

STATES OF JERSEY

OFFICIAL REPORT

THURSDAY, 25th JANUARY 2024

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[9:30]

The Roll was called and the Greffier of the States led the Assembly in Prayer.

APPOINTMENT OF MINISTERS, COMMITTEES AND PANELS

1. Selection of Chief Minister designate

The Bailiff:

Before we commence the process for the appointment of a new Chief Minister designate, I would like to address comments which have been made by some Members and in the media about the timescale for the submission of nominations to the Greffier after the vote of no confidence was adopted last Tuesday. As Members are well aware, this is the first time a vote of no confidence in a Chief Minister has been carried and therefore the first time the Standing Orders relating to the appointment of the new Chief Minister outside of the election cycle have been applied in the 19 years since they were drafted. It is clear that the timescale provided within Standing Orders was quite tight and, although these were appropriately applied both by myself and by the Greffier, I am sure this is something that the Privileges and Procedures Committee will be reviewing in due course. I should also inform Members that you can hear the occasional clicking. I have given leave for photographers from the *Jersey Evening Post* to take photographs up until the drawing of the names from the hat. Thereafter, no further. There is no recorded media other than the usual live stream on the web. There are 3 nominations for Chief Minister designate: Deputy Mézec, Deputy Farnham and Deputy Gorst. I will draw lots to determine the order in which the candidates will address the Assembly. I understand that the Greffier has brought her top hat for that purpose and I accordingly will do that now. Members can see there are 3 straws. There is no long straw or no short straw, just straws. I will fold them double twice. Deputy Ian Gorst, Deputy Lyndon Farnham and therefore Deputy Sam Mézec will speak third. Therefore I will invite the candidates to speak and answer questions, starting with Deputy Gorst, then Deputy Farnham and finally Deputy Mézec. Candidates will be asked or be able to speak for up to 10 minutes, and then Members will have up to one hour to ask them questions. We will display the time and ring a bell to signal when the 10 minutes is up, and similarly a bell will be rung when we reach the one-hour limit. When the 3 candidates have made speeches and answered questions, then we will take a recorded vote using ballot papers and the candidate who receives more than half the votes will be appointed. When one candidate is speaking and answering questions, the other 2 candidates will have to withdraw from the meeting, and staff from the Greffe will escort those candidates to a quiet room and stay with them until it is their turn. I therefore ask Deputies Farnham and Mézec to withdraw from the Assembly.

Female Speaker:

Sir, can I raise the défaut on Deputy Ozouf, please?

The Bailiff:

Yes, the défaut is raised on Deputy Ozouf.

Deputy D. Warr of St. Helier South:

Are we able to have a supplementary question after our main question?

The Bailiff:

I will operate this in the same way that I would operate the 15 minutes of questions we do on a regular basis. In other words, a Member will have the opportunity to ask a question and then an immediate supplementary question but no more than that. Then I will call upon the next Member who indicates their desire to ask a question in order. If no Member at the time that I call them is indicating a desire to speak, and there is time left, I will permit second or even third questions. But I will always give priority to those who have not yet asked a question if they put their light on. That is the way we

operate for the 15-minute periods, and that is the way I am proposing to operate the question period now. Very well, Deputy Gorst.

1.1 Deputy I.J. Gorst of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

We meet today to elect the next Chief Minister. Now, more than ever, we need a Chief Minister who can bring together a unified team with energy, ideas and talent and who can work to heal the divisions of the past and move forward with action and purpose. Making difficult decisions on behalf of Islanders is our primary responsibility. Each of us has to try to put aside any differences and focus instead on doing what we believe to be in the best interests of the Island. In the time remaining before the next election, we need to demonstrate to those who put their faith in us that we can take the action needed to put the Island on course for greater prosperity without leaving anyone behind. We can do that by delivering on the promises we made to make a positive difference to Island life. Jersey's reputation and economic success is built on stability and confidence. We do not have time for drift and division. Islanders, and people further afield, are looking at us expecting and hoping that we begin the process today of restoring stability and rebuilding confidence. I hope, with Members' support, to begin that task today. I know that last week's vote of no confidence sent a clear message; a message that the Assembly and the Island wants change. Change in who constitutes the Government, a change in approach and changes in policy. If the Assembly chooses me as Chief Minister, I can and will deliver those changes. I have listened to what Members and Islanders have said and I have heard. I am grateful to everyone who has signed my nomination paper or offered their support for me today. People may not always agree with me on every issue, but they know where I stand, and what they see is what they get. If I am appointed today, I will nominate a new Council of Ministers with new faces to bring new thinking, new ideas and a fresh approach into Government. I do not, however, take the view that absolutely everything was wrong with the last Government. A new Council of Ministers, under my leadership, will include a mix of Back-Bench Members and existing Ministers, giving us the change of direction that Members want to see. But it will be a Council of Ministers that will actually be able to work together under my leadership, harnessing the skills of Members. It is clear that too many Members feel disconnected from the decision-making process in our political system. That needs to be addressed immediately. We, of course, have structures to work within, but that does not mean that we cannot come together as an Assembly and work more closely together. I would open up Ministerial groups to non-Executive Members who wish to play a role in formulating policy and helping us to tackle the big issues that we face. I will make greater use of the Legislation Advisory Panel and give it the resources and support it needs to produce greater output. I will work closely with the Comité to connect the centre of Government with our 12 Parishes, including attending the Comité meetings, with their agreement of course. I will meet regularly with the chair of P.P.C. (Privileges and Procedures Committee) and, of course, engage fully and thoughtfully with Scrutiny.

[9:45]

In addition, I will form a Chief Minister's Consultative Panel with the membership largely determined by Members and not by me, so we can discuss key issues facing the Island and improve the link between Government and the non-Executive. I know that accessibility, inclusiveness and teamwork matter. That will be the approach I take as we seek to get to work quickly and refocus our minds on the big challenges that matter to the public, and which are a risk to our future prosperity. On policy, we will always have our agreements and our disagreements. As an Assembly, we are here for the very purpose of debating policy and legislation. But I will ensure, however, that policy proposals are properly consulted on within the Assembly, not only with Scrutiny but other relevant panels, before they are lodged as propositions or legislation. Particularly, I have heard concerns about increasing regulation, and I commit that a Government I lead would be focused on enhancing freedoms and choice wherever possible. I will ask policy officials at every stage to think about what is right for Jersey, what works for Jersey and what is appropriate for Jersey. Members will know that

for any Chief Minister leadership and visibility matters. It is the Chief Minister's responsibility to keep Ministers motivated, on track and to be an enabler for success. From 2012 to 2018, the Governments I led delivered huge programmes of work on social reform, criminal justice reform and public investment. Members most certainly were not lamenting the lack of legislation in those days. There has, during this campaign, been some commentary about my leadership style, and I think it was unfair. I am a consensus builder, a bridge builder. I believe on focusing on the issues, getting the job done, and holding the team together. The Chief Minister is also one of the primary external political faces of the Island, an absolutely crucial role. I hope and believe that I have shown I am capable of communicating Jersey's view to the wider world in an effective manner. Jersey's Government has, like many around the world, become overly bureaucratic, which is causing not only an increase in the cost of government, but also to the cost of doing business and ultimately making the Island more expensive. I will ensure that we refocus on actions. I recognise that we must and will do more to help Islanders through the cost-of-living crisis, including improving early years childcare provision. We must and will do more to support Islanders through the housing crisis. Training Islanders for the jobs of the future and ensuring that we can attract the skills we need. On the economy, we must focus on growth and productivity, removing bureaucratic barriers to business and development, and creating incentives for investment. Continuing the planning reforms and simplifications but we must go further. Government needs to be an enabler, not a blocker. Fundamentally, we must prioritise if we are to achieve anything. We must deliver the existing hospital project. But, just as important, is our future healthcare strategy, which I think should be built in partnership with the medical profession. I am not prepared to allow Jersey to become a mini-N.H.S. (National Health Service). Internally, I will decentralise, providing much clearer structures for accountability and delivery. Islanders are also crying out for control of public expenditure, and any future growth in public spending must go to the front line. My track record is to invest in public services in a managed and affordable way, while saving for a rainy day. That is the approach I will continue to follow. As Members know, I have been Chief Minister previously and I know what the job entails. I know how to deliver in this role and I have learnt from previous mistakes. I am ready to hit the ground running and have the experience this role needs. The world around us is at a pivotal moment. We have war in the Ukraine. Continued uncertainty in the Middle East. Interruptions to global supply chains. Elections in the United Kingdom, in the United States of America, in the European Union. We must bring stability for Jersey, and I believe that I am best placed to build consensus in this Assembly as we get back to delivering positive change for the Island we love and the public we serve. I ask Members to come together, to work together to put Jersey first. I ask Members for their vote. Thank you. **[Approbation]**

The Bailiff:

There is now a period of up to one hour for questions.

1.1.1 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

The candidate spoke of healing the divisions of the past. Yet, when he was Chief Minister on 2 occasions, he created a more socially and economically-divided community than when he started at the beginning, when the relative gap between the wealthiest and the poorest widened. Currently, as the Minister for Treasury and Resources, we have seen the gap between the poorest in our society and the wealthiest in our society also continue to widen. How can we take the candidate seriously when he says he wants to heal these divisions of the past?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

When I am talking about the divisions of the past in that speech, I am talking about the situation we found ourselves in last week where we had a very divided Assembly. That is what I am committed to the healing of. We just remind ourselves that while I have been the Minister for Treasury and Resources, income tax thresholds have increased to £20,000, some of the highest in the world, that

is supporting all taxpayers across our community. We have increased and extended the cost-of-living bonus; that will continue. The Minister for Social Security has increased benefits across a range of the benefits that she administers. That will continue. But I have heard what Islanders are saying about the struggle that they are encountering. They are not easy policy issues to solve, but I commit to working, as I have said, with foodbanks, because they are experiencing and seeing the most financially vulnerable in our community, and together with them are finding policy solutions to help deal with those most financially vulnerable. It might be that we need to reintroduce benefits, as we did during COVID, but we need policy interventions that are actually going to work and actually going to make Islanders feel better off at.

1.1.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

We know that then he is talking about healing the divisions of the Assembly, not necessarily the wider community. The candidate is a pious man and he will know exactly what I say when I say the words: “You reap what you sow” and when, as Chief Minister, he implemented £10 million of cuts across the board to some of the most vulnerable in society, and we are starting to see the very consequences of those cuts now, does he not agree that he has to take responsibility for those mistakes of the past and that it is his economic policy here which is at fault? While it might be easy to be humble before an Assembly while seeking re-election, that we need a change from his leadership to a fairer, equal society?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

My entire opening commentary was about the change and the change that I believe that I can bring and will bring. I know that my colleagues here like to criticise previous Governments that I was Chief Minister of and refer to them as austerity budgets. They were not austerity budgets, they were about controlling expenditure. In the final term that I was Chief Minister, overall budgets did grow by around £30 million over those 3 years, but that is controlling expenditure. It is reprioritising expenditure. That control of expenditure allowed the Government after that to be able to spend hundreds of millions of pounds supporting Islanders and supporting businesses during COVID. We cannot have it both ways. I will manage budgets, I will live within our means, but I will rightly prioritise for the priorities of this Assembly and the Island.

1.1.3 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier Central:

I wish to concentrate on one phrase from the candidate which was “leaving none behind”, and I would like the candidate to inform Members how he voted on P.113 in 2017, which was intended to leave none behind. It was the reinstatement of the single persons component in income support. How did the candidate vote in that request to rescind that charge?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

If memory serves, I voted against that on the day for all the reasons that I would have explained. Having said that, of course, a Member came back and reintroduced that, and that has remained part of the income support system since that reintroduction.

1.1.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the candidate today consider that such a move to reduce the benefit of the least able to support themselves ... would he repeat that same action today if he felt it was necessary?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

The public finances today are in rude health. Not least of which were actions that I have taken over the last 2 years. I do not think that the Deputy has supported those actions or voted for those actions. Because they are in rude health, it has meant that we have been able to increase tax thresholds, introduce benefits and increase income support payments to Islanders. I see no eventuality that that will change unless our public finances are not managed in a balanced and robust manner.

1.1.5 Connétable K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour:

Prices are up 12 per cent across the board; food and housing costs are astronomical. What would the candidate do to ease the burden on young families and pensioners who are struggling in Jersey?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

There is not one policy intervention that will deal with those challenges. But I recognise those challenges, and that is what I said in my speech and I have been saying in my engagements. We know, although I have had a number of questions from my colleagues in Reform, the number one issue causing inequality in Jersey is the cost of housing. We have had numerous reports which have told us that, and therefore the cost of housing and dealing with the housing crisis has to be a top priority for the next 2½ years. Progress has been made, but more must be done. I have said that I would introduce stamp duty reductions. I would look at reduction of planning fees. I would want to work with and instruct S.o.J.D.C. (States of Jersey Development Company) to ensure that they are building houses to meet the needs of Islanders. I think that there are a number of very capable and interested and experienced Islanders that I would want to bring into Government to help us with dealing with that housing crisis. Could the Deputy remind me of the remaining bits of his question?

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

I am not sure what bit the candidate has not got.

The Bailiff:

I am not sure there is a remaining bit that I can say. The question has been answered.

1.1.6 The Connétable of St. Saviour:

As Jersey is a relatively wealthy Island, does the candidate think that the continued use of so many foodbanks is acceptable?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

No, it is a concern to me. That is why I commit the Government that I lead to work directly with those 3 foodbank operators to understand their experience, to understand the experience of Islanders who are visiting those foodbanks and to bring forward proposals to support those Islanders.

1.1.7 Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier Central:

Following on from that, I think I will change my question. A constituent, a young person, young man - but it does not really matter - was speaking to me at the weekend who is just moving out of shared house, which they are paying £900 a month for.

[10:00]

They did all the right things I would like to say to the candidate. They have come back and they working in Jersey, they are paying tax, they are moving. The minimum they can pay is £1,100 per month for a one-bedroom; minimum. They have to come up with £1,000 deposit to do that, plus £175 of fees for the agency. There will be a gap before they get their deposit back, if they get their deposit back, for all sorts of reasons. What does the candidate say to these young people and these realities to get them to stay on this Island and contribute to our economy?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

We have disagreed in this Assembly about interventions dealing with the housing crisis on many occasions. I think I have stood here and said: "To me it is a great sadness that we use these crises as a political football" because there is no one intervention that will help. The fundamental intervention has to be around supply and demand. Unless we can supply more houses, then demand is going to remain high. We have to be careful that some of the interventions that the questioner would seek to put into the rented sector of our economy will make this situation worse. Not **[Interruption]** ... I do

apologise, Sir. It keeps timing my speech and I stopped 10 minutes ago. That is £20 I think I owe the Bailiff's coffers.

The Bailiff:

I was not going to say that until the end of your time.

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

Perhaps I should sit down and withdraw now before it costs me too much, this candidature. I am not sure my wallet can take much more. The reality is that we do need to come together as an Assembly to solve these problems. There are no easy answers for those Islanders. We are wrong to pretend and tell them that there are because there are unintended consequences of interventions, unless we are working together with all of the stakeholders and unless we are dealing with the fundamental issue of supply.

1.1.8 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Obviously the answer to the young person is to just get on with it. In addition to that, the contract that the person has to sign has clauses, including the cost for £250 for professional cleaning at the end. Should they want to move out early, they would have to find a tenant to take over the rent and pay £750 to allow that to happen. Does the candidate believe that these contracts are fair, reasonable and what will he do about changing those?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

Some of those issues that the Deputy raises are issues that Government can look at and can work with landlords, and the new Residential Tenancy Law can look at those and see how they can mitigate those particular elements of contracts. This is the very point that I made in answer to his earlier questions. We can actually work together across the political divide to help solve some of these issues and to improve Islanders lives, and I commit to doing that.

