way. Just being more proactive and forward thinking.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Well, we are going to get into skills a little bit later on but I have asked my first 3 questions. I am going to hand over to Deputy Ahier who is going to ask the next question.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you, Chair. Assistant Chief Minister, who sets the vision of population stability referenced in your foreword in the last paragraph?

Assistant Chief Minister:

What were those words again, Steve?

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

The vision of population stability.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Sorry, I know what you mean now. We have had many debates internally on this one and it is a state of mind. I think our colleague Deputy Morel described it in the in-committee debate and it was a comment worth listening to. He said if we carry on growing, eventually we will all end up in the water. I am not sure it is exactly what he said but that is the point, is it not? We will just be 9 by 5 of concrete and end up in the water. So I have had that in the back of my mind. I am always happy to give praise to fellow Members of the Assembly when it is appropriate. I have had that in the back of mind that somewhere we must have our thinking to have net zero. We must have that stability. Now, having that as a vision today with dates on it is wholly irresponsible, we cannot get there, but our policies must be thinking about as a way forward, as a long-term utopian goal, I would say, but we must have that thinking in the back of the mind. That is my thinking.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you. The introduction to the policy states that: "The States Assembly has agreed that future Councils will be responsible for agreeing an updated population policy on an annual basis." Will this policy still require the approval of the States Assembly?

Assistant Chief Minister:

It has been part of the Government Plan so, yes, it will be included within the Government Plan.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you. There is an acknowledgement in the policy that: "... successive governments have failed to provide information on population issues that is accessible to the general public." Do you include the current Government in this assessment?

Assistant Chief Minister:

So we are talking about data now, are we?

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

About providing information. On page 42 in the report.

Assistant Chief Minister:

I think that is a bit of a harsh question, Deputy Ahier. What this Government have done is more to change the digital culture of government than any previous government. I will just use one example. Love it or loathe it, it is in the press, it is in the public domain, the I.T.S. (integrated technology solution) project. That is a wholesale change of the core I.T. (information technology) functions. That is not necessarily going to help population but what it does do is mean that we have current 2021 accounting systems, asset management systems, H.R. (human resources) systems and procurement systems, which are one integrated system. That change is absolutely huge. Why it has taken since 1987 is beyond me but that is what is being done now. We are introducing systems, which we will discuss later. I would say we are so far behind where we should be as a government but I would say what this Government have done in the last 3 years is quantum more than has been done in the past. We have righted the wrongs.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

What has been progressed by this Government in this regard to provide information and what specific actions are proposed to rectify this in the future?

Assistant Chief Minister:

One of the things we have got is the C.E.R., which is called the Combined Employer Return. What that means is that tax, social security and manpower returns will be given by the employers every

month collectively as opposed to separately every 6 months or a year. So that has been agreed and you will note that I brought something to the Assembly at the back end of the last year to confirm that. That means there will be one central system that collates all of that information. It is about common datasets that means the data is useable, so it will arrive together as a common dataset that can be analysed. That is what is being done and you know the system. You will probably want to talk about the system specifically in Control of Housing and Work Law, so I will not mention that, but that is 2 examples of data.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you. It is proposed that future Common Population Policy annual reports will be part of the Government Plan process. The Government Plan is necessarily a large and complex document. The most recent one ran to 360 pages. Please can you detail how the inclusion of the population reports will make this information more accessible and understandable to the public?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I am not going to say how we are going to write that yet. That is a brave call. What I will say is the rationale behind it, including the Government Plan, means that all Ministers are engaged in the delivery of it and that is important. So when the Council of Ministers is sitting down - and you know the process when they are submitting what they want to do next year financially - part of that will be how does that affect the population policy. It is changing the thinking behind the delivery of the Government Plan.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

But how do you envisage it being included in the process and in the documents?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Well, that is the process, Deputy Ahier. That is how it is included in the process: is it front and centre of the decision-making going up to the Government Plan and the debates on the Government Plan? How is it included? I would rather not comment. I would suggest it is going to be a summary section that will be bringing everything back towards the population policy.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you. Does including the policy in the Government Plan process risk it not receiving the level of attention that it deserves?

Assistant Chief Minister:

No, it is an integral part of the process. Who knows who it is going to be next year? It could be you, Deputy Ahier, but it is up to whoever it is, who is charged in my role in the next year, to bring the

focus to that. That is what I have done is every single time something comes up on population within the Council of Ministers and everybody else I banged my drum and said population must be included. That is the role the person who does this in the next government will have. I will be delighted to do a handover come June.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you, Assistant Chief Minister. I will pass over now to Deputy Truscott.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Thank you, Deputy Ahier. The lodging of amendments to the Control of Housing and Work Law has been delayed a number of times throughout 2021. What has caused the delays and are you confident that they will be lodged by 7th January 2022, which is effectively tomorrow?

Assistant Chief Minister:

We are going a bit off-piste, are we not, because this is supposed to be the population policy but we will happily move on to the Control of Housing and Work Law. I have got a final briefing after this meeting with the officers to go through the final stages of it and I am envisaging it will be lodged by end of next week. Are we thinking end of next week? As soon as possible. By the end of next week - I will make a commitment.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Effectively we are missing tomorrow's deadline that is being replaced ...

Assistant Chief Minister:

For which I apologise but we will be a week. It is like everything, it is a complicated piece of work and we have to get it right. I think we have gone 26 minutes without mentioning COVID. Sorry, I have to resorted to the weak excuse.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Given these delays and the very short period within which any scrutiny of these amendments will need to be conducted, can you provide an assurance to the States Members and the public that they will accurately reflect the decisions of the States Assembly in approving P.137/2020, Migration Control Policy?

Assistant Chief Minister:

That is the absolute intent. I have seen the versions of it and it will be included. It is going to be a very easy piece of work for you in Scrutiny.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

I am sure the panel and people listening are disappointed that we have missed the deadline, but moving on the policy references actions which are set out in the recently debated Government Plan and the draft Departmental Business Plan for 2022. Will the latter be available prior to the debate on this policy?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Excellent, and the timing on that as well if you could, please?