1.1.9 Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade:

Given recent storms, pandemics and global events, would the candidate advise Members how he might ensure the Island is resilient to future events and without empty supermarket shelves in periods of heavy weather?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

Thank you for the question. The Minister for Sustainable Economic Development has set off on a road to address those very issues. He is absolutely committed to it. The train of work that he has in place with regard to supply lines will mean that we become more resilient. The other side of that is, of course, which I know is unpopular in some quarters, but the redevelopment of the ports to ensure that there is sufficient storage space and that we can have not a simple just in time supply line, but we can start to build resilience and reserves there as well.

1.1.10 The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Will the candidate be reviewing our southern trade route and how it can be enhanced to reinforce our resilience?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

That is work which is already underway. I see no reason to stop it. We need to ensure that all of our routes are resilient and, in difficult times, that we can switch from one to another. But again, I say to Members, that is work which is progressing well and I would keep it going.

1.1.11 Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North:

As we are all aware, a successful Council of Ministers requires diverse views and at the same time working as a team, as a galvanised team. What processes and procedures will the candidate introduce to bring stability and consensus to the Council of Ministers, which will allow to get on with the delivery for Islanders?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

I do not think, if one looks back at my record, that we have not been able to deliver consensus and make some great fundamental changes in Jersey. I will maintain that. I said in my opening comments, I am a team player. I am a bridge builder. I am a developer of consensus. Perhaps what the early days of the last 2 years have shown us is that a Council of Ministers need to have a more formalised process to thrash through policy differences, to work together on building consensus so that we can find a unified way forward. We were able to deliver, and I look across my colleague over in the Assembly, the fibre broadband to every home; unheard of across the globe in those days. We were able to deliver Andium Homes, which brought every social house up to U.K. (United Kingdom) good standards. They are now, even now as we stand here, a success story and are about the only hope that Islanders have of an affordable house. It is working together as a Council of Ministers, working through all of the issues, because there will be disagreements because there are disagreements right across the Assembly. Whether it is the 10 Members of Reform or it is the 39 centre-right Members, we will disagree. But we have to put those disagreements ... work through them first, find policies that work and then work together to deliver them. I have done it before and I will do it again. I am offering Members my candidature to be able to do that.

1.1.12 Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat of St. Helier North:

How will the Deputy deal with conflict in the team that he selects?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

I have led teams that have had quite strong conflict in the past. Sometimes I have dealt with it perhaps not as well as I might have liked. The Member will know that there was a period of time when I really could not work with a Minister. We went through the issues and through the issues and I found it very difficult. I would have removed that Minister. But after more conversations, after mediation, we were able to work through those difficulties, and that individual remained as a Minister throughout the time of that second Council of Ministers. It is absolutely fundamental that we ... let us not be partisan there. Whatever way the vote goes today, I want to say that it is absolutely fundamental that each Member puts aside their own particular what it is that they might desire and start to think we have made a blow against Jersey stability. Whatever happens today, we have to put that aside and we have to say we are going to work in the best interests of Jersey. We are going to work in the best interests of Islanders. We agree what the big challenges are. We largely agree - maybe not fully - but we do largely agree around the policy interventions that are needed. I stand simply because I believe I have got skills to offer to deal with those challenges. To deal with those disagreements and help the Island move forward. If Members do not want me to use those skills in that way, that is entirely up to them. I do not take it personally. But I am absolutely 100 per cent committed listening to Islanders, dealing with the concerns they have and making progress on the big challenges we face.

1.1.13 Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central:

The cuts made by the Government in amendment 33 of the Government Plan included a cut of £47,000 to the police budget. Nearly all the police budget is staffing, so that could mean fewer police officers. The cuts proposed for the Children, Young People, Education and Skills budget was £286,000. Fewer social workers, perhaps. These were on top of the planned value-for-money savings. This was all while the Deputy was the Minister for Treasury and Resources. Will the Deputy look to reverse these cuts to essential services if he becomes Chief Minister?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

The States currently has a budget of £1.2 billion. Let us just let that sink in for a moment. £1.2 billion. I would contest that it is possible for departments to provide the services that they prioritise within £1.2 billion. I was quite clear with Ministers that we needed to make those efficiencies. Ministers across departments got growth moneys to do new priorities. If we are going to have new priorities, then something else has to give. We have to start prioritising. We have to prioritise because the service that we have is swamped with policy priorities, with political priorities. It is partly that that is causing frustration in the community. They do not know what Government is doing. They do not know what ... they get a press release one day, they get a press release the other day and they are confused. We have to prioritise delivering on the big issues of the day and the big issues that matter to Islanders, and that is what I will do. I make no apology for saying to Ministers and Members that we must live within our means and we must have a balanced budget, because that is what I get the most criticism from Islanders about. "Your spending is out of control." We cannot continue. We must prioritise our spending. When more money comes in through coffers, we must put some aside and we must prioritise on to front line services.

1.1.14 Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Will the Deputy confirm that his idea of prioritising is to cut budgets on essential services?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

Absolutely not, I could not be clearer. I said it in my vision statement, I said it in my opening speech and I have said it again today.

1.1.15 Connétable K. Shenton-Stone of St. Martin:

Does the Deputy believe that the decision by the former Chief Minister to announce in a speech to the Chamber of Commerce a reduction in the number of public sector projects to return £30 million to reserves, only 8 days after the States Assembly voted to approve the Government Plan 2024-2027, and not provide prior notice to the Assembly, represents a breach of trust in the Assembly by the former Council of Ministers, at which the Deputy was Minister for Treasury and Resources? How would the Deputy seek to resolve this?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

I always found this a challenging one when I was Chief Minister, that if one is not careful, one has to go out to the community and make a big speech announcing policies and yet, at the same time, need States Members to have good advance notice and not do anything which has recently been decided. I will seek to balance those priorities, if I am successful today. Any Chief Minister has to seek to balance those things and not be disrespectful to this Assembly. I do not recall that I have previously been disrespectful to this Assembly, and I would intend to continue not to be so. This is the Assembly that makes the decision for Islanders. This is the place where decisions are made, and that must be respected. It is sometimes easy for Ministers to go off to government offices, and to be so overwhelmed with work that we forget that this is the primacy of decision-making in Jersey. I have heard what Members have said. I heard what the chair of P.P.C. said in her speech last Tuesday in that regard. I take that on board. If I might come to the £30 million of savings, I accept that there was ... that was not my £10, Sir, just in case.

The Bailiff:

Someone else is going to confess, I know.

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

I accept that there was some confusion because what that £30 million was, was about how we budget.

[10:15]

Every year we get to the end of the year and there is unspent money on projects that have not started. What the Chief Minister announced - I do not know, I have lost all track of days - at the Chamber lunch the week before last, I think it was, was that rather than every year just having the £30 million and rolling it over and departments just saying: "We need to use this money, we need to spend this money", and they never do it, it is saying ... during the course of 2024, I think the States agreed that I could put up to £25 million into the Stabilisation Fund. But rather than just simply rolling over that end-of-year money to go into budgets that might get used for something else, it is saying: "No, we will put that money into reserves, because we know from history we will not spend it during 2024." I apologise if there was confusion about what that was. It was not about stopping projects. I understand that people felt really frustrated because we had only just successfully got through a really good Government Plan in December.

1.1.16 Deputy M.R. Ferey of St. Saviour:

In recent years, we have had substantial increases in the minimum wage, and now we are above both Guernsey and the U.K. Would the candidate explain how he will achieve realistic increases in the minimum wage going forward?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

I am one of those who, I have to say, I think I have become a little bit frustrated with this continuing conversation. We need, as an Assembly, to put this issue to bed. Our colleagues here on the left have rightly reminded us about how difficult some Islanders are finding it across the Island. The underlying answer is to see wages increase, for people to be paid a fair wage for a fair day's work. That is not the view of the left. That is, in my mind, a good conservative principle. I think we have lost sight of that. A fair day's pay for a fair day's work. That will mean that minimum wage will ... we will need to work towards increasing it and I would like to see it increased. Despite the report that I know the department issued, which has been, I think, misrepresented for political purposes - but we will put that to one side - I do think that it is time that Government took hold of the living wage issue. As much as my good friends in Caritas Jersey, when they started doing it, I encouraged them to do it because I thought it would stimulate the conversation, and it would stimulate businesses to think about the salaries that they were paying, as well as we had this legislative minimum wage. They have been doing that for a number of years. It is about time that the Government took hold of that now, and it started doing a proper ... I do not mean any offence to Caritas there, because they just take the U.K.'s minimum living wage and they do an uprating. About time that that was brought into Government and Government did that calculation so we can move and see increases in a stepped way. But, and I put the caveat in, it is because there are some industries and some Islanders' jobs, that if we just do it without compensation and working with those industries jobs will be lost. We do have that balance. We must be committed to seeing a good day's wage for a good day's work. But we must also support those industries and those jobs that we do not want to lose, otherwise they will fundamentally change our economy, and that would be wrong as well.

1.1.17 Deputy M.R. Ferey:

What does the candidate believe to be the best mechanism for realistic minimum wage increases?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

I do think the mechanism that we have has increased the minimum wage by over 20 per cent in the last couple of years, so it is working. It is whether we in this Assembly are more ambitious to deal with the challenges of low wages and working with those industries of agriculture and hospitality. I think we are ambitious. I think we do want to work with those industries to protect their jobs. That is the right thing to do. But at the same time, we want to see Islanders getting a fair day's wage for a fair day's work.

1.1.18 Deputy R.S. Kovacs of St. Saviour:

This question I want to ask all 3 candidates. It is a subject raised almost weekly on social media by the public and I also asked it to the current Chief Minister during the last sitting. My understanding of Fort Regent is that although the safety assessment is still ongoing, the roof structure already seems to be safe and the main hall must be safe as it was ongoing used as a vaccination centre until recently. Given all this, if elected, what immediate action would the candidate take to put Fort Regent back in full use as soon as possible?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

I do not think there is a plan to put it back into immediate use. This is one of those areas that is being worked on, needs to be worked on. I was hopeful that the previous Minister for Infrastructure and the Constable of St. Helier were going to make progress. I think they had plans which were sensible, which were probably not too costly, and used a good dose of common sense. I cannot tell the questioner exactly how much progress was being made, but they seem to me sensible and reasonable, and I would support those. But it cannot be at the expense of the other big infrastructure priorities that the Government has.

1.1.19 Deputy R.S. Kovacs:

Once the full assessment will be completed, then what does the candidate see to be the future plan of the Fort Regent?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

I think the question about the future plan is quite difficult. My understanding and recollection was that there would be leisure activity, that there would be sport moving back to the Fort. But I think on a practical, common-sense basis rather than a big all-encompassing spend.

1.1.20 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour:

Does the Chief Minister candidate agree with me that the legislation giving children with same sex parents equal rights, which is currently tabled for the March sitting, pending the Scrutiny review, should remain on the Order Paper and will he commit to enthusiastically supporting it when it is debated?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

I think the legislation was correcting a historic wrong and it should be brought to this Assembly for debate. I suspect any incoming Council of Ministers or Minister would want to get themselves fully acquainted with the legislation before they committed to an actual debate date. I know the Treasury Department has the same with independent taxation. We are looking for Scrutiny to scrutinise that independent taxation. This piece of legislation falls into that same category. We have to be really careful that we do not allow the interregnum - if I might call it that - of the vote of no confidence and the selection of a new set of Council of Ministers of putting legislation and action off track. It needs to be picked up straight away.

1.1.21 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I would not like to see that legislation delayed in any way. Does the Chief Minister candidate agree that the consequential amendments that also need to be continued to be worked on and lodged in order to bring the law into force, is the candidate committed to ensuring that the necessary resources are in place to complete that work, so that the families do not have to wait any longer than they have to?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

Yes, I am. The issue, of course, is that we do have this interregnum and therefore we cannot do those things during this interregnum period, but we can pick them up and do them as soon as it is completed. I, for one, cannot wait to get to that point.

1.1.22 Deputy M.R. Scott of St. Brelade:

Coming back to the candidate's reference to balancing the books, I just wanted to come to the subject of his understanding of the delivery of value of money, in the absence of a systemic review of the performance and governance of delivery vehicles, including the States-owned entities for which he has been responsible as Minister for Treasury and Resources, and the absence of zero budgeting within departments, as per the Comptroller and Auditor General's recommendations.

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

I was not sure there was a question but I can certainly talk on that topic for a few minutes, if you wish.

The Bailiff:

Ninety seconds, if that is all right.

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

I see I have a lovely length of time still to go. There is a review of arm's-length organisations, contrary to what some people might have misread in the media. It has moved into the chief executive office, and it is an important review. It is addressing those very issues that the Deputy refers to about value for money for those arm's length organisations. I am fully committed to it. I might say something a little bit controversial, if I may. I know it is not within my normal *modus operandi*. But it has been a constant source of frustration to me over the last 2 years, being the Minister of Treasury and Resources, around the constant requests from boards for pay increases. I have looked at those pay increases and, as I say, I have become frustrated with them. I have taken them to the States Employment Board, and I had a very interesting conversation with the States Employment Board. I think we came to the conclusion that while the non-executive pay might be within the remit of the Minister, together with the board - I think that needs to change - one of the areas which is most frustrating is the senior executives' pay within these organisations. That is the thing that I would wish to get to grips with because I think that is the thing that Islanders are most frustrated with. If we have largely monopolistic arm's length organisations expecting to be paid salaries of the equivalent large organisations in the U.K. where they are operating in a market and are expected to compete and make a profit, I do not think we are counting like for like. That does need to be addressed. When it comes to zero-based budgeting, I have had these conversations with the Comptroller and Auditor General, and I, as a young accountant, used to wax lyrical about zero-based budgeting. Sadly, in my experience, and I am getting on a bit now, zero-based budgeting, unless it is done well and there is a commitment from those doing it and those managing the organisation, it leads to increased budgets, not reduced budgets. It is all about the management, it is all about the political leadership. Unless this Assembly and Ministers are committed to zero-based budgeting to help reduce and control and provide value for money, they will be unsuccessful.

1.1.23 Deputy M.R. Scott:

The entities for which the Minister has been responsible are States-owned entities such as States of Jersey Development Company, Ports of Jersey. I would appreciate him explaining his approach towards them and also explaining why a timetable for the review of arm's length organisations has not been produced, notwithstanding it has been 18 months since the Government actually was created.

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

I think a lot of it comes down sadly to prioritisation. Every department and every Minister have more things to do in their department than there is time in a day to do. I think that some of these arm's length organisations ... we have to deal with the pay issue, as I have just mentioned, but some of the arm's length organisations, like S.o.J.D.C., are absolutely key in delivering on our other priorities. We should look at them not as a shareholder, not as an arm's length organisation, but as a delivery partner to deal with in those 2 cases, the housing crisis. That is how I will act and it is what I intend to do.

1.1.24 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier:

Apart from seeking to revitalise Fort Regent, what practical steps would the candidate take as Chief Minister to support our tourism and hospitality industries?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

As the Minister for Treasury and Resources, although I might have had to drag one or 2 of my colleagues to this position, we have kept fuel duties at the same level that they were when we came into office.

[10:30]

We have sadly had to increase impôts on alcohol but we have had robust arguments being made around the Council of Ministers' table. I would wish to see those impôts levels kept low or frozen, because I think that has a fundamental effect, but we also know that the necessary skills and the necessary people to work in the visitor economy is critical. I am supportive of allowing those organisations to have non-licensed additions to their Regulation of Undertaking licences. I am supportive of the removal of the fee for those licences that was recently announced and I am supportive of the work that the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development has been undertaking in seeking to bring large European brand hotels into our community. That is fundamental to refreshing our visitor economy.

1.1.25 Deputy H. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

Recognising the significant retention challenges in Jersey's health and education sectors, what specific and immediate steps does the Deputy plan to take to address the current outflow of professionals and enhance retention within these crucial sectors?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

I am a great believer that if you want to address problems sometimes you just need to gather together a group of willing, able and committed people to deal with those challenges. The reason I say that in this instance is because we did have somebody in the delivery unit who had started doing a fantastic job in dealing with these issues. If I am absolutely honest - I will spare that lady's blushes - if I am successful, my first action in dealing with that issue will be to pick up the phone to that person and see what it takes to get her to come back to help us address those issues, because she made progress. People were staying. New people came with professional ... who were the right professions in the right job and improving Islanders lives. We have got to stop making it hard for people, with bureaucracy, who are committed and can get things done. That is the first practical thing I will do.

1.1.26 Deputy H. Jeune:

Of course, if you are unable to persuade the person to come back ...

The Bailiff:

Through the Chair, please.

Deputy H. Jeune:

Sorry, Sir. If the Deputy is unable to persuade that particular person to come back, what are the particular steps that the Deputy will take and carry on to ensure that there is the retention?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

The piece of work that was being undertaken was multifaceted. It was really getting rid of the bureaucratic barriers. It was helping people to see the advantages, ensuring that there was accommodation for essentially employed people. I will do all those things but I have to be clear with the Deputy that without that individual it will be so much harder. I will look for another, I will not give up, because it has to be addressed, but the key is - as I have often found this in my working life - to surround oneself with first-class people. I always say people better than myself. Surround yourself with first-class people who are committed and dedicated and you get a job done.

1.1.27 Connétable A.N. Jehan of St. John:

What would the candidate do to find a resolution to the ongoing teachers' pay dispute?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

Firstly, I want to thank the questioner for all the work that he did in seeking to work with teachers and resolve that dispute, often unseen in the public eye and sometimes unfairly criticised in my view. I think it is fair to say that the offer of a 3-year deal is probably the right approach but we know that the Education Department has had substantial growth money. It seems to me that a priority for an incoming Government is dealing with the teachers' dispute. We want teachers to be in the classroom teaching our children and giving them a future, so we need to sit down with teachers and look at the budget that is in the Education Department. We know we have used all the budget for salaries, we know that the terms and conditions work is ongoing and I think that we should look there, from that growth budget, to see if some of that cannot be reallocated to help us solve this dispute, because it has to be solved.

1.1.28 The Connétable of St. John:

Does the candidate support the letter that was sent to all teachers recently?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

The problem is, in hindsight, we say the letter could have been written differently and could have been given more thought. But, again, the States Employment Board were under pressure, they were being advised to get that letter out in advance of being able to make the payments and get those details. We need to just take one step back from that letter. It has caused a lot of difficulty and upheaval. I am absolutely committed to believing that a 3-year pay deal is the best approach so we do not get into this situation again over the course of the next 2 years. Sometimes when you are in these situations, when you are in a negotiation, you have to take one step back in order to move forward. I think that is where we are today.

1.1.29 Deputy E. Millar of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

The financial services industry is the engine room of our economy and produces a significant amount of income that the Government applies and uses to fund public services. Will the candidate tell us what he would do to protect and promote the industry and ensure its continued success?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

There are a number of work streams ongoing in regards to financial services as we know. The most important one as we stand here is the completion of the MONEYVAL review. Now, I know, being the Minister together with the questioner, that that has been painful for industry. We have had to make some really quite difficult and challenging decisions in order to have what we hope will be a

successful outcome, but we must continue working on that. That is still a work in progress that will be released later this year. We will see what that report has got to say but I have, for a number of months, if not years now, believed that we need to reimagine how we regulate. We must be a risk-based regulator. It could be said that some regulators have really taken on the same mantle as governments and become very bureaucratic and form-filling focused, rather than having a risk-based approach. I actually think some of the information that has needed to be gathered for the MONEYVAL process will mean that the regulator can have a more risk-based approach going into the future. The keeping of our corporate tax system is absolutely fundamental, and I stood in this Assembly before and supported that. We are going to have some opportunities to grow the finance industry. As we bring forward the O.E.C.D. (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) corporate tax changes, there will be opportunities to see growth markets in the U.S. (United States) arising out of that. I have always stood and supported the financial services industry - one of the reasons why I am getting so much criticism from my colleagues here to my right - and I will continue to do so.

1.1.30 Deputy E. Millar:

We saw yesterday Guernsey Finance relaunching and rebranding itself under the brand of Guernsey Finance. Other jurisdictions have similar bodies to represent and promote their industry, will the Deputy support Jersey Finance to continue its work supporting our industry, subject to the A.L.O. (arm's length organisation) review that he has already mentioned?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

Jersey Finance is the gold standard when it comes to promoting small international finance centres. Perhaps it has been taken a little bit for granted. I have heard things said about it, I have heard some Members comment on it. We cannot take it for granted. There are other centres out there that would like to eat our lunch. I am committed to ensuring that that is not the case, that we promote financial services, that we support Jersey Finance. Yes, they are providing value for money, that is critically important, I acknowledge that, but let us not throw out the baby with the bathwater in such a review. Let us make sure that we continue to support the promotional elements of Jersey Finance, because they are a great success.

1.1.31 Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South:

The candidate said in his opening remarks that he does not want to see Jersey to become a mini N.H.S. Does that mean the candidate does not support external - sorry, I have forgotten the word - external standards, like N.I.C.E. (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) guidelines in health practice?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

I think that is a simplistic approach to standards. There are standards in healthcare. Yes, there are those and I think we largely do now follow N.I.C.E. with some exemptions. I recall a meeting which was going to be tricky - Deputy Binet will confirm - with consultants at the hospital. He was there, I was there, the Minister for Health and Social Services was there, I am not sure if the Chief Minister was there - maybe she was - and we had what could have been a very tricky meeting talking about the new hospital. It quickly moved on to talking about how we could co-create ... and I do not like that modern management language, what it really means is you are working together, you are taking the skills of the people you have. There were first-class consultants coming to Jersey because it is not the N.H.S. and they were worried that, as we were reforming, we might go in that direction. I was so inspired by what they had to contribute and what they want to contribute to our health strategy going forward. That is why I say we must work together to deliver that strategy and not simply say we are going to be the N.H.S.

1.1.32 Deputy T.A. Coles:

So, with that mind, does the candidate accept that it is better to sometimes take the best aspects of the N.H.S., as well as developing a new policy that is better suited for the Island?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

In regard to healthcare, it is always best to take the best practice from around the globe. My point was that we have consultants who now have practised around the globe, and the point of working together with them to develop this strategy is that that is exactly what we will be doing.

1.1.33 Deputy L.V. Feltham of St. Helier Central:

Given that the candidate has held the office of Chief Minister for 2 terms and has been one of the only common denominators in the past few Governments, what was his vision when he set out on that particular aspect of his career? Is the Jersey of 2024 reflective of that?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

There are many challenges that we face in 2024, and I do not shy away from them. There were many challenges that we faced in 2012 and I did not shy away from them then. But we remind ourselves, if we think that all of our issues are simply generated locally then we are misleading ourselves. We have had a global pandemic, we had the financial crisis before that. I was Chief Minister in all of the years post the financial crisis; they were difficult, challenging times, but I think our record stands for itself. In the last Government, we had the global pandemic. In this Government, we have war in Ukraine, we have the crisis in the Middle East. All of these things are leading to imported inflation and high interest rates. It is nice that people think that I am so influential, that I am the author and architect of all of our woes, but let us just be clear where our challenges arise from. More importantly, let us focus on what we can do to deal with those challenges.

1.1.34 Deputy L.V. Feltham:

During the candidates final act as Chief Minister at the end of 2017, the candidate brought in the former C.E.O. (chief executive officer) who proved a highly divisive figure in the Island before his departure with a £500,000 pay off. The candidate also lodged P.1/2018, which saw more powers taken from Ministers and given to the C.E.O. Does he regret any of those actions?

[10.45]

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

Hindsight is a sometimes very painful journey. The reality is that I would certainly not make the same mistake of appointing a C.E.O. at the end of a term of Government, not knowing what the electorate would do in regard to appointing a Government. I should not have done it. The reason is because that individual was a very strong-willed individual and needed a strong-willed political team in order to point them in the right direction. That sadly did not happen. Because that did not happen, I have no choice but to say I regret that decision and I should not have made it.

1.1.35 Connétable D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence:

I was interested to hear the proposal for a Chief Minister's consultative panel. Will the Deputy elaborate on that, please? Will he explain the objectives and how he envisages it working?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

Well, I have to be careful because you know what they say about imitation being the sincerest form of flattery. Sir, you yourself have a Bailiff's consultative panel made up of States Members and I think that works incredibly well. When I thought about this proposal, it was in the mirroring of the approach that you take to harnessing Members' views that I was imagining in the creation of a Chief Minister's consultative panel. If I may say so, I would prefer them to meet rather more regularly. I

think it probably needs to be on a fortnightly basis. The aim is to discuss the political issues of the day and to hear what Members are saying and hearing across their Parishes from Islanders about issues that need to be addressed.

1.1.36 The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

I think we need to know how it would be constituted; what numbers the Deputy is thinking about inviting or the procedure.

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

I would be intending to invite interest from Members and then, having selected those Members, make a proposition to this Assembly so that they could approve the membership. I am imagining probably about 6 people to be on it.

1.1.37 Deputy P.M. Bailhache of St. Clement:

Does the candidate support the Reform Party's manifesto commitment to remove the Constables from the States?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

Well, the way they voted last week ... no, of course I do not. They are the heart of Island life and it really is a disappointment to me that in the last 2 years we have somehow largely in Government lost the support of the Constables. That, to me, shows that there has been a disconnect between us and the Parishes and what the Constables are telling us. That is why I say in my opening comments, it is really important, if they will have me - I am looking to the Connétable of St. Brelade - that if I am successful that I do attend upon them more frequently, because it is critical to our success that Government works with the Parishes which are the heart of Island life. At the top of those Parishes are the mothers and fathers of those Parishes. Being Chief Minister sometimes feels like being a father or a mother of the Island. The reality is the Constables are the fathers and the mothers of the Parishes and we should treat them with such respect. They do a first class, sterling job and they are all that is good about Jersey.

The Bailiff:

There may be a time for one last question.

1.1.38 Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

In the candidate's estimation, is the United Kingdom representing Jersey's interests effectively in regards to immigration and helping the staff shortages that we have in the Island? If it is yes or no, how would he ensure that Jersey is able to get the staff that businesses in Jersey so desperately need?

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

I think the Deputy knows there is not an answer to that question in the 30 seconds left because it is very nuanced. The relationship with the United Kingdom is a historic one, it is an important one, but we must not assume at all times that they are acting in our interest. We must make the case for our interests. I think that the Minister next to which the questioner is sitting has done a first-class job in making Jersey's case, particularly around immigration. I know she has plans to improve that and to broaden that. The reason I can be confident in that is because what she has done is now what the U.K. are doing for themselves.

The Bailiff:

Thank you. That concludes the period of questions for Deputy Gorst. I would ask Deputy Gorst to withdraw from the Chamber and for Deputy Farnham to be brought back. Greffier, with the laptop that sounded, was that one of ... would anyone like to admit to the fact that their laptop sounded? Deputy Gorst is already paying £20 worth of fines, it seems to me that we could have at least another

£10. There we are. It did not sound like it was online to me, so that is a disappointment, but there we are. Deputy Farnham will now have 10 minutes to speak to the Assembly, after which, as previously, a period of an hour is available for questions. Up to 10 minutes, Deputy Farnham.

1.2 Deputy L.J. Farnham of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

This is an election about change. We are here today to elect a new Chief Minister because this Assembly carried a vote of no confidence in the previous Chief Minister and her Council of Ministers. The Assembly voted for a change and a change must be delivered, not just a Cabinet reshuffle. What the Island needs to see right now is stability and some unity from us. We are living in exceptional times with exceptional challenges where exceptional solutions will be required. We need a Chief Minister with proven experience, sound judgment and the ability to make tough decisions and provide a clear vision to tackle some of the very real challenges we are going to be facing. Being Deputy Chief Minister during the global pandemic, I believe, has demonstrated my ability to work under intense and prolonged pressure and also to deal with some of the most difficult decisions Members could possibly imagine. One of the key requirements of the Chief Minister is to represent Jersey on the international stage at sometimes the most senior levels, an area in which I do have extensive experience. I also bring experience from all corners of the Assembly and I cannot stress enough the importance of the Scrutiny function. Since the last elections in June 2022, I have served on the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel and the Privileges and Procedures Committee and have benefited significantly from working alongside my fellow Back-Benchers. This has provided me with a new perspective on the work of the Assembly, enabling me to bring a well-rounded approach to leading the Government, which I believe to be important for any Chief Minister. I will bring a different style of leadership and new skills to the role. First and foremost, courtesy, respect and professionalism will be guiding principles for the new Government. If I am elected as Chief Minister, communications within the Assembly and across the Island will be improved. I will ensure that Members are informed about Government Plans and activities before anyone else. We will aim to provide a better understanding of the political landscape and to build consensus and maintain stability. A better understanding of the needs and concerns of the public is crucial. Greater empathy is required to help craft policies and address the diverse needs of Islanders. We will aim to provide an improved ability to analyse problems, propose practical solutions and make decisions that benefit the public. We will demonstrate the ability to adapt to changing circumstances and emerging challenges. We must remember that our commitment is not to each other but to the people of Jersey through this Assembly. I believe we have lost our way. Government has become too cumbersome, it tries to do too much and, in reality, achieves too little so we must streamline. We must identify our major problems and solve them, one by one if necessary. Affordable housing is a critical component of any thriving community. It is the foundation for ensuring that individuals and families of all income levels have access to safe, decent and affordable homes. It is simply not right that some Islanders cannot even dare to dream of buying or renting a home and, as a result, many are leaving. So we must fix that. Two years ago, we rezoned sites for 1,000 homes and I am not aware of any progress to date. We must simplify the planning process to speed up the production of new homes, provide the essential infrastructure that is delaying housing developments around the Island, reintroduce the States loan scheme, provide additional support for deposit savings and shared equity schemes, to name just a few of the potential solutions. We must prioritise healthcare, which must be returned to the highest standards we used to see, providing our residents with access to the very best possible facilities and services. We all know that the hospital is one of the biggest issues we face. For the avoidance of doubt, I am committed to seeing the current plans completed, costed, presented to this Assembly for approval and a new hospital delivered without further delay. Education is the foundation upon which our future is built. I am committed to investing in our schools, providing teachers with the support and the resources they need, and ensuring that our young people have the skills and knowledge to thrive in an ever-changing world. A strong education system is not just an investment in our young people but in the collective success of our whole community. We must also

invest in our teachers and we must find a solution which settles the pay dispute. Let us also make it easier for businesses to do business here in Jersey. I would like to see excessive and unnecessary regulation reduced or removed altogether.

[11:00]

Our new Government must be more representative of this Assembly and should be compiled upon ability, experience and commitment. We must forget - we must forget - personal grievances and wipe the slate clean. This Island needs a more unified Council of Ministers who are prepared to listen to Islanders and to listen to the Assembly. I pledge to listen to Members' ideas and concerns, engage in open dialogue and work tirelessly to create a Government that is transparent, accountable, and responsive to the needs of our community. My vision for Jersey is for an Island that provides a high quality and a more affordable way of life for all residents, to create a prosperous and sustainable community with a thriving capital, which is St. Helier, that embraces the unique natural beauty, rich heritage and vibrant culture while also being a sought-after destination for visitors from around the world. We must strive to be a leader in renewable energy, waste management and conservation efforts. Through sustainable practices we must preserve our environment and natural resources for generations to come. We must maintain Jersey as a well-regulated leading finance centre, an Island which continues to be well-regarded on the international stage because how the outside world perceives us is incredibly important. Maintaining strong external relations, international development and overseas aid is vital for Jersey's own development and prosperity, a place where we value and promote diversity and inclusion by providing equal access to the opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded and marginalised. The challenges we face are great but our potential is even greater. We must focus on delivery, we must focus on making life better for Islanders. I ask Members to place their trust in me, to help me heal the divisions and move this Assembly forward and our Island forward for the benefit of all. Thank you. **[Approbation]**

The Bailiff:

There is now a period for up to one hour in which Members can ask questions.