Assistant Chief Minister:

This month.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Right. Assistant Chief Minister, your introduction points to the need for a population policy to take account of Jersey's unique characteristics. How does the policy achieve that goal?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Also you will see in there the Island Identity Project is also very much then taken into consideration. I will just add that in as we have tried to extend that to include all the thoughts and passions that are one of the great joys of this Island.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Thank you, Assistant Chief Minister. I will hand you over to the Chair.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Thank you, Deputy. In the introduction to the policy it is stated that: "The Council of Ministers considers that the aim of its Common Population Policy should be to achieve a stable population position for Jersey, where reliance on inward migration has been significantly reduced in the longer term." What is your definition of a stable population for Jersey and what does this policy do to achieve that goal? Stable population is mentioned.

Assistant Chief Minister:

We are going back to my utopia now. A stable population is net zero. Now, one thing that will never change is our need for inward migration. There are skills that no matter how hard we try we will not develop locally and we will need to bring in and that is just a fact, but obviously we have to balance

those with those people that are leaving the Island. That is the utopia. In order to get there, as I said, we have to go back to the core principles of ensuring our local population has the right skills and the right basically attitudes and approach in order to ensure that we are, as far as possible, self-sufficient. That is the fundamental principle.

[13:30]

Senator S.W. Pallett:

But if you are saying the stable population, the utopia for that is net zero, is that not unachievable knowing the demographic issues we have got to face?

Assistant Chief Minister:

It is not achievable today with the data that I see, with the dependency ratios that we see, with the ageing population that we see, with our current business model. I have mentioned it in the past; the productivity in our finance sector for some reasons beyond our control has halved over the last 20 years. That is going in the wrong direction but that does not help the dependency ratio and it certainly does not help the finances in our working population. We need to change many, many core things, diversify our economy, increase the productivity in our finance sector in order to ensure that we are bringing in the tax income we need in order to ensure we can provide for the community, which is fundamentally all of us in the 49. It is our role to provide for that community.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

You have mentioned dependency ratio several times. The executive summary points to an increase in the ratio of the dependent population to those of working age over the next 50 years even with net migration of +700 per year. Does this policy endorse that figure as the likely scenario for that period of time despite the goal to reduce reliance on net migration?

Assistant Chief Minister:

It is purely modelling and what is important is to highlight the challenges that we have ahead. I think when we discuss it earlier, if you look on page 21, that particular chart that says if we are +700 we would still have a rising dependency ratio, call it whatever you want, it is damage limitation that we have to do or it could be a wake-up call as to how we have to change in order to do that. This is playing our part. I hope everybody in the Island realises that if we want a dependency ratio that is flat ... I do not know what the number is but it is far more than we have been letting in recently if we stay on the same business model that we have today.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Well, as you say it may well be a wake-up call but net migration growth forecasts used by the Government of Jersey vary between +700 to +1,000 per annum.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Correct. I have pointed that one out.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Absolutely. Could you explain the use of the different forecasts and how or whether this policy will ensure a consistent approach by future governments?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I pointed that one out. I cannot remember which page it is on. It is something that I saw and I cannot to hand. We are using different numbers all over the place, which is absolutely ludicrous. Different assumptions in the Island Plan, different assumptions in the hospital, different assumptions in social security. It is wrong. We have to bring that together and that is something that must be done as this evolves over the next couple of years so we have consistent ... I have been told it is page 14 if anybody wants a reference.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Going on with that, the first of the list of actions for Ministers in 2022 is to improve co-ordination between and within departments. How are you going to achieve that?

Assistant Chief Minister:

We have started the ball rolling with this policy. We are working with that on a day-to-day basis. We have not just lodged this and forgotten about it. That is one of the many activities that we are looking at going forward.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay. Well, given that forecasts are being developed, as noted in the policy, to inform projects as significant as the Bridging Island Plan and the Our Hospital project, and you have mentioned others there as well, what consideration was given to using these forecasts in lieu of the figures that will now not be produced until 2025 according to the policy?

Assistant Chief Minister:

My officers are going to laugh now. This is the time when I bring in my favourite quote that I have used in the Assembly on many occasions from the former C.E.O. (Chief Executive Officer) of Netscape. He says: "If we have data, let's look at the data. If all we have are opinions, let's just go with mine." I do not want to be in a situation where we are making decisions based on assumptions

and on opinions. I want to move culturally to a situation where we are making decisions based on data and facts and that is the premise of this, to put that foundation in place to do that.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

But would it not be better to use those assumptions, which are being used by the Government's departments, various government departments, while we are waiting for the data? Surely that would be a ... at least give the public some comfort that we are trying to achieve something.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes, we could do that. There is an old saying in the world of technology, "garbage in, garbage out", and I would love to make those assumptions but I would rather stand firm and say we are going to put - I am repeating myself - the foundations in place to make informed decision-making. That is the premise behind that. I am sorry, it is my background and that is where maybe I am a bit polarised and focused on it but I genuinely believe it.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay. We are going to carry on with the questioning on this and I am going to hand over to Deputy Ahier. Thank you.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you, Chair. Assistant Chief Minister, why does the policy propose to defer any decision on the point at which a stable population can be achieved until 2025? This is referenced in the penultimate paragraph of page 43.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Same answer. We have chosen 4 years. It is the same answer. In the middle of that there is an enormous number of actions that need to take place: the delivery of the I.T. systems that are in place, the legal structure that needs to be put in place for the Control of Housing and Work Law. I could continue. There is a lot of work to be done to do that. We are not just stopping. There is a lot of work to do that.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

What criteria do this Government envisage will be key to measuring whether a sustainable rate of population growth is being achieved?

Assistant Chief Minister:

When we achieve that. We cannot get there. What criteria? When we achieve that, absolutely. That is too far ahead, Deputy Ahier. Good question, love to be able to answer it - too far ahead.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Closer to home, which of the actions for 2022 detailed in the policy will be in place and completed prior to the end of this term of Government?

Assistant Chief Minister:

This term of Government? We will deliver the I.T. systems. The Control of Housing and Work Law I.T. systems will be delivered end of this quarter, April I believe. The data collection for the combined employer returns will be ready in time for this financial year, which is 15th February is when the first months come in and then have to be submitted. That is the data side of these things and we will have lodged and debated the primary law following up from P.137, so the Control of Housing and Work Law, the primary law. Secondary law unfortunately will be up to whoever takes over from me.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

The encouraging and enhancing productive activity within the resident population as referenced on page 54?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Sue, you have been very quiet and I know you are ...