1.2.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

I will ask the same question I asked the previous candidate which was: how did he vote when he came to P.113/2017 which is about the reinstatement of income support to single parents?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Sorry, I cannot remember.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

He voted against the rescindment of such a measure.

The Bailiff:

So you do not have a supplemental question?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I have received no answer yet.

The Bailiff:

No, the answer you have received was that the Deputy did not remember. You then stood up and said something else; that would normally be your supplemental question. Do you have a supplemental question, Deputy?

1.2.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

A supplemental question would be, I remind him that he voted against the rescindment of the component for single parents. What empathy was he showing then?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Well clearly I was not showing empathy to the single parents at that time. For the avoidance of doubt, given the huge changes in the cost of living and the challenges especially that the lower income families are suffering at the moment, I think if the same debate was had again I would be likely to support it.

1.2.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

If elected Chief Minister, would he maintain the 1 per cent revenue for arts, heritage and culture in future budgets and does he accept that having such a provision has been very beneficial for, not just the arts sector in Jersey, but also as an economic multiplier on the more general economy?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

The short answer to that is yes and, of course, credit must go to Deputy Tadier whose proposal it was to deliver this to the Assembly. We worked well together then when he was Assistant Minister and I think it has proven to be extremely beneficial for the arts. Because we are funding them at a more realistic level, I think we are on the verge of seeing some great benefits for the Island from that.

1.2.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

I do not ask the question because I was the mover of that but because I want to establish whether the candidate accepts that there are times when a well-thought-out investment with a clear vision and strategy behind it can be good at delivering outcomes which may not be immediate but might take a few years to come through. If we do it correctly we can see that economic benefit and, conversely, does he also accept that if we make cuts in the wrong places, which are cuts and not efficiencies, we would also see perhaps the opposite effect happening?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Yes, and I remember the discussions we had about that and the strong resistance at times from the Treasury who are rightly keeping an eye on the bottom line. But when you make decisions that are quite groundbreaking, for example, that proposition to increase the support for that sector to 1 per cent of our revenue expenditure, once it went through and was accepted I think then suddenly the misgivings fell aside and we started to see the benefit. I think we need to be a bit more pragmatic about thinking in those ways, where we are going to have to redirect money in the future.

The Bailiff:

There was a flurry of Members who indicated a desire to ask a question over there; I am not sure I got all and nonetheless all the lights have gone off. I had not got Deputy Bailhache; I got the others, yes.

1.2.5 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Could the candidate elaborate on his views on equality of opportunity for society as opposed to equity in our society?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I think, as I mentioned in my opening comments, inclusion and equality is about, I think, providing equal access and opportunity to all members of the community, especially minorities and those perhaps that might otherwise be marginalised. I think my answer is, it is about providing equal access to everything that everybody else has access to.

1.2.6 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Does the candidate commit to keeping the same-sex parental rights legislation lodged and debated and will he enthusiastically support this and provide any necessary resources to complete the consequential amendments?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

The short answer to that is yes. I am not fully aware of the consequential amendments yet but I would hope they can be fully supported to.

1.2.7 Deputy M.R. Scott:

Would you be committed to achieving value for money in your administration and how might your approach differ from the current Government's?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Sorry, could the Deputy just repeat the question? I could not quite ...

The Bailiff:

If you could repeat the question and if you could address it through the Chair; it is not "could you" but "could the candidate or the Deputy".

Deputy M.R. Scott:

Sorry, of course. Would the candidate be committed to achieving value for money for taxpayers and how might the candidate's approach differ from the current Government's?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Yes, we have to drive out for value for money. I think we have to look at reprioritising and redirecting quite a lot of the spending. I think there are opportunities that need to be examined fairly quickly where we can drive out greater value for money. I would mention I think first off our arm's-length organisations and States-owned entities. I think there is a lot of opportunity for collaborative work in there.

1.2.8 Deputy M.R. Scott:

Would the candidate accept that the arm's-length organisations could be a barrier for collaboration with the public in terms of delivering policies?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

My experience with the arm's-length organisations has always been very positive. They operate and drive forward the policies that we put in place, both through this Assembly and the Government. I think there could perhaps be better interaction with some of the arm's-length organisations and States-owned entities through the States and the shareholder function. I believe we should continue to support them but look where we can drive out better value, as I said before, by better collaboration.

1.2.9 The Connétable of St. Saviour:

I too will stick with the same question for all 3 candidates. Shipping up 19 per cent, freight services, gas, electricity, fuel, all gone up. Prices generally up at least 12 per cent, food and housing costs, astronomical. Jersey, I read, is the eighth most expensive place in the world to live. What would the candidate do to ease the burden on young families and pensioners struggling in Jersey?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

The rampant rise in inflation and the cost of living in Jersey is largely due to geopolitical challenges that we are facing and have little control over but there has been, and I think there are, some measures that we can introduce fairly quickly that will help. Members may be aware of the report of the anti-

inflation strategy group from 2020 which recommended 6 key action points. I will not go through them all but a couple of those points were: the Government should understand the impact of indirect taxation and monitor their own price increases against the impact that will create on the cost of living. I think some quick wins we have had that have been very well received by the public are the moves to reduce G.P. (general practitioner) fees, free G.P. fees for children and free bus transport. Now those things do not have a big impact on the overlying R.P.I. (retail price index) but they are certainly well received and benefit those people that use them, so we need more of that.

1.2.10 The Connétable of St. Saviour:

I thank the candidate for that response but as Jersey is a relatively wealthy Island, does he believe that the widespread use of foodbanks is unacceptable?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

It is unacceptable to many but unfortunately it is necessary at the moment. I think we need to gain a better understanding of why they are there, what we can do to support them, and what we can do to perhaps alleviate them. I would like to see a time when we no longer need foodbanks and we must aim to get there.

1.2.11 Deputy R.J. Ward:

To follow on from that, I too will ask the same question without trying to turn this into some form of experiment. I was speaking to a young person at the weekend who is moving home, is currently paying £900 a month rent, has to move, will be moving into a one-bedroom flat which is a minimum price of £1,100 a month, will also need £1,000 deposit and pay a charge of £175 for fees from the agency before getting their deposit back, and hopefully getting their deposit back from the flat they are in. What can you say to this young person who works here, pays tax here, is committed at the moment to the Island, to keep them on-Island, given the extortionate costs of housing on this Island?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Jersey is, despite the cost of living here, one of the safest and most stable places to be. I refer to the experiences of my own children who often say: “Do you know, we could buy so much more for our money or rent so much more if we moved somewhere else?” I would say to these young people to try and stick with it because this Assembly has to get onside. As I said before in my address, that the affordable housing issue providing safe and affordable homes for families of all income levels has to be our top priority right now because people are leaving the Island. I would say to them just try and bear with us and we will make a difference.

[11:15]

We have to make a difference, there is no real option other than to do that because of the grave situation we find ourselves in. As I said, there are some things we can do very, very quickly that would make quite a big difference if we are to focus on them and be bold enough to do it.

1.2.12 Deputy R.J. Ward:

It will be no surprise to hear that part of this was they had really no choice but to sign a contract that includes if they were to break the contract they would need to find a new tenant and still be charged £700 for doing so plus a £250 charge at the end for professional cleaning. Will the candidate commit to making changes to these draconian contracts that people have no choice but to enter into if they want a home?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Yes, there is no place in our society for draconian measures in contracts like that which serve only to exploit people. I will certainly commit and I hope any new Government would commit to changing that situation for the better.

1.2.13 Deputy D. Warr:

I understand the candidate, if successful, would look to nominate members of Reform to the Council of Ministers. Can I remind the candidate the pledges that are in the Reform manifesto: rent freezes, making open-ended tenancies for default and taxing empty properties? We have had feedback from my Residential Tenancy Law and we have had an incredible 300 responses to that report. These views are extraordinarily controversial, so would he back these pledges or would he look to seek compromise from the members of Reform Party?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I have had a conversation with the leader of Reform Jersey in the last week, as I did with Deputy Gorst, on the run-up to this election and, as we have repeated in the media, we have made no deal. The leader of the Reform Party suggested that they could be interested in working in Government and that we would talk again after this election. I said I would be amenable to that and that is where we are. We also know I have the greatest respect for the Reform Party and their members, and we work together and we agree on some things and we disagree on other things, and that is healthy politics, that is what we are in here to do. What we have to do in some instances is find a compromise and Reform has to do that. I think they are realising now that they might have to do that a little bit more while still pushing for their policies. There are some things that we will just never agree on, and I think we have to accept that, but that does not mean we cannot work together. We have to work harder to win our arguments.

1.2.14 Deputy D. Warr:

I would ask the candidate, if he cannot find agreement around the Council of Ministers' table, I understand that Deputy Mézec walked away from the last Government simply because he could not find agreement. I would like to understand, if that happens again, does he just accept that certain Members of the Council of Ministers would walk away and that would cause complete chaos once more?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I am tempted to say ...

The Bailiff:

I think the "does he accept" was the question.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Having worked more closely with Reform Jersey members over the last 2 years, I can only say it has been a very positive experience. While we have disagreed on many items, we have managed to work our way through it and I think this Assembly should take a lesson from that. I cannot predict what will happen in the new Government. I think, I hope, I have a reputation for compromise and working together with people. In all my times as a Minister with my Assistant Ministers when we had differences, we managed them very well and always found a way through. I feel confident that we could do that with Reform Jersey, with Members of the former Government, with other Members, that is how we have to work in this Assembly and the Government if we are going to succeed.

1.2.15 Deputy I. Gardiner:

The last question moved me to ask a different question of the candidate. I understand that the deals have not been done; completely accept it. As the candidate indicated he would welcome Reform Party to his Council of Ministers; obviously negotiation needs to take place. Also Deputy Binet supporting the candidate and I assume that it is also an option. Now, Reform manifesto: "We will establish a public service ombudsman to enable Islanders to seek redress when failed by Government service." Tom Binet in his interview after ...

The Bailiff:

Deputy Binet.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Deputy Binet, apologies. Deputy Binet in his interview after the V.O.N.C. (Vote of No Confidence) was very clear that he will scrap the plans to establish a public ombudsman. Would the candidate advise the Assembly his views and would his government establish a public ombudsman?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I have had a couple of conversations with Deputy Binet this week but we have not talked about the ombudsman. I have to say right now I think I am probably leaning towards support for a public ombudsman. That is a conversation we are going to have to have around the new Council of Ministers' table but I am not insistent. I would open that up for debate and, if necessary, bring it back to the Assembly and we deal with it democratically. We can agree to disagree and still work together.

1.2.16 Deputy I. Gardiner:

The candidate mentioned in his speech it is important to have a unified council. Within council there are completely opposite views on a public ombudsman, how would he unify the Government?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I think I will make it clear to new potential Government Members that compromise is going to have to be a place where we will find ourselves at times and we have to accept that. There are no guarantees that Members can compromise on everything. I know some Members in the past have been uncompromising but that is because they have particularly strong-held views. I cannot guarantee there will not be fallouts. I know the previous Government started with great hopes but then ultimately saw 4 Members resign during that course because they failed to reach compromise. It is about give and take. If we are going to move forward, we sometimes have to let go of what we believed in and fought for passionately before, as I have demonstrated with the hospital, to do what is in the best interests of Jersey. Like I say, our goals to the people of Jersey, are not for supporting each other, we need to make the right decisions for the Island.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

I believe my question was not answered because I asked what the candidate will do to unify the Government with opposite views.

The Bailiff:

Well I think it was a question of urging compromise upon Members and making it clear that that was the tenor. That was the answer I heard and it seemed to be an answer to the question, so the question has, in my view, been answered.

1.2.17 Deputy H. Jeune:

Has the candidate read the Violence Against Women and Girls report published in November in which a great many people shared their experiences and perceptions? Which specific recommendations does the Deputy feel are the most important in the report to prioritise?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I have a well-thumbed copy of the executive summary. I have not read the full report; it is a huge and comprehensive report, there are 77 recommendations. The taskforce laid out clear and specific recommendations for change, including the need to address immigration policies that compound the violence experienced by women who have not resided in the Island for 5 years. That was one that particularly jumped out. Also the need for urgent specialist counselling support for victim survivors

is currently extremely limited in the Island. That is another one I picked out on, and that was mentioned in their release. I think we have to look very closely at our legislation, and I cannot remember the particular parts of the legislation that were referred to - I know this is quite a high-level answer - but we certainly need to examine the legislation, or the lack of legislation, that was highlighted in the report.

1.2.18 Deputy H. Jeune:

Going beyond the specific report, there are obviously other important pressing challenges that face diverse women and girls in Jersey, could the candidate outline the specific strategies and initiatives that should be championed to ensure equal opportunities for women and girls regardless of their background and identity?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I just cannot do that off the top of my head but I am reassured by the comprehensive report that we have that that will act as a very, very useful guide in the new policy that we have to make but I do undertake to support the report. I cannot say that I can support every one of the 77 recommendations because I have not got them all in front of me, but I would hope we can support at least the vast majority of them and work with the group to make significant improvements and reduce, significantly reduce with the aim to eliminating violence against women and girls.

1.2.19 Deputy R.S. Kovacs:

I am also going to ask the same questions like the other candidate; it was a subject raised often by the public. My understanding of Fort Regent is that it is an ongoing safety assessment but we already know that the roof is safe and we assume the main hall is safe because it was used until recently as a vaccination centre. Given all this, if elected, what immediate action would the candidate take to put Fort Regent back in full use as soon as possible?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Regrettably, Fort Regent was one of the projects that was cancelled by the incoming Government. Some budget had been reserved for that and work had started. I know many Members like me feel ashamed that we have just allowed this wonderful asset to deteriorate. The plan we had in place is a good one and I think we should look at returning to that. I think we should put together the body, the taskforce, the action group, whatever it was called, we should put together a group of States Members to oversee that and look to bring Fort Regent back to its former splendour and provide a great asset and amenity for Islanders. I do not have time to go through the old plan but I am sure it is available somewhere online and Members should look at it because it was very good.

1.2.20 Deputy R.S. Kovacs:

Once all safety assessments are completed then how soon would the candidate initiate those actions and what are the main activities he wants to see going forward in there?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

We would implement it as soon as possible and amenities ... well one thing I was particularly keen on was the creating new access from town from the Snow Hill part. Members will be familiar with Fort Regent, the views and the environment up there absolutely are fantastic, and I think a lot can be made out of the gardens and the public realm up there. The indoor winter garden, another great idea, which will of course provide year-round facilities. Then I would like to see leisure facilities for our young people.

1.2.21 The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Given recent storms, pandemics and global events, would the candidate advise Members how he might ensure the Island is resilient to future events and without empty supermarket shelves in periods of heavy weather?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I think the Constable knows, because he is familiar with our contingency plans, or some of them at least because we are vulnerable on the ground, that about 95 per cent of what we consume is important, so if the boats do not sail then we do not get fed. I think the biggest challenge is around our sea links and I know there are strong contingency plans in place but it is concerning. When I was the Minister, and I am sure I can speak for Deputy Morel who is the Minister, it is an issue, a subject that we have to keep a very close eye on on a regular basis. We have a good contingency plan and we work very closely with the U.K. authorities and the military in relation to those contingency plans.

1.2.22 The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Would the candidate consider enhancing on-Island storage?

[11:30]

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I would but there would be a significant cost involved. The retailers now run just-in-time stock systems. Shopping habits have changed with consumers. Most of what we buy is fresh or with very limited shelf life, and cans and long-life goods are not sold, I believe, in the quantity that warrants large storage areas or makes them feasible, so it is challenging. We discussed at the outbreak of COVID that increased storage, on-Island storage, and the supermarkets, the large retailers did that, but that required financial support. I am pleased to say we did not run out of toilet rolls at the time.

1.2.23 Deputy M.R. Ferey:

Like my previous question this relates to minimum wage. Over the last 2 years we have seen substantial increases in minimum wage, putting us above the U.K. and Guernsey, so what will the candidate do to achieve realistic increases in the minimum wage going forward?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Well we made, this Assembly made, a commitment to the living wage and I believe we have got to stick to that, but I am also realistic about understanding the financial pressure that puts on small businesses who might not be able to afford it, especially in sectors such as agriculture, tourism, hospitality and retail. So if we are going to go to the living wage I think we have to be prepared to provide some bridging, some financial support to small businesses to get them there and then support them until they can adjust their business to maintain those pay rates.

1.2.24 Deputy M.R. Ferey:

I thank the candidate for his answer. So what does the candidate believe to be the best mechanism for achieving realistic rises in minimum wage?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

By “mechanism”, does the Deputy mean the process which we follow now for deciding increases in the minimum wage?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

I was referring to the best calculation and the best mechanism of setting the minimum wage in future.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I do not think there is anything wrong with the work that the forum has been doing, the minimum wage forum. I think that works fairly well and we should continue with that, remembering that this Assembly has made a decision to move to the minimum wage. That clearly does not always align with the work the forum are doing, so again I think there needs to be a conversation where everybody sits down together and perhaps finds a solution to that. But maintaining the route we use now has worked well, albeit there is a bit of a gap in timing.

1.2.25 Deputy P.M. Bailhache:

The candidate has rightly spoken of compromise in the Council of Ministers but the difficulty with the Reform Party's manifesto commitments is that many of them are binary: one is either for them or against them, for example, the removal of the Constables from the States, for the removal of you, Sir, as President of the Assembly. Would the candidate compromise on some of these issues in order to keep the peace?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I do not think those are issues for the Government, those are constitutional issues that are for the Assembly and, no, I would not move on those. **[Approbation]** I want to keep the Bailiff and the Constables and bring back Senators perhaps. **[Laughter]** **[Members: Oh!]** Maybe the Deputy would support me on that.

The Bailiff:

Did you have a supplemental to that, Deputy Bailhache?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Just before that, would you mind reading a list of the names that are on there? Because I believe I pressed the button and thought it had been lodged some while ago, and I just do not know whether it was missed or not.

The Bailiff:

Very well, those who are still to ask questions on my list is Deputy Alex Curtis, Deputy Stephenson, you, Deputy Morel, Deputy Ozouf, Deputy Le Hegarat, Deputy Porée, the Connétable of St. Helier, Deputy Alves, Deputy Renouf, the Connétable of St. John and Deputy Millar. Deputy Catherine Curtis I now add to that list.

1.2.26 Deputy A. Curtis of St. Clement:

Successive hospital projects have been plagued with consultancy and design costs that are hard for the public to reconcile with the outputs. What expectations would the candidate have on their Ministerial lead for the project to scrutinise these costs personally and report to the Assembly on them?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

That was a very similar question I had been asking the previous Government time and time again and, despite Deputy Binet's efforts, the costs were not forthcoming. We have to have transparency in the hospital project and that means being transparent about the cost, being transparent about the timing, being transparent about the logistics, being transparent about the financing, and I believe Deputy Binet will do that. I will support him to do that, I will encourage him, and I hope the Government will encourage him, to follow the process, the correct process, which is seeking the approval of this Assembly on the project at every appropriate step of the way to get it over the line. We cannot look back, we have to look forward now, and there can be no further delays, but I believe

this Assembly will only support it and should only support it if the project demonstrates the appropriate amount of transparency.

1.2.27 Deputy A. Curtis:

Beyond the high-level cost there are many granular costs in capital projects that can make a difference between an affordable project and unaffordable one, so does the candidate give his commitment to ensure those granular costs such as plan and consultancy fees, traffic and road network simulation, engineering and landscaping costs are all released proactively and do not require questions to Ministers?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I can only wish on that one but I think the most important thing, because the previous hospital project did include, it was not just a hospital, it was everything as this new one is, but the biggest enemy, the biggest challenge to that is delay. We have seen that if you delay something, if you keep searching for a better option and keep searching, all you do is delay and that only achieves one thing: putting the price up. So, yes, I would support that but this Assembly and the Government have to stop messing around and when they agree things, they have to get on and do it, rather than try to hang around for a better idea or to gain some sort of political advantage. When we agree things, let us get on and do it.

1.2.28 Deputy L. Stephenson of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

The candidate has made some quite grand promises on Fort Regent which, given the question we have just had about affording a new hospital, is particularly interesting to me. How does he propose to pay for it and will that include returning to the original plan, as he stated he wanted to earlier, including a casino as part of the business plan?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

There is a good example where perhaps stopping a project has put everything in limbo and will probably only have increased the costs. If I remember rightly, there were opportunities for private investment in Fort Regent where - I am trying to remember - some of the estate I think could have been earmarked for residential, some for commercial, some for leisure, and of course the question of a casino came up. I personally do not believe that Fort Regent would be the right place for a casino and I am not sure that Jersey is the right place for a casino. That is a debate this Assembly will have to have in the future.

1.2.29 Deputy L. Stephenson:

Given that, as I say, the previous business plan was based largely on being able to afford it due to what was raised from a casino, will the candidate accept that the plan that he has just promised the Assembly he will return to and deliver is now unaffordable?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

No, I will explain it again. What I said is there are opportunities to partner with the private sector, okay? Part of that was with a casino. If we decide not to go with a casino then we have to look for other opportunities. That could include residential developments on the outskirts or land swaps with a private developer in other parts of the Island: we give them some land, in return we invest that money in Fort Regent. Hotels, leisure facilities and other things like that would generate a significant amount of income, maybe not as much as a casino would, but it would certainly generate income which I believe would still make the development or the project viable but we have to look at the figures again because I have not seen them for a couple of years.

1.2.30 Deputy K.F. Morel:

A great deal has been said about cost of living and also resilience, as the Connétable of St. Brelade mentioned, so it is a current economic development policy to help impact both of those matters by increasing trade to Europe through the establishment through the private sector of a southern freight route and also encouraging, and we have been currently in talks with, European supermarkets that may wish to set up in Jersey to provide competition to the current sector. Both of those would help with resilience and the cost of living, so could the candidate explain to the Assembly whether these are matters which he would seek to continue as economic development policy or is this something that he would prefer to see ended?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I strongly support that and I would support its continuation. I would hope we can be more successful than we have in the past because we have been trying to develop stronger European trade links with our French neighbours as a conduit as well from other parts of Europe. It is perhaps more challenging now post-Brexit because we have lost our unfettered access to some of those markets. Of course, when it comes to food, we have a different culture. We are very anglicised, we have much bigger brand recognition with the British, the U.K. brands, than we do with the French ones. I like nothing more than spending an hour or 2 in a large Carrefour supermarket when I am in France because they have some fantastic products but unfortunately it is a huge challenge to get that and get the volumes necessary in the Channel Islands that we need, but I am fully supportive, we must keep trying.

1.2.31 Deputy K.F. Morel:

Well a supermarket is certainly knocking on our door. It is the case, in my estimation, that over the last 20 years Jersey's links with France have been weakened and frittered away by successive Governments. The candidate is absolutely correct that the U.K. Government does not make that any easier but I personally have invested large amounts of my time in rebuilding those political and business relationships with France. Can the candidate commit to continuing this work because the last 20 years, in my estimation, have been an appalling car crash in terms of relations with France?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Well I disagree that it has all been an appalling car crash when we look over the 20 years and we look around the Assembly at Members who have done tremendous work with France in developing our relationships there, and I mention Deputy Ozouf and one or 2 others. Yes, we have had our ups and downs, we have had fishing crises and Brexit and the likes that have not really helped, and some of the Government responses have not been too clever at the time. But, as the Deputy knows, when he was Assistant Minister, I supported him in his endeavours to build links with France and if we were to work together in the future he can rely on my support to continue that work.

1.2.32 Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf of St. Saviour:

The candidate just mentioned me and he and I have known each other well. I have been elected with him since 1999 which served I think in one Council of Ministers where he was a Minister and I was not, and he just said it was right at the right time. This is in no way critical but in an earlier question in asking lessons learnt - it is in no way critical - when a decisionmaker, often with the benefit of hindsight you know, the ombudsman proposition was one I brought as a Back-Bencher, when the facts change, you change your mind. The candidate said the cannabis industry would be the new finance industry and we would have a new hospital to pay for it. Could he comment on that and in specific issue related to the cost of living, would he kindly say, as the former Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture, and the importance of competition policy which he answered in an earlier question, does he know what has gone on in the rest of the world about competition law changes? Would he agree that there is an embedded risk in Jersey that inflation is higher here than it is elsewhere because of a lack of competition policy and law that is in small places

advanced but Jersey has not. What will he give our Government and who is his next Minister for Sustainable Economic Development going to be?

Deputy M. Tadier:

A point of order, how many questions are we allowed to ask now during our opening? [Laughter]

The Bailiff:

Well, best policy is of course one; the reality of it is most Members manage 2 or 3, and it is up to the responder how many questions he answers.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

If we go in reverse order, I am not sure who the next Minister for Sustainable Economic Development is going to be.

[11:45]

It will be up to the Assembly, although I have had some good conversations with Members who have shown an interest. I am not fully up to date with competition law evolution around the world but I think with Deputy Ozouf we might have even on a rare occasion worked together a long, long time ago to establish what was the Competition Authority. What the anti-inflation report did highlight among one of the levers we do have to help control inflation is strong competition. I am not sure how that is working, it was working in some markets but not particularly well in others, but perhaps we do need to change our legislations and the like because I am a little bit out of touch. In relation to the medicinal cannabis industry, I do not remember saying it was going to be the new financial services centre, and I think that could have been taken slightly out of context, but what I did hope was that if it worked, if it could be developed, it could produce significant financial benefit. I still hope it can and I still hope it is something that the Island can work with and develop for all the right reasons.

1.2.33 Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

I am grateful. Can I just press the candidate - I am grateful for his answer - if I say to him he would understand that the competition law issues are really at the heart of, and the cost-of-living crisis is really massively weighting on people's households. Will he undertake under his Chief Ministership to put the cost-of-living issues at the very highest level of his Government's priorities?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I am pleased to say, yes, I will, alongside affordable housing. I think those are the 2 most pressing issues for Islanders at the moment.

1.2.34 Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

My previous original question has been answered but I would like to ask the Deputy, following on from the questions asked by Deputy Jeune, part of the report in relation to violence against women and girls talks about work permit holders. The question therefore for the Deputy is this: will he, if he is elected as Chief Minister, ensure that the legislation in relation to modern-day slavery is pushed up the agenda?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Yes.

1.2.35 Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée of St. Helier:

With reference to the future economic development, is the candidate familiar with one of the ideas brought forward to boost economy which is to create a European modern-style hotel by the previous Government, obviously that idea? If so, how does the Deputy plan to increase the supply of a

seasonal migrant workforce, particularly when the recent review on the welfare of migrant workers has showed that the present policy has been failing seasonal migrant workers who are invited to this Island to help the economy to thrive?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I know that is an important issue; migrant workers are absolutely essential and should be made welcome here. They should be properly protected by relevant legislation and regulations. I think that we are going to need another conversation on that. I am not fully aware of where all the weaknesses are but we need to identify them. I would undertake to ensure we can close any gaps, any problems that are causing the issues. Now the Deputy has a much better understanding of the issues than I do, so we will need to have a conversation.

1.2.36 Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Does the Deputy believe that the focus from the previous Government on producing an information booklet for seasonal workers prior to arriving in the Island making them aware of their rights, their obligations and the way of life is sufficient and therefore the best that the Government can do to protect workers from exploitation?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Well I think providing information is always helpful but it is clearly not going to work if our legislation and our regulation is not doing the job and leaving people exposed to problems.

1.2.37 The Connétable of St. Helier:

What steps would the candidate take if he is elected, and perhaps having declared an interest, to support the tourism and hospitality industry?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Well Members will know that I have had a strong political interest in tourism and I have a business connection, which is duly declared on my interests but it is a far, far more distant association now than I have had in the past. Tourism is essential to Jersey for so many reasons because the thread of tourism and the benefit of tourism runs just about through everything that we do on this Island. It touches everything economically, socially, environmentally, and of course it is part of the reason, a big part of the reason, why we enjoy such good transport links. What I would like to do is, like we have done with arts and culture, like we have done with agriculture now, is review tourism to make sure that they are getting the adequate funding to continue to safeguard the benefits that we have seen. Because if we do that and we maintain our air and sea links, that will give the private sector confidence to then invest in more bed stock and, once we get that formula running collectively, then we can start to see some growth again.

1.2.38 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Yes, it is a practical step but does the candidate support the re-establishing of a customer-facing tourism office in a central location?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Well I do. I do but again that would have to be, I think, dependant on additional financial support for Visit Jersey because they do not see it as a priority with the limited budget they have. I have to say, I rely on my mobile phone for tourist information when I visit a place but I do understand that many visitors to Jersey do not and they would like to see that face-to-face opportunity. So if we are prepared to pay for it, then I think it would be useful.

1.2.39 Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier Central:

Will the candidate commit to ensuring that the excellent work that has commenced and is in train with the International Cultural Centre, currently overseen by the Minister for Children and Education, and as a result of the priorities from the Diversity Forum legacy report, will continue and be supported in the same way should he be elected?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Again, I do not know as much as I perhaps should about that but I do make that commitment and would look forward to learning a lot more about it whether I am elected or not.

1.2.40 Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade:

The States is due to debate P.82/2023 on offshore wind in March. Will the candidate be supporting this proposition?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I am not sure. My own view is that the most reliable type of renewable energy for us has to be tidal-related in some way and that is a debate I look forward to having with the Deputy at some time, and I respect his knowledge on environmental energy options. So the short answer is I do not know; I support renewable energy. I might well support it but I certainly expect us to look at doing a lot more research into whether we can get similar benefits from using our tidal movements, which I think is much more reliable because we can predict to the nearest inch or 2 how much our tide is going to come in and out, twice a day, every single day of the week of the year. Much more reliable.

1.2.41 Deputy J. Renouf:

Does he not accept the evidence that was put forward in the report accompanying the proposition P.82 that at the moment tidal power is nowhere near as economic as offshore wind and that the industry is telling us that they are very supportive of offshore wind? They think we have an incredible opportunity in terms of the wind regime and the shallowness of waters and access to markets and would he be prepared to rethink his caution on that and perhaps seize an opportunity that might lie for the Island in the future?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Absolutely, it is important that we all are open to compromise.

1.2.42 The Connétable of St. John:

The candidate mentioned the teachers' pay dispute in his speech, so I would like to ask what would the candidate do to find a resolution to the ongoing teachers' pay dispute?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

We have to be close. I believe both sides really want to settle this, so we cannot be too far apart. I think we need to show a little bit more respect to our teaching profession. I am not sure that sending them a letter with an ultimatum was a good idea. While I understand the challenges around the unions, I am not sure that was helpful, but I think everybody is going to have to sit around the table and find that middle ground. We have got to be close so let us just try and find that common ground and get it over the line. We have got to find a solution; there is a solution somewhere.

1.2.43 Deputy E. Millar:

The financial services industry is the engine room of our economy and produces a significant amount of government income which funds public services. What would the candidate do to protect and promote it and ensure its continued success?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I would, I think, continue to do what we have been doing over the years. I also know about the amount of work that has been done by the industry and regulators in preparation to the recent MONEYVAL visit, which has demonstrated what a well-run, well-regulated industry we have. I believe we have given the best possible account of ourselves because of the strength of our industry and would do everything I can to ensure that continues. I am rightly, I think, proud of the industry that is so important to our economy and eagerly await the results of the MONEYVAL visit, which I believe will be positive because I have faith in the industry.