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

Deputy, you asked about things that will be done by this Council of Ministers. The population plan is for a year, so it is the whole of 2022, so it is quite hard for us to say to you which ones will be done by June and which ones will be done after June. But the whole idea is that the whole of government is working on improving productivity, improving education, improving skills, and those are ongoing tasks. Each of those tasks individually helps us to reduce our reliance on inward migration. That is the whole point; they all come together. So there will be lots and lots of individual actions. There is a new skills strategy about to be published quite soon. There is a review of higher education funding coming soon. All these things will be part of that overall process.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

How many of the actions included in the policy were originally meant to be completed during this term of office that have subsequently been delayed?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Have we got a spreadsheet of that? I cannot say off the top of my head. We have not got that information. Is it possible that we can spend many hours putting a spreadsheet together for that? Currently we do not have that information to hand.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Are you able, for instance, to provide a timeframe for the register of property ownership and a full review of health and social care needs referenced in the policy?

Assistant Chief Minister:

The property ownership one is interesting because I wanted to have 2 stages of parts of this policy. One is ensuring that we table what the Government are doing to date; the skills programme, for sake of argument. Also I wanted to make sure there were things in there which would be carried on going forward, which were not necessarily fully budgeted for and delivered today but really are necessary for the future. So maybe handing over a bit of something to my successor. But I can say that the area of the property register for both landlords and tenants and the property register you are referring to the proposition that I brought to the Assembly and also Deputy Higgins brought to the Assembly. I was hoping that I would be able to say to you today that I have secured the funding for that and the staff to do that, the allocation to do that, to do the initial assessment of that. I would love to be able to say I can but I cannot, but I am hoping to have it by the end of the week, beginning of next week, because that is an essential project that we have to get underway. As a component part of the data, we need to have an informed population and population data.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you. I will pass over now to Deputy Truscott.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Thank you, Deputy Ahier. Apologies for the style, I have had to change laptops and I have not got a webcam facility on this one. In the section "Actions beyond 2022", areas that the new Council may wish to consider are outlined. These include establishing a full e-census programme and maintaining a focus on data collection and analysis. Why were these areas not developed in the term of the current Council of Ministers? You have had 4 years, 3½ years.

Assistant Chief Minister:

An e-census has got to follow on from the current census. That is the idea is to take the data we have got and allow it to evolve and so we cannot do that until the census has been finished. The other thing about data is we have had to change the culture of data within the Assembly. You have seen a lot of work that is going on around, let us say, the I.T.S. project. The challenge with the I.T.S. project, as you know, Deputy Truscott, you do not walk on with a bit of hardware in the cloud and a bit of software and say: "Off you go." Huge cultural changes are required in order to ensure that the implementations are successful. You also know from your experience one of the things you do not do is you do not implement a system that solely fits the needs of the users, because it becomes an

unsupportable and unsustainable system if you tailor it that much, so you have to change the working practices and law to fit within the system. This takes an enormous amount of time and an enormous amount of resource and as you know in the world at the moment where tech is absolutely exploding, resource is the challenge. I think to be honest with you the resource we have got and the resource we have made are fantastic but they do not grow on trees and, therefore, these things, sadly - and I am an impatient person having been in the tech industry for 30 years - sometimes they take time.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Yes, I agree, but to a degree it is about forward thinking and getting actions into place well ahead of time, but there we go. How does this policy commit future governments to develop the suggestions made in the policy into actions with tangible outcomes?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I am repeating, but that is the fundamental premise of what we ... early on, I do not know if I am sharing too many secrets here, I just said we are going to have to put some hooks into this particular policy to ensure that the future Council of Ministers take on those particular challenges and actions. That is one of the reasons why it is included within the Government Plan and one of the reasons why we put the 4 years in. Four years I have to accept it has got to be a bit random. It could have been 3, could have been 5, but it works with the government cycle so make it 4 years in the Government Plan to ensure there is a commitment made by this Assembly - hopefully this is accepted by the Assembly - that that will be delivered on in 4 years' time. The focus is to ensure the systems are in place, the work has been done, the other platforms are put in place to ensure that that magic number and that magic date can be realised from a position of knowledge and strength and not finger in the air.

[13:45]

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

No, that is fine. It is stated on page 10 that the policy is based on 2 clear principles. The first is that the Government will take action to reduce the need to grow the population further whenever this is feasible while the second states that at various times this principle to reduce net inward migration may need to be paused or reversed. How do these statements work together in practice to commit future governments to achieving the aim of reducing reliance on net inward migration?

Assistant Chief Minister:

One is after the other, is it not? The first 3 or 4 words of the second paragraph is the long-term aim is to get into a situation where we have that under control. The short term is obviously, I have mentioned it, we need ... unfortunately the world has become more skills orientated. Every single

person who does a job anywhere is more skills orientated. I was talking to a farmer in my parish and his biggest challenge at the moment is that he cannot do his annual tree maintenance because none of the new staff he has coming from, I think, the Philippines have a licence to operate a chainsaw, so he cannot do that work. It is the first example that came to my mind of every job requires more skills, therefore we need those skills and we are going to have skills coming in to do the skills transfer to our existing population. We have also got to train up our existing population. So one is the short term, we are going to be reliant on them. We always will be but we want to reduce that reliance. That is the goal. The long-term aim is obviously to be self-sufficient, which is utopia but net zero is a fair long-term goal.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

I think there is an analogy used, and I used it in the debate, and it is one that a dripping tap will eventually fill the bath. It is very similar to Deputy Huelin's reference as well.

Assistant Chief Minister:

You are thinking Deputy Morel, it will eventually fill up, yes.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

The section on population growth in the policy, which contains a number of different scenarios, references the impact on the dependency ratio of the return of people at the retirement age who have maintained their right to live in Jersey. Do the Government have any figures which suggest likely trends and projections for these returnees?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Are you talking about our diaspora, the 18,000 to 20,000? We do not have any data. Can you remind me of the question? I am not sure I am answering it correctly, Deputy Truscott.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

I will repeat the question. The section on population growth in the policy, which contains a number of different scenarios, references the impact on the dependency ratio of the return of people at the retirement age who have maintained their right to live in Jersey. Do the Government have any figures which suggest likely trends and projections for these returnees?

Assistant Chief Minister:

No. Unfortunately I am one of those. Send me back to England if you wish but I am one of those that retired over here and I am random. I am a random number. It is not predictable and I do not know how we ever would. It is used to highlight the way that we cannot control our borders as other countries can because obviously we have got ... anybody from the common travel area can arrive

here and obviously those 20,000, 18,000 or whatever they are can return whenever they feel like and take up full residency.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Okay, but we have no figures?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Sadly, no.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Thank you, Deputy Huelin. I will hand you over to Senator Pallett.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

I just want to go back on a couple of points. In regard to your 2 clear principles, if your second clear principle is to pause or even reverse a policy, is that not counterproductive? Is that not literally giving the Government a “get out of jail free” card if they do not like the direction it is going in?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I am trying to understand, Senator Pallett, what is behind the question.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Each of those principles, one potentially could work against the other.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes, but if you put a timeline behind it they do not. Okay, I am being told to have a time out by Sue Duhamel.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

You can give us that answer maybe in writing if it is easier.

Assistant Chief Minister:

I know the answer. Sue would like to take over from me for a second.

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

I would just like to explain why the Minister included that second paragraph. The point is about maintaining the long-term aims and it was almost the reverse of the “get out of jail free” card. It was saying: “Future Councils of Ministers, do not think that you can kind of abandon this population policy because something short term has come up and you can now forget about it.” It says: “There might

be some short-term things that come up from time to time but, hang on a minute, you have still got to keep going with the long-term aim.” So it is the other way. It is trying to say: “There will be bumps and jolts along the road but you have got to keep that long-term aim going, so even if you have to put it aside for a couple of years while there is some terrible recession or something or some natural disaster, you have got to come back to it.” So it is saying come back to it, keep on coming back to it, keep it there in the background and come back to it as soon as you can. You can only divert from it for short-term periods. That is what it is trying to say. It is not trying to say: “You can have an excuse whenever you fancy.” It is trying to say: “There may be reasons when you cannot do it one year or another year but you have to keep back to that track, keep back to that north star” or whatever you want to call it.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes, very well put.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

But there still has to be a judgment call about what is serious enough to either pause or reverse and that is the point I am trying to make.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Sorry, I apologise, brain freeze quite clearly. Lessons learnt, COVID, Brexit, beyond our control, would have to be a change on that and we do not know the outcome of Brexit and COVID on our population, our society.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

I was also curious when you mentioned it was too early to measure the criteria for measuring the sustainable rate of population growth. You said it was too early. On page 35 of the policy during the public survey results there is a whole list of things that the public have put down here, like affordable housing, good educational opportunities, diverse job market, low crime, retaining Island identity. Are they not the criteria that you would use for measuring a sustainable rate of population growth?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Absolutely. This is not about the short-term housing challenge but this is making sure that we have got the building blocks in place to have a balanced supply and demand of housing to meet the needs of our population. That is an example of it.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

I think the public have been quite clear about the things they think it should be, the things that are important to them. I think they were just making the point that ...

Assistant Chief Minister:

No, fine, it is a good point, a point well made. They are subjective not objective targets, which need to be quantified. You are absolutely right, they need to be quantifiable.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Moving on to consultation, what future consultation would you expect to take place in refinement of the next policy, next year's refresh?

Assistant Chief Minister:

We have not thought that one through because I think we need lessons learnt from this so far. However, I do not think the Island necessarily wants to go round again. I do not think all of Jersey business want to come and knock on my door in a formal way. As one of the things, I made it very clear that if anybody contacted me, and still can, at population.gov.je I will speak. I had many one-on-one interviews with individuals with no specific reason. They just wanted to talk and share their views. The door is open. During the course of this process I have made very strong relationships with people in business, charities, et cetera, which I hope if they are listening they can always come and say: "Stuff has changed and you need to be aware of it. We are concerned about this." This is what we are learning and feeding into it. Hopefully they will all play their part in taking part in the new Control of Housing and Work Law system, embrace it quickly. I am sure they will. We are working to make sure that they have every opportunity to do that. If it is an ongoing situation. What specific actions we have for post debate in order to maintain, I do not know. There was one thing we wanted to do that we did not do, which was working with the focus group company, and that was to have an online forum for younger people, 30 to 18 and maybe the young as well. It is a different style and we did not have time to fit it in, but it is a different style of consultation which I will be very, very keen to pursue, so maybe that is something we could do that we did not do before.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay, but at the current moment in time there is nothing formal planned?

Assistant Chief Minister:

No, there is nothing specifically. There is no schedule there. It is delivering on actions that we have been talking about.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

It appears the younger participants in the focus groups felt that more should be done to ensure Jersey is a welcoming place. Does the proposed policy address the tension between providing a welcome to workers and new residents and aiming to reduce the reliance on inward migration?

Assistant Chief Minister:

That is a good question. Welcome to workers, welcome to the workplace from school or welcome to our migrants coming into the Island?

Senator S.W. Pallett:

This is more about people I think that come into the Island to work.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes. It is a personal bugbear and I think: have we been good historically over the years of being welcoming?

Senator S.W. Pallett:

But does this policy help to improve that situation?

Assistant Chief Minister:

No, I have got ideas on that and I am going to take that as a very valid takeaway moving forward to the next one, if we can note that. But the answer is, no, there is nothing in there. I do not remember having a conversation or writing anything about that, no.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay. Well, I will move on.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Hold on, sorry. Neil Stocks has got an idea.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay, good.