1.2.44 Deputy E. Millar:

We saw yesterday the relaunch, rebrand of Guernsey's representative industry as Guernsey Finance and we know that other jurisdictions have similar bodies to promote their financial services industries. Will the candidate support Jersey Finance continuing in its role as promoting and representing our financial services industry?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I always have supported Jersey Finance and I can see no reason why I should not unless there is a googly in there somewhere that the Deputy knows about that I do not. I would be pleased to continue to support Jersey Finance and, as part of the review of A.L.O.s, I think there is an opportunity to support them even more.

1.2.45 Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I asked this question to the previous candidate too. The cuts made by the Government in amendment 33 of the Government Plan included a cut of £47,000 to the police budget. Nearly all of the police budget is staffing, so that could mean fewer police officers. The cuts proposed for Children, Young People, Education and Skills' budget was £286,000. These cuts were on top of the planned value for money savings. Will the Deputy look to reverse cuts to essential services if he becomes Chief Minister?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I think the short answer to that is yes but it has got to be part of a bigger piece of work about reprioritising how we direct our spending. We have got basically 4 layers to the public sector: we have got our front line services, then we have got public services and infrastructure, then we have got our corporate functions which includes I.T. (information technology) and H.R. (human resources) and Treasury, and then we have quite a large layer of policy. I think we need to look very closely to make sure we are getting value for money from those higher levels, whether we need them, and redirecting any savings that we can make there and put that to the front line. I think the examples that the Deputy raised are good examples, especially in relation to the police and retaining of law and order. I was not in favour and remain concerned about the potential cuts to front line policing that will be a consequence of the previous Government Plan.

[12:00]

1.2.46 Deputy H. Miles of St. Brelade

Can the Deputy tell us some more about his leadership ability and how he plans to deliver within a Council where there seems to be so much need to compromise?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I think it is largely about respect and professionalism and courtesy and being prepared to compromise. Any Member of this Assembly that I have worked closely with I cannot remember falling out; we have had a few cross words here and there with anybody. I think people will know and realise my style is about working together and always trying to find a solution. I have not been fortunate enough

to work with many of the new Members and I regret that. The Minister for Home Affairs very kindly appointed me to the Jersey Police Authority and I hope my work there has been welcomed. I certainly have enjoyed doing it and I can only say that I aim to continue how I have worked in the past and just try and heal the differences and remember why we are all in here, remember what we are working for and put the people of Jersey before our own passionate feelings at times.

Deputy H. Miles:

The question asked how the Deputy would deliver, given the need to effect so much compromise in a diverse Council?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

That is a really broad sort of question; I thought I had answered that. To deliver; I am not sure, deliver what, but to deliver success from a Government we have to work together and to work together we have to show each other a bit of courtesy, respect and professionalism. My style of management would ensure that that is maintained through government processes and I would expect Members to subscribe to that.

The Bailiff:

There is less than 20 seconds left and, therefore, I will not call upon anyone else to ask any further questions and that concludes the time available for questions to this candidate. Accordingly, I would ask that Deputy Farnham leave the Chamber and Deputy Mézec be brought back in.

Connétable M. Labey of Grouville:

May I propose the adjournment, Sir? It is a natural break in proceedings, to allow the next candidate to not only give his speech but also to answer questions rather than break in the middle of his questions.

The Bailiff:

The only observations I might make before anyone else makes observations is that would mean that the remaining candidate would need to remain sequestered until after the luncheon adjournment, so for several hours, which may be unnecessary in the proceedings. I think it must be right that one would not wish to see a break in the questioning so I think it might be now for the Assembly to consider whether to continue into the lunch hour, even if it does not vote, at least for the purposes of dealing with this matter. If you wish to make a proposition in the sense you have, but it may be there is a better proposition to be made, if I can say so, Connétable.

The Connétable of Grouville:

I withdraw my proposition.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Sir, may I propose that we carry on to at least 1.05 p.m. or at the conclusion of questions for Deputy Mézec and then break for luncheon?

The Bailiff:

The proposition is we continue until the conclusions of Deputy Mézec. Is that proposition seconded? **[Seconded]** Does any Member wish to speak on the proposition?

The Connétable of St. Martin:

I would like to make another proposition just to say that we stay here until we finish. **[Approbation]**

The Bailiff:

It is a matter for you, Connétable. You can withdraw that proposition that you made, otherwise we will have to vote upon it.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Well, the actual voting may go on for some time but if Members feel they could complete then I am prepared to withdraw and we will go through.

The Bailiff:

Chair of P.P.C. are you proposing that we continue until we finish?

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Yes, I think that would be fair on all candidates and the Assembly.

The Bailiff:

Is that seconded? **[Seconded]** Does any Member wish to speak?

Deputy M. Tadier:

Just an observation; I think the reason it might have been moved is that some of the more disciplined Members who have remained in their seat all this time may think they need to get up for a comfort break, that is all. I might be in that position, although I am not one of the disciplined Members who has been in their seat. So if Members are going out it is probably because of that, not because of any discourtesy to the candidate.

The Bailiff:

Does any other Member wish to speak on that proposition? Those in favour of adopting kindly show. Those against. Very well, we continue until we finish, notwithstanding the fact that it eats into the lunch hour. Deputy Mézec, you now have up to 10 minutes to speak to the Assembly, following which I am sure you will know there will be up to an hour of questioning posed to you.

1.3 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I want to start by publicly reiterating the words of thanks that I have privately expressed to the outgoing Chief Minister, Deputy Moore, and recognise her leadership over the last 18 months, serving Jersey through difficult times and remaining committed to the Island which we are all so lucky to call home. Anyone who is prepared to do that is deserving of our gratitude. **[Approbation]** Last week the States Assembly made a historic decision when for the first time ever we chose to democratically remove a Government mid-term and provide an opportunity for new leadership to take the Island forward. Rather than bury our heads in the sand, allow mistakes to continue to be made and watch as the public grew more and more discontented we chose to take the first step towards fixing those problems. Today is about taking the second step; a step forward, not backwards to where we started. In making my pitch for Chief Minister I must start by saying that the decision that we made last week was the right decision. It was undoubtedly an unpleasant experience to go through but it was a necessary one and one which we must learn the lessons from, lest we are doomed to repeat them all over again. The outgoing Government started its term with nice words and rhetoric about effective collaboration, good communication and compassion, but none of these things ever really materialised. The Government was never collaborative or inclusive, it was exclusive. The communication was pretty terrible at times and often decisions were made which appeared to totally lack compassion. The optimism that many felt at the start of term of office was well and truly extinguished by last year when the nice words would no longer cut it. Words are inconsequential if they do not match the outcomes. With growing inequality, record levels of foodbank usage and hundreds of locally-qualified Islanders leaving Jersey every year to seek better lives elsewhere it is

vital that we use this moment to reset and get Jersey back on track. Now is not the time to preserve the status quo. To those who say we need stability now, I say that it does not matter how steady your hand is on the tiller if you are sailing the ship towards an iceberg. I am running for Chief Minister because I have the vision, the skills and most importantly the plan to steer Jersey away from the terminal decline that successive conservative-led Governments have taken us to the brink of. I have shown through my leadership of Reform Jersey, my roles as a senior scrutineer and a former Government Minister that I am a competent leader who can bring people together and deliver the kind of politics that Islanders deserve. For Jersey's Government, my platform can be summed up with these simple words: social and economic justice. I believe in an Island society that works for everyone rather than one that caters to the rich and powerful and expects the wealth to magically trickle down. I believe in an Island society that values the things that are unquantifiable, like our collective well-being and happiness as a community and our natural environment. I believe in an Island society where no one is denied the opportunity to achieve their potential because of their background. These political convictions are fundamental to my leadership and would guide how a Government I lead governs the Island. In my vision statement I have outlined what my 3 short-term priorities will be if I am elected Chief Minister. The first of those is to resolve Jersey's housing crisis. I make this commitment that on day one of a Mézec-led Government we will issue an official declaration that Jersey has a housing crisis and we will establish an emergency taskforce to drive the implementation of our housing crisis action plan which, despite 18 months of prevarication, consultation and review by the outgoing Government, remains the only coherent and credible plan on offer. Jersey's young people are telling us that it is the cost of housing that is largely to blame for causing so many of them to lose hope that they can have a prosperous future here. Our statisticians are telling us that the cost of housing is the biggest contributor to causing people to live in relative poverty. We cannot sit around and wait for a few drains to be installed and the supply of homes to increase and expect everything to magically fall into place while we pat ourselves on the back in the meantime. We must go further and we must introduce rent control and ramp up schemes to support Islanders into home ownership. Secondly, I am determined that Jersey can and must play its part in responding to the climate crisis, but we must do so in line with the principles of a just transition with commonsense proposals that are to the benefit of working people. The carbon neutral agenda ought to be an exciting chance to improve our quality of life, clean up the Island and exploit the economic opportunities that come with it, but I am deeply concerned as we are going now we are losing public support for this cause and risking turning it into another culture war. This is in part due to the approach that we have had so far where taxpayers' money has been funnelled into schemes which disproportionately benefit the affluent to support them receiving grants for things they either do not need or could afford on their own anyway. As Chief Minister, I would bring together the leaders of Jersey's financial services industry to set up a plan for becoming a green finance centre. We have the talent and the expertise to use this industry to play a positive role in the world as others look to fund their own journeys to carbon neutrality while raising the funds to pay for our own transition here. Thirdly, we must restore faith and confidence in our government system. It is clear that the reforms to our government system, which were spearheaded by the Chief Minister of 2011 to 2018, have not worked. We have put too much power in the hands of too few people, many of whom are not elected. The creation of the Cabinet Office has achieved the exact opposite of what it was meant to and it seems like the more we spend on communications the worse communications gets. The next Chief Minister must reconnect the Government with the public. Ministers should be responsible for their own communications. Democratically elected people must be in charge and we must repeal the laws that have concentrated powers in the hands of the unaccountable. We must pay greater heed to Scrutiny. There has been some seriously good work done in this term, including the work permit panel's report and the overpayments review which were rejected by the outgoing Government. The new Government must not have such a dismissive attitude to Scrutiny and to this Assembly as a whole. As well as those short-term aims there is so much more that needs to be done to secure our long-term prosperity for our community and we can only do this by working together. But it feels

like the winds are change are blowing. It will not have escaped Members' attention that the vast majority of email correspondence we have received in the run up to today has been in support of my candidacy, and a recent *J.E.P. (Jersey Evening Post)* poll had me as the public's preferred candidate with over 50 per cent of the vote. Reform Jersey is receiving accolades from places we never received them before and our support in the country Parishes is growing too. I believe that this is because our block of 20 per cent in this Assembly has demonstrated political dignity, unity and clarity of purpose where the outgoing Government did not.

[12:15]

We are willing and ready to serve, to put our talents and expertise to good use for the benefit of the public. All we ask for is that opportunity. Thank you. **[Approbation]**

The Bailiff:

There is now a period of an hour for questions to Deputy Mézec and the first one is Deputy Southern.

1.3.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

I ask the same question as I asked the 2 previous candidates, in this case in the context of the use of the word "compassion", and it is this: how did the candidate vote on P.113 back in 2018 which involved the reinstatement of single parent components in income support, the worst off in our society?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Not only did I vote in favour of the proposition to reinstate the single parent component but I lodged an amendment to the Medium Term Financial Plan to prevent it being abolished in the first place. I regarded the loss of that amendment and several others that day as one of the worst days I experienced in this States Assembly because that Assembly, led by a previous Chief Minister, inflicted £10 million of cuts to the support for some of the most vulnerable people in our society, despite the statistical evidence we had that showed that some of those groups were those most at risk of living in relative poverty. I think poverty is a mark of shame on our wealthy Island and I would simply not stand as a politician or a Chief Minister with any kind of complacency that we allow poverty to continue to get worse in Jersey. That is why I voted strongly in favour of that proposition when it was brought.

1.3.2 The Connétable of St. Saviour:

I too will ask the same question of all candidates. Shipping up 19 per cent, freight service, gas electricity, fuel, all gone up, the prices going up at least 12 per cent. Food, housing costs; astronomical. Jersey, I read, is the eighth most expensive place in the world to live. What would the candidate do to ease the burden on young families and pensioners in Jersey?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I thank the Constable for this question. I think we are due relatively soon to see the next R.P.I. and the breakdown of that which will give us a bit more clarity on exactly where those pressure points are, but we already have the stats to know that it is the cost of housing that causes the biggest impact on people's cost-of-living expenses, rent and inflation and the cost of mortgages going up as well, and it is the biggest contributor for causing people to live in relative poverty. I do not think we can underestimate the impact that it would have by having a focus on that particular inflationary cost to people's household budgets and what that would enable people to do with their remaining income to support themselves with other costs going up. It is also not any secret that I have never agreed with taxing the essentials in life, especially food. I think that is something that we ought to revisit, and I know that there are supermarkets in Jersey that are keen to be partners in that to see what they can do. A strategy that is not enough is what we have had up until this point, which is every time we have seen costs go up we have just increased benefits. That is a sticking plaster on an open wound.

We have to deal with these things at source because there is only so much ability we have to tax the working population to fund extra welfare for everybody else who is struggling. That is an unsustainable position, though it is the right thing to do in the short term. That is why I am so supportive of the living wage campaign and other things like that, which I think would get to the root of the problem.

1.3.3 The Connétable of St. Saviour:

I am pleased to announce that the Parish of St. Saviour has the living wage accreditation. Further to the candidate's reply, there are many, many people having to use foodbanks. Does the candidate believe that in this day and age in a relatively wealthy Island such as Jersey that this is unacceptable?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

No, it is a mark of shame on the Island that foodbank usage has gone up to the levels it has and I think we ought to respect and listen to the testimony that those who run our foodbanks give us. I think the comments that we have received from some of them about the conditions that are causing people to have to rely on that service must be listened to. It is also evidence that the strategy up until this point has not worked. We have done good and necessary things like expand the Community Costs Bonus, like raise income support components, et cetera, but that has happened while foodbank usage has gone up. That is a sign that that strategy does not work and why we need to - as I said before - look at the root causes of this and not simply just throw money at a problem and expect that to solve everything because the evidence shows it has not.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Sir, may I clarify? I am not sure if the candidate understood the question as asked. I was implying that it was the fact that people have to use the foodbank, not the fact that they are using it.

The Bailiff:

I think the Deputy said, yes, it was unacceptable. He agreed with your proposition. I think that has been answered.

1.3.4 Deputy C.D. Curtis:

The cuts made by the Government in amendment 33 of the Government Plan included a cut of £47,000 to the police budget. Nearly all the police budget is staffing so that could mean fewer police officers. The cuts proposed for the Children, Young People, Education and Skills budget was £286,000. These cuts were on top of the planned value-for-money savings. Will the Deputy look to reverse cuts to essential services if he becomes Chief Minister?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

There should be no cuts to essential services. The clue is in the name; they are essential so they should not be the target of cuts. I have expressed great concern over the value-for-money programme that has been proposed by the Government because I think that they have not provided the evidence that it has been targeted on the basis of any clear thought-out plan to ensure that they are efficiencies and not cuts. I worry that the future projections of targets that are put on Government departments could lead to panicking in departments when they are not able to find genuine efficiencies, and that turns into pressure then to turn them into cuts. I do not understand how targets can be come up with for services like the police force, like Children, Young People, Education and Skills without telling us what that means. In the recent Government Plan when an amendment was approved that had extra value-for-money savings provided for they had one sentence in the report justifying what that was. I do not think we can have confidence with one sentence that that was thought out properly. I am all in favour of departments being efficient and getting best use out of taxpayers' money but I am not in favour of putting your finger in the air and seeing which way the wind is blowing and just going for that. The exercise has not been scientific up until this point.

1.3.5 Deputy D. Warr:

The candidate proposes his manifesto and I am pleased to hear him reiterate this point about rent control. In the manifesto document the pledges include rent freezes, making open-ended tenancies the default, and taxing empty properties. Are these red lines that the candidate could not cross?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Yes, I believe in respecting your manifesto commitments.

1.3.6 Deputy D. Warr:

I understand that in a previous candidate's answer he talked about the word "compromise" and suggested that if he needed to work with the Reform Party he would expect compromise, so presumably he is not going to get any in these areas?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I am not entirely sure the Deputy heard my previous answer. His question was about those specific ones. Those are red lines but that does not mean everything is a red line and there are other things that you can look at, but those ones are red lines because the housing crisis is so dire.

1.3.7 Deputy I. Gardiner:

Thank you for the clarity, and I do respect really clear what are the red lines and what are not. Last time Deputy Mézec resigned from the Council of Ministers because the policies that he believed in could not progress. If the candidate is successful we have 10 members of Reform that definitely will be Members of the Council of Ministers, but to make Executive you would need to invite at least, if not more, 11 other Members. Based on the Government Plan debate that most of the amendments were rejected I would like to ask what flexibility and what compromises the Deputy will be ready to accept from his manifesto to other people joining the Government.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

The Deputy is right that there were some amendments that were brought which were accepted. I am content to say that when it has come to our income tax policy we have given that a good go in this Assembly and we are probably not going to get it over the line until we have a majority Government. There is probably not a lot of point in spending more time on that. We have already fulfilled our manifesto commitment by at least trying on it but I can see that the writing is on the wall for that in this term of office so it is probably not worth spending that much more time on it.

1.3.8 Deputy I. Gardiner:

Thank you, Deputy, that is really helpful. A follow-up question. If a potential candidate to the Government is not accepting rent control - as an example, this is red line - would he or she be invited into the Government?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

As Minister for Housing, no, that will be very clear because I am so determined that we need to respond to the housing crisis. But I am accepting that in whatever new Government there is it will be a coalition and it will include independent Members who are not necessarily aligned with my politics. I think we make a grave mistake when we boast the virtues of having a system of independence and then do not let those people behave like independents when they go into Government. I think that is hypocritical. I would expect Members to refer to their manifestos and ultimately I think that is healthy because if we are prepared as Ministers to sit around a table and be open and honest with one another about what we disagree on, and not guilt trip other Members into voting for things that they are staunchly opposed to. What that ends up doing is it defers that to this

Assembly to be the decision-making body and I would not wield a whip against Ministers to make them vote against things that they felt so strongly against.

1.3.9 Deputy M.R. Ferey:

My question to the candidate is about minimum wage. Over the last 2 years we have had substantial increases in our minimum wage, now placing us above Guernsey and the U.K. Will the candidate explain how he will achieve realistic increases in the minimum wage going forwards?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

We already have a target of setting the minimum wage at two-thirds of median earnings and I say we crack on with it.

1.3.10 Deputy E. Millar:

The financial services industry is the engine room of our economy and it produces a significant amount of government income which funds the public services. What would the candidate do to protect and promote it and ensure its continued success?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I desperately want Jersey to continue to have a thriving finance industry. I want it to be employing lots of people, paying them good salaries and paying tax which we use to fund our public services, and I make no bones about that. In the short term it is absolutely vital that we engage with the MONEYVAL assessment and make sure that we come out of that with a very clean bill of health, but looking beyond that I mentioned in my opening remarks how enthusiastic I am about trying to develop more of a green finance industry. I met not that long ago with the leadership of Jersey Finance who very kindly introduced me to some of their members to talk about the prospects that there are for developing the green finance industry here.

[12:30]

They produced an extremely good report on this, which I do not understand why we have not been boasting about a bit more to be honest because there is a great opportunity there, as other jurisdictions and businesses are seeking to improve their own environmental credentials, that they will need good financial advice, they will need to set structures up to help fund some of that and we are one of the best places in the world to help those people. I think that ought to be something that we promote and shout from the rooftop because not only is it good for the world, it is also good for Jersey and good for our own public funds as well.

1.3.11 Deputy E. Millar:

Yesterday we say Guernsey Finance relaunching and rebranding; other finance centres have similar representative bodies. Will the candidate support the work of Jersey Finance as a promotional and representative body for our industry?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Yes, absolutely. When I was a member of the Housing and Work Advisory Group we used to meet with the leadership of Jersey Finance very frequently, who gave us very helpful updates on things like their own employment statistics and some of the issues they thought they were facing. I thought I had a good relationship with them when that was happening and I am very keen to maintain that.

1.3.12 The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Given recent storms, pandemics and global events would the candidate advise Members how he might ensure the Island is resilient to future events and without empty supermarkets in periods of heavy weather?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

The Constable will know of the worries that we have heard from some very experienced people in the realms of logistics who I think have expressed concerns to him and also to me as well about Jersey's preparedness for eventualities like that if for whatever reason ferries cannot come in or if there is any more global turmoil than we have already. I think that having some form of resilience strategy in place is something we need to give serious consideration to and I would be very keen to work with those in our Island community who are at the forefront of this; those who run the supermarkets, those who have got experience with logistics and shipping, to talk about how we can have something in place as soon as possible because at the end of the day we have got absolutely no idea what is heading around the corner and it would not take that long for things to get very bad here if we were not able to import fuel or food or all of those things.

1.3.13 The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Would the candidate be reviewing our southern trade route and how it can be enhanced to reinforce our resilience?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Indeed. I know that there are talks at the moment about our freight links and passenger services as well for that matter, and that ought to definitely be part of that conversation. Obviously the U.K. is our closest political and economic partner but it is not our closest geographic partner. Having as good relations as we possibly can with our French neighbours and build upon that friendship to ensure we have got ties there if the ties we have elsewhere are not able to be used is absolutely vital to our well-being in the event that we hit another crisis.

1.3.14 Deputy R.S. Kovacs:

While there is an ongoing safety assessment for Fort Regent we already know that the main parts are safe enough, like the roof and the main hall. Given this, what immediate action would the candidate take to put Fort Regent back in full use as soon as possible if elected?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Obviously with the vaccination centre moving out from there as well that probably provides us with a good opportunity to look at what can be used there. The Fort is not empty; there is still stuff going on there, despite lots of the facilities there being moved to other places too. It seems a total waste to have a facility - provided that it is safe and usable - not being put to good use. That is something that time and time again we see with government-owned property and things being left to decay, which ends up making them cost more in the long run to get back up to use as well. So now that that opportunity has presented itself with the vaccination centre moving then that should, I hope, provide an opportunity to look at what short term use we could get for that while we develop a longer-term plan for Fort Regent.

1.3.15 Deputy R.S. Kovacs:

What does the candidate see as the future plan for Fort Regent?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

This is something that every term of office that I have been in the States the Government seems to come up with a new plan for Fort Regent towards the end of its term and then immediately forgets about it after the election. I think I might have even seen 3 iterations of that. We do not have a good record at managing that particular facility and so I do not really think that the Government is well placed to come up with bright ideas that in actual fact turn out to be unrealistic or do not really have the buy-in of the public. I think that if we are to get the best use of Fort Regent that will probably involve a lot more engagement with the private sector who might see some really good opportunities

to station some activities up there. That being said though, whatever arrangement that would absolutely be a partnership between Government and private sector. I am not somebody that wants to sell off facilities like that, which I think would be terrible for the Island.

1.3.16 Deputy R.J. Ward:

I too will ask the same question of somebody I spoke to at the weekend, a young gentleman who is about to move from a £900 rental home and the only property costs £1,000 plus £1,000 for a deposit plus £175 for fees for the agency. Can I ask the candidate what is the action that can be taken to stop these young people who have done everything right, are working and paying their taxes, leaving this Island because of the high cost of living that they are facing day in and day out?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

For a start we should not be using government land to build small, cramped, one-bedroom properties that end up getting rented out at rental stress levels. We have seen this on far too many occasions and I think it is a very sad thing that when we look at the Horizon development where every single one-bedroom flat there does not meet the minimum space standards for a couple to live in them, but many of them are being rented out at levels you would not be able to afford unless you had 2 incomes to be able to do that. So, for a start, that ends immediately and our own government developers will not be building projects where that is destined to be their future. I too, when I work with constituents and look at draft tenancies that they sometimes present to me, see clauses in them that are not justifiable. I have seen clauses that stipulate arbitrary fees for getting professional cleaners in at the end of a tenancy which is what the deposit is meant to be for, and it is a way of getting around my deposits being able to arbitrate on that and profiteering out of somebody getting a professional cleaner, rather than judging whether they have actually cleaned up the place properly themselves. I see things like that far too often and I think a new residential tenancy law has got to deal with some of the arbitrary fees that are put on tenants that have no correspondence whatsoever to the work that the letting agent does and just seem to me to be exploitative.

1.3.17 Deputy R.J. Ward:

One of those was on contracts; one of those exact details that I have asked the other 2 candidates but I will ask, there is another clause in one of the contracts that I have seen - in fact more than one - whereby if you were to break the contract within a year you have to find another tenant plus you pay ranging up to £750 to deal with transferring that tenancy. Would the candidate do something about this really unfair charge which I do not even know how it is legal?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Yes, and I am aware of instances of people who have had to leave a property before the tenancy was up because of the personal situations they found themselves in - in one instance it was somebody who had had a child and so that property became unsuitable - who was charged hundreds of pounds to assign the tenancy to someone new. In that instance this tenant found the new person, helped them do all the checks, that person was going to have a higher rent when they took up a new tenancy and the letting agent and landlord had done nothing apart from pass on a massive arbitrary charge that caused hardship to somebody who was about to become a single parent who could have done with keeping that money to support their newborn child. Again that kind of thing is exploitative and I think that there needs to be much tougher rules about what fees can be charged to tenants in those situations. In that instance, all the letting agent had to do was print off a new tenancy form with a different name on it and they charged hundreds and hundreds of pounds for that, which is clearly outrageous.

1.3.18 Deputy M. Tadier:

The candidate is in his tenth year of politics now and I think he needs to be congratulated for the way in which he has engaged publicly with politics when there has been an otherwise general trend away

from interest in politics. To maybe reference President Obama who talked about the politics of hope, there seems to be a quite a lot of people in Jersey who have lost hope in the Island. Does the candidate still believe in the politics of hope and what is his high-level vision for Jersey and for restoring that hope?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Ten years, boy, it has flown by, has it not? I have not changed at all in that time, have I? Today I find myself with no diminishing whatsoever of my determination and that fire I feel inside of me to make Jersey a better place to live for everyone, but crucially to make our politics work for everyone. I think that by moving away from the unpleasant personality politics, the broken electoral system and other elements of our government system that need to be changed we can convince more and more Islanders that politics is something that can have an impact on their lives. I just take one small example I found recently. I was at my constituency surgery and a gentleman walked past the café and just happened to see me so he came in to talk, and he said: "Did you know that the pensioner's Christmas bonus has not been raised in 7 years?" I said: "No, I had not realised, thanks for telling me that, I will give that a think." Which we did and then within months Deputy Ward took on that one, had it passed, had it implemented, and I then remember bumping into this gentleman again in the street, he said: "I could not believe it; a politician listened and did something about it." I hope by highlighting those kinds of examples we can teach people that it really is worth engaging with the political system and things are not as bad as often people may feel.

1.3.19 Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

How will the Deputy deal with conflict in his team should he be Chief Minister?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Point number one is that if you are to take up a role in Government you should know that it is an implicit and non-negotiable condition that you are to respect one another on a personal level in doing that job, notwithstanding any political disagreements that you may have. When I have served as a Minister - and in fact in all of my professional life - I have had 2 principles; one is you never raise your voice at people, you are perfectly capable of speaking firmly and holding people to account without shouting at them, and never swear at them either, I believe that is unnecessary too. I would expect that anybody who served in the Government lived up to those principles and were there instances where they did not live up to those principles they would find themselves very quickly in my office receiving some very calm and reasonable volumed words, but words that I hope would get across the impression to them that that was unacceptable.

1.3.20 Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Could the Deputy give an example when that has happened?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Could you clarify in what kind of context?

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Where you have had to deal with conflict between 2 people, if you can give an example. Obviously not with any names.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I am very lucky that the team I lead is so united on political principles but the one thing that sometimes can cause tension is tactical discussions, deciding strategy as opposed to deciding principle. I think that I can demonstrate that I have been an effective leader in bringing people together, making them feel even if they may have the occasional reservation about a strategy or a tactic but a belief that the

ultimate goal is worth it, and unity means we can be so much more effective and deliver more. That has been, I think, a constant throughout the entirety of my time in politics.

1.3.21 The Connétable of St. Helier:

In my Christmas speech on behalf of the Connétables, Members may have noted I departed from tradition in wishing the States of Deliberation Guernsey a very happy Christmas, and I would be interested in hearing what plans the Deputy would have if Chief Minister to work more collaboratively with our sister island?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Absolutely. Firstly, we can learn from the experience of our sister island who themselves have also just gone through a vote of no confidence and replacing of the Chief Minister, although in this instance I hope we will pick a Sam rather than a Lyndon or an Ian. But there is lots that can be done to work with Guernsey.

[12:45]

What feels like a more ad hoc collaboration with them probably ought to be formalised a bit more, and I think that our islands could probably do with having a more formal agreement in place; a Channel Islands council of some form where there is constant dialogue, not just at political level but officer level too. When we look at some of the shared challenges we face - recruitment in our public services being one - I wonder if there are opportunities we could have when it comes to specialist services, health being a great example there where maybe our Health Departments could jointly employ people where maybe it would not be cost effective for one island to employ that person but for both of them to share them to provide that service could be a really good opportunity to get better use of funding. The other point I will make is that I have to say that I have a great deal of sympathy with our sister islands Alderney and Sark which are often left out of this discussion. I would desperately like to see much closer connections with them, and particularly Alderney who I think have their own economic difficulties, part of which comes from isolation. As a Channel Islands family we should be working much more closely with them as well.

1.3.22 The Connétable of St. John:

What would the candidate do to find a resolution to the ongoing current teachers' pay dispute?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Firstly, I would revoke the letter that was sent to them a couple of Fridays ago, which I think sent out all of the wrong messages to them and I think was authoritarian in its nature by asking essentially to compile a database of how people voted in a private ballot. I think that was a disrespectful thing to do to them. The teachers are not our enemies; they are our partners for delivering an education system to our young people who are our future. We are shooting ourselves in the foot if we continue to treat them with disrespect. I think that we have very good relations with the teachers' representatives; in particular to my left is sat a former union leader for teachers who maintains a very good rapport with them. I would hope that the new Government would be able to press that reset button on relationships with them, sit down with them and say: "Right, okay, we are approaching this now as your friends and partners, not as your enemy. What will it take to have you feel comfortable that you have a good future in teaching in Jersey and what is a reasonable thing that the Government can offer them to end that dispute and look towards the long-term challenges that education has beyond this initial pay deal?"

1.3.23 Deputy M.R. Scott:

In addition to the candidate's comments regarding liaising with Guernsey, could the candidate please confirm whether he is committed to achieving value for money for taxpayers and how his approach would differ from the current Government's?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

One of the advantages of having clearer political policies is that it enables you to save a huge amount of time and money on consultations which sometimes serve the purpose of delaying decisions from being made or putting off difficult decisions because they may end up being unpopular. I have seen examples in the past of consultants being commissioned to help the Government with something and they end up coming up with half the solution and say: “You will have to commission us again for the other half of that solution.” The benefit of having clearer political policies is that if you are going to consult it will be more on the fine detail or with a targeted approach to stakeholders rather than paying people a fortune to tell you things that you probably ought to have known from the start.

1.3.24 Deputy M.R. Scott:

Which of the Comptroller and Auditor General’s recommendations to achieve value for money do you think is the most important to implement in terms of priority, and when might you do it?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I have no clue. That is my joker card there; I will have to look at them and come back to her on that one.