Senior Policy Officer 1:

Yes, Senator, where that does come into it is part of the getting better data and information out to the public is to make everyone in Jersey aware of how important migrants are to the Island and have been throughout history. Education and skills are absolutely a fundamental part of the policy, especially in relation to making the most of the resident population. But there will always be times when the skills and labour gaps that cannot be met by the resident population and, therefore,

migrants will feel more welcome if people in the Island understand how important they are because they are fulfilling gaps and skills that cannot be filled by the Island.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Good point, very good point, thank you.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay, thank you. It is indicated in the policy that a sudden reduction in the workforce, due to limited inward migration, would lead to a drop in government revenue and, consequently, an increase in taxes or potential taxes or reduction in services.” How would you propose that future governments provide the necessary transparency to justify increased tax revenues in the future?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I think this is a point that has been made to say this is a beware comment, just to say this is the consequences if we get it wrong; that is all that is there to say. Clearly, if the situation arises where the dependency ratio is poor, productivity is poor, that taxes have to go up, that is a challenge on the communications and how transparent that is for future governments. This is purely to say this is a potential consequence, beware.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Again, it comes out of the document, would you accept that some of the focus groups or participants in the focus groups stated they would be willing to pay more taxes if they knew where the money was being spent? Would you agree with that, accept that?

[14:00]

Assistant Chief Minister:

I think that is a very fair observation from anybody in the Island and I would hope for that as well, yes.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay. Again, it is my time to hand back over to Deputy Ahier.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you, Chair. Carrying on with the consultation, participants were asked during the consultation how future governments should measure the success of a population policy. While it is recognised that the question focused on the action of future governments, please can you outline which of the criteria the current Government is able to measure?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Where is that one? I just cannot find the page. It is 35, is it? From what I recall ...

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

He is asking which are the ones people are asking that we can do now.

Assistant Chief Minister:

I think as a result of the survey we had 1,700 responses of which ... somebody told me that it was way 500, 600, 700 people entered into the free text that was all read and analysed. There is an enormous amount there that we are sort of breaking down for you in order to summarise into a bite-sized chunk. I will just give you some context as to the challenge and the work that went in to try and understand that. Now I am going to have to remember: you are asking which of those we can measure?

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Yes, that you are able to measure now.

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

We have statistics on most of them but they do not hang together properly yet.

Assistant Chief Minister:

I think that is fair. It is quite a difficult specific question in order to give you a specific answer when there is a lot of stuff here. Give me an example of a couple of them and I will try and answer.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

No, if you could supply the figures of those that you are able to measure to the panel that would be useful.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Sorry to interrupt you there, rude of me. I think the answer is you measure them but what you need to do is measure them collectively and what the overall impact is. I am trying to get away from saying, yes, we need to know the individual components but what we need to do is to understand the sum of the parts. That is the culture I am thinking of.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Which of the actions in this policy commits future governments to establishing a baseline for these criteria?

Assistant Chief Minister:

This is part of the ongoing process. This is part of the ongoing process.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Is this Government going to provide baselines before the end of its term of office?

Assistant Chief Minister:

The answer to that is no. This is the start and this is really beneficial because you are bringing stuff that we need to be thinking of going forward. But we are not going to get the baselines, if I understand the question correctly, until such time as we have done a load of other work, which is called getting the data, the systems and the processes under control so we can have answers to those questions.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

What actions are outlined in the policy to address Jersey's residential housing crisis in the context of the desire to find a stable population level?

Assistant Chief Minister:

This is not about today. To be absolutely clear, this is not about today. This is a policy for the future to put the building blocks in place so that we do not have a housing crisis in the future because we have managed supply and demand properly.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

What review has been undertaken to ascertain the current impact of the high cost of renting and property purchase upon population levels? This is young people of working age leaving the Island or not coming to work here because they see housing costs as a barrier to living here.

Assistant Chief Minister:

This was a very clear message that came through from the consultations we have done, absolutely clear. But, as I said, this is a population policy for the future, so put the building blocks in place to deliver on that, to make sure we have that balance; that is the goal. You will be talking to the Minister for Housing and Communities because that is his challenge as a short-term role; mine is looking at the long-term future.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

No review will be undertaken?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Not by me, not within the population policy. You can talk to the Minister for Housing and Communities about what he is doing on this particular subject.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Absolutely. Thank you. I will now pass over to Deputy Truscott.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Thank you, and we are under the business heading. The policy states that there has been a downward trend in net migration since 2015 and that this is: "... evidence that existing measures are helping to reduce the demand for inward migration." What are these measures and how do they relate to the current Control of Housing and Work Law?

Assistant Chief Minister:

That is the Control of Housing and Work Law working.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Yes, and the measures that you have implemented to link that ...

Assistant Chief Minister:

This is the current Housing and Work Law is working. What we are doing is the amendments to the Control of Housing and Work Law primary legislation coming to be lodged by the end of next week, as previously committed, and also that P.137, the Control of Housing and Work Law debate that we had, which talks about the various levers that we are hoping, with the support of the Assembly, to have in legislation in the next term.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Are you confident that the changes that are being brought to the law in the near future will further enhance this downward trend without damaging any industries?

Assistant Chief Minister:

The levers are there to respond to the needs of the Island; it is the cart and the horse. We want to be in a situation where we clearly understand the skills shortages that we have in the Island, so, therefore, the Control of Housing and Work Law levers can be turned on or off to allow those skills in, both a specific skill and the volume of those skills that are required, so it is the cart and the horse. No, it is not cart and the horse; it is one has got to follow the other. We have to understand what is needed and then the Control of Housing Work Law enables that to be delivered on.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Have market forces had a role to play in this downward trend, rather than existing measures?

Assistant Chief Minister:

That is a pretty chunky question that really, is it not? The answer has got to be yes because we live in a world of supply and demand.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Yes, and the pandemic and Brexit comes ...

Assistant Chief Minister:

That is one of the reasons that I have been pushing for near real-time data, is because we have no idea, we cannot make decisions based on trends that are happening within the last ... we have to be making decisions within a month of them happening, as opposed to waiting years until the data comes through; the ship is gone by then. Neil would like to add something.

Senior Policy Officer 1:

Thank you, Assistant Chief Minister. It was just to say that when we looked at the Control of Housing and Work Law as it exists presently, there has been a reduction in the workforce through the Control of Housing and Work Law in areas where the Control of Housing and Work Law can control people coming into the Island, for instance, the number of registered people that are able to work here and the number of licensed people that are able to work here. Where the Control of Housing and Work Law does not influence the population is the permanent population because of the automatic graduation that currently takes place. That was highlighted in P.137, the migration controls. The Assembly have agreed to take that forward to introduce a number of time-limited commissions and to remove the automatic graduation and those will be coming forward in the Control of Housing and Work Law amendments imminently.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Sue, would you like to follow on?

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

Just to add on, rather than the point about controls, which Neil has just explained, something else you can see, those statistics for the last 5 years is the reduction in the number of agricultural people coming into the Island and that is due to farmers picking up more technology, using more machines basically to take on some of the tasks that were done by hand previously. People asked before about the role of businesses. One really important role of businesses is to use modern technology to reduce the need particularly for repetitive jobs, which are often low skilled and low waged, and to

pick up new technologies, for example Premier Inn with automatic check-ins, the farmers using much more machinery within their packing stations and stuff like that. There are many areas in which local businesses are already helping to reduce the need for inward migration by picking up on modern technologies. That is really important and something the Government will encourage because it is something businesses have to do for themselves as well.

Assistant Chief Minister:

We can add remote working to that as well.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Yes. My final question in this section is the recruitment difficulties being faced by businesses across a range of sectors, from hospitality to finance, are discussed in the policy. In the context of migration control, how does this policy seek to address these difficulties in the shorter term?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Did you say recruitment are or are not addressed in this policy?

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

They are being addressed, yes.

Assistant Chief Minister:

They are.

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

As the short term, long term.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

They are discussed in this policy.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes, this is a short-term, long-term question, is it not? This is about the long term, the policy is about the long term.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

It is the shorter term, a lot of local businesses where they are basically trying to fill vacant positions with no one there to fill them.

Assistant Chief Minister:

I am not trying to dismiss the importance of it and the strain that is on local businesses. I am trying to keep on message to the fact that this a Common Population Policy for the future. While I care as a Member of the Assembly, it is not my specific role and responsibility of the population policy to address those short-term issues. We can go off-piste and I can share what I think but that is not my role in this population policy.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Just following on my question line, could prioritisation of certain sectors be needed and we concentrate on hospitality, for example?

Assistant Chief Minister:

That is what we are going to end up with, with the population policy. That is where we need to be so we can make those decisions. Some people come to us and are being quite brutal and saying some businesses really are hanging on by their fingertips and we should let them go. That is not my call or my decision whatsoever to do that but that is what a lot of people are saying, that we should be allowing a natural ... this is a harsh one but that is what people are coming to us and saying. I do not necessarily agree with that. However, what I want to do is to be able to have a policy and data in place to make informed decisions of that.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Thank you.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Sorry, Deputy Truscott.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

I was going to go on to my next question but I just heard somebody murmuring in the background there but ...

Assistant Chief Minister:

I apologise. It makes it quite difficult online.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

No, I fully understand. Moving on to the next question, how will the Government of Jersey seek to solve its own recruitment and retention challenges, particularly in the areas where there is a shortage of qualified staff on the Island, such as within social care and mental health sectors?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Again, that is not my role within the population policy to deliver. It is not my role to comment on that in this particular forum, this particular agenda. That is the role of other Ministers who are looking at here and now.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Okay, thank you. I will hand you over to Senator Pallett.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Just one last one on the Control of Housing and Work Law amendments. To ensure that we are not going to exacerbate the impact of the pandemic or Brexit, are you going to carry out any further consultation with businesses before you implement any of the amendments with the Control of Housing and Work Law?

Assistant Chief Minister:

We have a 2-stage here and I think it is important that primary legislation, by the way, does not include the numbers that we are talking about. In the Control of Housing and Work Law, P.137, we discussed 9 months, 4 years, 10 years, okay. The primary legislation coming is the overriding legislation that enables the secondary legislation to have those numbers included and be much more flexible for change of those numbers, as demand changes and as businesses advise us on what they need.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

You will be consulting businesses.

Assistant Chief Minister:

I have got the feedback. Again, it is not relevant for this specific policy but the feedback is coming that, yes, we need to do more. I think that is all I can say at this particular stage. I do not want to go down the route of any specific examples but we do need to do more.

[14:15]

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay. The population policy does mention productivity in various parts of the policy. Have Government carried out any reviews into productivity industry by industry?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes, there is a PwC report on that, I believe, which we commissioned. I think what is really important to understand, I am going to give you a headline from PwC, which is it estimates that by 2035, which

is not that far away, that 30 per cent, 35 per cent of jobs as we know them today will be replaced by robotics, A.I. (artificial intelligence) technology, call it whatever you want. I think, subsequently, PwC have revised that saying it is worse, i.e. it is closer and it is more. We have to be aware of that; that is a beware and a red flag up there that we have to be aware of it. I would see that as a great opportunity because if we are prepared for it and we go back to my going back to skills, lifelong learning and change, if people adapt for that change and recognise which roles will no longer be directly applicable because of technology and can reskill, repurpose themselves positively - by the way I have to stress positively; we do not want to be forcing people out of one job into another, it has to be positively - then we have an opportunity. If we hang around and do nothing and wait for that to happen - because do not forget we see how overall business is going to look at the huge financial attraction of using technology, get huge service delivery capabilities of using technology and will do it very, very quickly - we do not then want to have a large number of people, and I can say, knocking on the Minister for Social Security's door. We do not want to have that. If we are prepared for it, it becomes an opportunity for which we will thrive. If we ignore it, it becomes a disaster.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Timing is key with many things. Is it the intention of Government to launch a new productivity support scheme before the end of this political term?

Assistant Chief Minister:

You will have to ask Senator Farnham on that one. He has launched one; I do not know what his plans are for another one.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

It is in the actions for 2022. I would have thought you would ...

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes, sorry, I missed that. Then, yes, I apologise if I cannot memorise everything that is in that but, yes, if it is in there it is. I assume that is an input from Senator Farnham then.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Is this by the end of this political term or by the end of 2022?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I cannot believe it is this political term. It has got to be 2022.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay. The future economy framework, will that be delivered by the end of the political term or by the end of 2022?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes, yes, political term.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

We will have a future economy framework by the time this Government leaves office?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay, then it is over to Deputy Ahier, who is going to ask some questions on education and skills.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you, Chair. Please, can you fully explain what is meant by people over 65 becoming a bigger part of the economy?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I mentioned this somewhere else and I did not get my message over as clearly as I would have liked to. It comes from a poor education, Deputy Ahier. The trend is many of us, because of the wonderful changes in healthcare, are fitter and healthier for longer. The suggestion is to, I think, allow or not block or encourage those people to continue to contribute to all 3 of those basically for longer. I think the idea of at a certain age you retire and on a Friday and a Monday you sit at home and start gardening is really quite dated and worrying. All that is in there is just to sort of keep people going and keep people active, keep people involved, keep people engaged, there is so much value. Look at us, we are approximately the same age. You never know, we might have another 4 years in this job and why not? I am not encouraging everybody who retires to stand for the Assembly, why not? But I am just saying there are many roles they can do, great skills that they can do and partake of our Island life and community; that is all that is there for.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you. The results of the government survey and focus groups, which form the population consultation, suggest that Islanders recognise a need to focus on education, skills, lifelong learning and retaining skilled individuals. The action outlined in the policy refer, in the most part, to ongoing projects and schemes. What additional new actions are detailed in this policy?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I think the Minister for Children and Education has done a great job with the work that he is doing at the moment, but you can take the horse to water. This is a call out to the Island to embrace the work he is doing. I believe, for the sake of argument, Digital Jersey had a call ... they offered free coding courses during COVID and the uptake on them was absolutely huge. We are talking hundreds of people were prepared to go out and learn a new skill; that is a great start. We just hope that that extends further along; that is just an example of the lifelong learning. I am on my fourth career, each one is a new challenge and each one involves getting out of your comfort zone. I think we just need to encourage that, help it. This is long term; put the measures in place to persuade people, make it easy for them to do that because the world is changing so fast with technology we must play our part if we are going to survive and thrive as an Island and go back to our fantastic entrepreneurial roots that have been the wonder of Jersey for generations. We need to get that back again. We need to get that back again.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you. One of the suggestions appears to be a revived apprenticeship scheme. Please detail how this will differ from the tracker scheme that was launched in the wake of rising unemployment figures in 2011 and 2012 with the same aim in mind to recruit and train local people in vocations and trades?

Assistant Chief Minister:

That is a Minister for Children and Education question. All I can talk about is why it is important going forward that we have this culture, that these very good initiatives the Minister for Children and Education is working on are supported and delivered on.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you. The policy identifies a need to upskill and provide further training to Islanders and highlights that those with lower levels of education tend to have low employment rates of older ages. How do this Government suggest that older people be encouraged to take part in training and work for longer? This is on page 49.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes. No, it is the same thing. A lot of this is philosophical stuff going forward because it has to be at this particular stage. When you say how does the Government? The Government is sitting here in a public forum broadcasting the fact that this is the population policy for the whole Island and asking for their contribution, and going forward, ask the questions: "Me, how do I do that?" How do we change that fundamental culture of lifelong learning going forward? That is what the Government are doing, are broadcasting it today.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Thank you, Assistant Chief Minister. I will pass over to the Chair.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Thank you, Deputy. The panel acknowledges the need for actuarial reviews to take place. However, does the Assistant Chief Minister consider that a raise to the current pension age would be acceptable to the public?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Going back to the social security question, is it not, as to the ... just give me a quick start on that one because I think I know where I want to go but you can answer the facts, Sue.

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

Somebody suggested, I think in 2011, to increase the pension age from 65 to 67, which is happening at the minute and that will run through until 2032. Many other countries around the world have increased pension ages on the grounds that older people are significantly healthier than they used to be and the jobs are much less manually-based than they used to be. They still have the energy and the ability to do their job during their 60s. It is one of the things that we asked in the public consultation. We did not get a significantly positive response from members of the public when asked rather straightforward just out of the blue kind: would you work longer? However, this is absolutely what this conversation is about. This is for the future for the next Council of Ministers to consider for people to have a public discussion about it. If we all worked a few years longer we could reduce the number of people who need to come to our Island. Is that one of the balances? The Minister uses the diagram of balancing everything together. Is that one of the balances we are prepared to make? That may well be something that people will be quite happy to do if it reduces the need for extra people coming into the Island. We talked again before about people, businesses and Government all playing their parts. That is the part that people can play by choosing to work longer, choosing to remain active, even if they are not working in a waged job, to work voluntarily in the community. All these things help us reduce the number of extra people we need to bring in. The concept of a pension age increase is absolutely one to be discussed. There are no decisions made at all at the minute. A review is going to happen this year, so that will give you the data upon which you could work out what the impact would be of doing it.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

That is very much something that you are going to be asking the public to consider in future years.

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

It might be.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

I use the word “consider”.

Assistant Chief Minister:

My take on this is I do not think it is the right approach to encourage and parenthesise people to work longer by putting up the pension age. I think the approach is to encourage people to carry on working should they wish to and should they find fulfilment and have an active role that they can play. I think there is going to be a trend going forward. I am seeing it with my generation of people who are retiring around me and I hope they are listening - because I can get a dig in - because their brains are slowing down and I think because they are not active enough physically and ...

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay, so more carrot and less stick.

Assistant Chief Minister:

I would say all carrot personally, but that would be my view. But that is consultation and not my call.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay. You refer in your introduction to a third of jobs that exist today potentially being lost to automation by 2035 and to many young people not seeing a long-term future in the Island. How are these statements evidenced in the policy?

Assistant Chief Minister:

It is referred to documentation that must be in here. It must be linked to it because it is referred to as evidence from the PwC report.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay. Could you provide that for us because we could not find that?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes, of course. If it is not there, I am sorry it is an oversight but it certainly should be. Yes, you will get that PwC report.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay. Before I hand over to Deputy Truscott, a review of student finance is underway. What options are being explored for a funding model that would encourage graduates to return to the Island?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Again, that is the Minister for Children and Education.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay. I am going to have to do some questions for the Minister for Children and Education I think.

Assistant Chief Minister:

He is looking forward to them.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay. I will hand over to Deputy Truscott who has got a few final questions.

Assistant Chief Minister:

That is fine, thank you.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

It is our favourite subject, Deputy Huelin, data. A number of data and I.T. systems and enhancements are mentioned in the policy and have been recognised for some time as integral to providing the necessary data to inform a robust and meaningful population policy. Please provide the deadlines now given for each of these systems to be online and producing the data needed.

Assistant Chief Minister:

I think we are being specific about the combined employer returns in system number 1; that is the collection of data from employers on tax, social security and manpower. That will be ready-to-collect data because I think there is a time lag of 2 weeks between the periods and when they have to arrive, so that will be ready for 15th February. The Control of Housing and Work Law system, which is, effectively, the self-service system that enables employers to apply for licences, apply to change licences or also give notification of licences or workers no longer needing a licence, the self-service aspect of that, will be by the end of the second quarter, by the end of June.

[14:30]

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Okay. The timeline has slipped because during a public hearing with you in February 2021 this panel was informed that the I.T. system being commissioned at Customer and Local Services would be up and running by the end of 2021 and producing data.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Can I hand over to Neil Stocks for that one?

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Just to finish, although the benefit was unlikely to be seen until 2022, in fairness to you.

Assistant Chief Minister:

It was slightly off kilter there. I hear your question and I see where it is coming from. Neil, I will let you answer.

Senior Policy Officer 1:

Yes, thank you, Assistant Chief Minister. Some of the feedback that we had from businesses, as part of the consultation process into the I.T. system, was that clearly with COVID and Brexit going on at the moment they would not welcome a new system being introduced just now. That has been taken on board and that is partly the reason why that is now aiming to be in Q2, rather than at the end of Q1.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Okay. Thank you, Neil. Chair, it is just after 2.30 p.m., do you want me to continue or would you like to wrap up?

Senator S.W. Pallett:

I would just ask the Assistant Chief Minister, have you got 10 minutes you can spare us?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Of course.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Thank you. I think we can be done in 10 minutes, so if you could carry on, Deputy Truscott.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Absolutely. How has the new Revenue Jersey combined employer return been linked to the new I.T. system and what are the benefits? I was going to say will the new data collection provide a defined number of workers on the Island as well as the number of jobs?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Question 1: how is it linked? It is all on one workflow. I will share this with you because you are not going to need much of it from there but I will just share it with you, Deputy Truscott, because it will be self-sufficient. The answer is they are integrated.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Okay.

Assistant Chief Minister:

The second question, sorry, I did not ...

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Will the data collection provide a defined number of workers on the Island, as well as the number of jobs? I presume it would, specific data.

Assistant Chief Minister:

It is in our data, the answer is, yes, that is the purpose of it.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Okay. Our final question, the panel acknowledges that the census 2022 is being analysed by Statistics Jersey, which is a body independent of government. What timeframe has been given by Statistics Jersey for the publication of results and have the preliminary findings been requested to assist the Government, States Members and Scrutiny ahead of the February debate?

Assistant Chief Minister:

The answer to that is we have been told a period of time in March is when we get the headline figure, which we know what that means, whatever that is. Obviously they are beyond political interference, so we can ask and we can be ignored but it will be delivered in chapters thereafter. For the sake of argument, one of the chapters I am specifically looking forward to is home occupancy. There are many others there that will be delivered, ongoing iterations forward. I have asked the question of when those chapters will be delivered, is the best way of describing them, but I am yet to get an answer.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

Okay. I look forward to that because obviously going forward with a debate and an informed debate it would be useful to have some meaningful information from the census. Thank you for that and I will hand you over to Senator Pallett again. Thank you.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

I mentioned it previously and I do understand obviously you had to get the census out of the way, but is there a timeline for establishing a full e-census programme?

Assistant Chief Minister:

No. It is a big project. The answer is no.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay.

Assistant Chief Minister:

That is handing the baton on.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay, so this is one for the next government.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay. The policy includes a suggestion of developing and introducing a robust and secure digital I.D. (identification) system, I thought you had probably guessed we were going to mention that at some point. How will this differ from the systems already in place, which are YOTI and Digital Me?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Not prepared for that one. Take it, Sue, please, if you may.

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

As you say, the Government do use a couple of digital I.D. products at the minute. We do not control this project, it is a project controlled by the central M. and D. (Modernisation and Digital) Department. We are waiting basically for their signoff that they have established basically a secure and robust product, upon which time we are very keen to use digital I.D. for the C.H.W.L. (Control of Housing and Work Law) system because it will be much easier for people to use in the future. But there is no point in doing it until we are confident that the product that we use will be one that will be long-lasting. We are just waiting basically for the Government as a whole to agree a firm and robust solution.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay, thank you. The executive summary of the policy references the creation of a data warehouse that will be able to provide valuable information on overall population terms. Have you got a deadline for that project or a timeline for that project?

Assistant Chief Minister:

The answer to that is no. Data warehouses are very complicated things to get together. The trouble with getting data together is it is not that easy. I am not technical but in order to get data into a data warehouse they have to come from common datasets, which basically, in simple terms, they have to be compatible. If they have got to build a data warehouse it is dependent on where the data comes from and the format that data is in. This is something that has to be front and centre of the thinking of not the population policy but the Government of Jersey's thinking is to have a central data warehouse where everything is at your fingertips. Big project, visionary; it has started but visionary. Bring it back up again next time, do not let it drop. It is very important.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

We will not because it is the first time I have heard the phrase data warehouse used in a government document. It certainly got our ears pricking and I think something that others will have picked up as well. We will pick that up in our future meeting.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Please do.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay, that has concluded our questions, which I am surprised we have got through but I am pleased we have. Thank you for staying on a few minutes over time, it is much appreciated. I thank you and your officers for providing the answers that you have. If we do think of anything else then we will obviously be in touch.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Of course.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

We will carry on with the review and start to pick up our public hearings with our stakeholders. But we appreciate your time this afternoon and I call the public hearing to a close.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Thank you all very much as well for partaking. We are doing this together. It is in the best interest of the Island and I really enjoy working closely with your panel. It is really very good news, so thank you all.

Senator S.W. Pallett:

Okay, that is much appreciated. Okay, so I call the meeting to a close and we will sign off. I thank those that have been listening as well.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes, thank you all.

[14:38]