1.3.25 Deputy H. Jeune:

Following recent reports published regarding the persistent high gender pay disparities in Jersey, especially in the finance sector and even within the Government, what policies and initiatives would the candidate pursue to encourage more parity in the workplace?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I served on the Gender Pay Gap Review Panel in the previous term of office and I helped follow up with that in this term of office when all of my colleagues from that panel ended up in Government. I think that there is good scope for having some form of compulsory reporting on the gender pay gap across all sectors. But I am keen that that is done in such a way that is not necessarily about shaming businesses for getting things wrong or making them feel reluctant to deal with things properly because of that requirement, but one that goes hand in hand with a plan to reduce any gender pay gap when it is discovered in those businesses. I believe I have had very good conversations with some of those who represent the groups that have been calling for this kind of thing, even though there has not, to my knowledge, been much talk about making that a requirement, I think that it could have a very positive impact if it is framed properly.

1.3.26 Deputy H. Jeune:

Carrying on from that, what in the candidate’s view are the other pressing issues and challenges facing diverse women and girls in Jersey, and could the candidate outline the specific strategies and initiatives that should be championed to ensure more equal opportunities in Jersey as a whole for women and girls, regardless of their background or identity?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

The big watershed moment that we have had very recently of course was the publication of the Violence Against Women and Girls report which has a very large number of recommendations, none of which I could see being particularly objectionable. Even though there will be overhaul in the Government now I do not want to see any momentum lost in examining that report and getting a timeline in place for the implementation of those recommendations. There are some really important things in there to do with our criminal justice system which will be of huge benefit for people who encounter violence and abuse from their partners or from others. One idea that I have had in the past that I would quite like to see is some kind of temporary housing qualification system to support people when they are the victims of domestic violence to enable them to be able to find a new home

and have the right to live there and not struggle because it was their partner who had the housing qualifications in that relationship. That is something that can put people off and end up trapping them, and putting children in harm's way there, all because of an arbitrary rule to do with our housing qualifications system. I would like there to be some system either through the Children's Service or perhaps the police or whatever to offer some housing qualifications system to enable women to use that.

1.3.27 Deputy A. Curtis:

Government projects including but not limited to successive hospital projects have been plagued with consultancy, design and change management fees that are hard for the public to reconcile with the outputs. What expectations does the candidate have on the Ministerial lead for any project to scrutinise these costs personally and report to the Assembly on them?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I think that transparency of costs is an important thing. The Future Hospital Review Panel did make recommendations to that effect, not all of which were accepted by the outgoing Government, so I would want to see that revisited. I have to say - and I have no idea what the previous candidates have said on the floor of this Assembly - but I do not think it would be a wise thing for the new Government, whoever heads it, to have some mass effort to go back to the drawing board and restart this whole process again or put so much of the work that has been done in the last 18 months into the bin. I think that would be repeating the same mistake that was made before and that would end up costing us tens of millions of pounds. We need to work with what we have got and make the best of it.

1.3.28 Deputy A. Curtis:

Does the candidate support Ministers releasing and explaining design costs for projects at a more granular level than we have seen previously, including which firms are contracted for which services and how much different elements of a project cost, and ensure that this clarity is built into projects from the outset and is not an afterthought?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Doing as much of that as possible early on can only be to the benefit of a project like that. Obviously you have got to be careful with commercial sensitivity and make sure you do not shoot yourself in the foot and end up with a worse commercial deal on projects like that, but the principle has to be as much transparency as possible. At the end of the day, these are our projects and we might see them and decide we do not like them and want to do something different, but we are not informed to make those decisions if we do not have the detail.

1.3.29 Deputy J. Renouf:

The candidate spoke just now about how the Island's relationship with the U.K. is critical. Does the candidate believe that this relationship would be helped or hindered by a Chief Minister who has frequently criticised the Labour leader with whom he may have to deal with as the next Prime Minister?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

You could equally ask that question to the leader of any devolved Government in the U.K. I think it is right that people speak with political conviction and we will agree to disagree on many issues. We ought to be able in a democratic and free society to express those. That does not mean that when you have direct engagement with U.K. Government Ministers or officers that those are unpleasant. In those circumstances you put the Island first and you get whatever deal needs to be done for the Island. But there are plenty of political systems around the world where there are different heads of Government within the overall country structure where they are able to disagree very strongly.

1.3.30 Deputy J. Renouf:

The job of Chief Minister is to represent Jersey's interests rather than advise the U.K. on their best interests, so is he saying that he would make no compromises in his tweeting policy or other social media interactions if he was Chief Minister?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

No. As I said, I believe in freedom of speech and I believe in speaking according to your political convictions, but that does not have to have any impact on your direct relationships with people when you work with them. I have served on Scrutiny Panels with Members with whom I will have had great public political disagreements with, but when you sit around a table you get on with the job.

1.3.31 Deputy M. Tadier:

Following on from Deputy Renouf's question, given the fact that the candidate has had some quite strong words for human right abusers around the world, does he think that he would be comfortable at pursuing the policy of previous Governments where they seemed to ignore the human rights records of countries they want to do business with simply to get a few quid in extra for Jersey?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I do not have a policy of complete disengagement from those who you have strong disagreements with but I will have a policy - and this was in our manifesto - of not participating in any kind of promotion of individuals who have bad human rights records. I remember when the King of Saudi Arabia died a few years ago a message was sent from Jersey in terms that I thought were quite embarrassing, given what a horrendous human rights record that particular country had. There are ways of engaging diplomatically without selling out on your principles and I would not take part in positive promotion for those kinds of human rights abusers.

1.3.32 Deputy P.M. Bailhache:

If the candidate is not elected as Chief Minister would he be prepared to serve in a Cabinet led by Deputy Farnham, and if the answer to that is yes, would he be intending to draw up a coalition agreement with the Chief Minister?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

The answer to that will ultimately depend on what the winning Chief Minister candidate would be prepared to consider. I do not necessarily feel like a written coalition agreement is the right thing at this time. I personally think in the future that ought to be a normal feature of politics because it provides transparency and accountability and that is a normal feature of politics in lots of other jurisdictions. In that obviously highly unlikely eventuality of that being the outcome of today then I would have to give it serious thought, but I am not at this point inclined to think that a formal coalition deal would be the best way at this moment in time.

1.3.33 Deputy E. Millar:

The candidate has been critical this morning, as his party have been previously, of Government's practice, in which we are not alone, of conducting reviews, consultation and investigation before implementing and rolling out new policies.

[13:00]

Will he tell us what he will do to test that his policies will work, as he expects, before rolling them out and making sure that they do not create lasting damage to our economy or create unintended consequences or will he just roll them out anyway and hope for the best?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I would be very grateful to hear of a way of how a policy can be tested without implementing it that is not reliant on clairvoyance. You can look at various studies and that ought to inform your policies, so I believe that that is often what we have done in forming our policies. We look at examples from elsewhere. We look at whatever economic studies are available to inform that. But when a political decision has been made so there is a particular route to go down, I think it is a feature of Jersey politics that consultations are often used to prevaricate and to delay decisions being made because they might be a controversial decision. I think at the end of the day if Government implements policies according to their mandate and they turn out not to work so well or are unpopular, the best solution for dealing with that is the next election where those people ought to be thrown out of power for not doing a good enough job. But I think if we constantly prevaricate and delay and not make decisions that often ends up costing us a lot more in the long run, and that is a policy that has been tested and tried in Jersey, to our great indulgence previously.

1.3.34 Deputy E. Millar:

Given that the Reform Party among them have 5,000 votes, I believe, approximately, does he really believe that he has a mandate to enforce policies and laws on this Island without consultation or discussion with the public as a whole across the Island?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

That is more than any other individual candidate would have but every Member who sits in this Assembly is here on their own personal mandate. No Member who is elected should ever apologise for trying to fulfil the commitments they made to the public to get to this Assembly in the first place. I do not believe that politics is some kind of objective process where the purpose of running for election is that you get the honour of being a part of the most boring social club on the Island and then you just outsource every kind of decision to some other body and have an objective process and we will just come to whatever conclusion we do. The point of democracy is that the public get to choose what policies they live under and every Member of this Assembly does not have to disregard their manifesto because it was not identical to the manifesto of the other 48 Members of this Assembly.

1.3.35 Deputy R.S. Kovacs:

What does the candidate intend to do to revive the farming and fishery industry?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I am very pleased that we have been able to meet with the Jersey Farmers Union and the Fishermen's Association several times in the last couple of years. Given that it was not that long ago that we did not particularly see eye to eye on much, I think that shows how far we have come to the facts that now we have on many occasions sat round a table with them and talked about our common ground and issues that we know they care about. We know that those industries in particular are worried about newcomers into them; new people getting a fishing vessel and going into that industry or people trying to acquire farmlands that they can set up there. That is something that those who are now coming up to retirement age in those industries are extremely worried about. I am pleased that we have been able to develop a good relationship with them in recent months and I would want to work with them to see how we can do that. But what I certainly would not want to do is to roll back on the previous very positive decision that this Assembly made to provide an uplift in the funding that we provide to those industries. Because I think that was much needed and it was a good example of the Assembly doing something right for those industries.

1.3.36 Deputy R.S. Kovacs:

What plan does he have on having the farming, fishery, tourism and hospitality industry working in synergy to revive all those areas?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

One of the areas that they all have in common of course is food; that is all part of what they do there. Jersey is very lucky to have so many, I think, really interesting and diverse restaurants here. I am quite worried about some of the talk that there has been about new taxes and charges on businesses. In particular, we have talked about a waste disposal charge, which I would be worried that if such a thing is imposed on those businesses at some arbitrary level could end up causing more damage. I would much prefer that if we are going to have any kind of charging or taxing arrangement on businesses it ought to be on the basis of profitability, not at an arbitrary level. Because then if a business is doing really well it can afford to make more but if it is going through a bit of a difficult time then it would get a break on the tax front. I think that principle will end up being much more supportive to those industries.

1.3.37 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will the candidate commit to the introduction of a living wage by the end of 2025 and, if not, why not?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Yes is the extremely short answer to that; that commitment has been made. I do not think that we should row back on it. I was thoroughly unimpressed with the Government report that was published. It had a sentence in it basically about how the economic conditions are not appropriate for it, without elaborating at all as to why that is the case and without referring to the economic conditions of the people that the policy is meant to help. No, I think we ought to stick to that target.

1.3.38 Deputy M.R. Scott:

Has the candidate read the *Barriers to Business* report and, if so, what recommendations does he think are most important to prioritise?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I have not read every single word of that report but I have read some of the highlights of it and I think that the general point that it is getting at to make sure that businesses who are operating in Jersey have a much easier relationship with Government, with less bureaucracy, that they have to abide by something that I am entirely supportive of. I think that whoever is the next Minister for Sustainable Economic Development should be given a task of rapidly responding to that with more detail. I do think that there have been a few economic documents recently that have been, I think, too high level to be celebrated that much. I think we ought to move away from that and try to provide for reports like that that provide greater detail, so we can get on with things more quickly.

1.3.39 Deputy M.R. Scott:

To the extent that the candidate does feel that the increase of the living wage does not form a barrier to business, could he perhaps explain how he would address potential inflationary impact in areas like the food retail industry?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Sir, could she clarify the question? I was not sure if that was a question more about the kind of larger more established retail industry or whether it was smaller businesses in other sectors for whom that might be a consideration.

The Bailiff:

Can you clarify just that point, please, Deputy Scott?

Deputy M.R. Scott:

Certainly, Sir. I could give an example of supermarkets and just the potential inflationary impact of increasing the minimum wage to the living wage there and how the candidate would address the inflationary impact.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

A few years ago we commissioned Oxera to do an economic study on this and that was a result of a proposition that I brought that examined what it thought would be the potential scenarios of different levels of up-rate in the minimum wage, including, I think, one was to raise it to two-thirds of median earnings right away. Even I was surprised at their conclusions that they did not think that it would have much of an inflationary impact. It might cause a bit of movement from some people from one job that suddenly became unviable but then it would generate more economic activity elsewhere that could create another job, which would be a higher-paying job there. When we have commissioned the experts to do economic studies into this they have not reported back that they would think that the living wage in particular would have such inflationary impacts, and I am inclined to think they probably know what they are talking about.

1.3.40 Deputy J. Renouf:

The States is due to debate P.82/2023 on offshore wind in March, will the candidate be supporting this proposition?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

At this point I have not made up my mind on the proposition itself. I am in 2 minds about it for this reason: the first is that I am not clear in my head what the proposition is seeking to achieve. Of course I like the idea of Jersey having a big renewable energy project and all the pride that will come to the Island from having such a thing. But I do not want it to be tokenistic and I do not want it to not have real benefits for Jersey. It depends on the conditions of it. If we are to set up an offshore windfarm next to the Saint-Brieuc windfarm and we decide that the cable to get to the electricity for Jersey would be better value for money if we just attach it to the ones nearby already going to France, then we do not really end up with energy security or independence at the end of it, which I think would be a waste of time. If all we do is rent some space on the seabed to some multinational conglomerate or hedge fund or whatever to make loads of money out of it, then we might be shooting ourselves in the foot with our own publicly-owned electricity company. I do not necessarily think that would be worth it, especially when you consider that our electricity is already pretty much carbon-free anyway, so we would not even be reducing our carbon emissions by much. But if we got it right, had the cable dealt with properly and had the ownership of it, it could be a huge opportunity to bring energy bills down, have pride in such a scheme like that and provide energy independence. If the detail were right I would be wholeheartedly behind it.

1.3.41 The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Reform Jersey's policies tend to involve increased spending, how would the candidate propose to fund these?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I think most government policies involve increased spending, to be fair; that is not anything unique to us. You cannot do something without spending money to either employ the people to do it or to fund funds to whatever projects you are working on. I think that there is an immense amount of money that could be saved in government by reducing our reliance on consultants. I think that there

is an immense amount of money that could be saved by focusing some of what we do on earlier intervention, rather than services that serve people at the end of an issue. One of the reasons I have been so supportive of reducing the cost of primary healthcare is because that is an investment in people's long-term health so that you do not need to spend as much on them later on. I appreciate that that is very difficult to calculate and demonstrate in a spreadsheet but I think the principle counts there that you can do better if you target your money more effectively.

1.3.42 The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Really to finish that one off, does the candidate support the philosophy of tax and spend?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I would love to know another way of running a Government.

1.3.43 Deputy M. Tadier:

Is the candidate committed to a human rights and equalities commissioner and/or a Minister and what is his general feeling about where Jersey needs to perhaps take more care in this area?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I think that the example that the Children's Commissioner has set in establishing an office that exists to promote and defend children's rights and have the ability to take up cases and see them through the court system in support of people whose rights abide by, I think that sets a good example of what an equality and human rights commissioner could do in Jersey. Obviously we would have to do some thinking about the best way of forming such an institution and the best way of empowering it. But I think having human rights is one thing if they are simply on paper but if you have no ability, when your human rights are denied, to challenge it somehow and get justice and get change, so the systems that infringed on your human rights are changed, then they can be worthless. Having some kind of body to help people, many of whom will not have much recourse to financial means to get lawyers to help them challenge those things, could, potentially, be a very positive thing. If the Government engages with it properly it will help us identify some of the laws that we might need to change, which, again, would save us money in future challenges.

1.3.44 Deputy M. Tadier:

The Island has a wealth of legal expertise and we obviously have our own judicial system, which I think is respected certainly around the world in certain areas. Does the candidate believe that some of the legal expertise that we have on Island could be used to inform the Government and the Assembly in an open and transparent way, rather than necessarily in the way that has traditionally been where legal advice to Ministers remains secret and confidential, when there could be a public body that informs the wider conversation around these issues?

[13:15]

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Yes, and I have felt for some time that in particular pieces of work that there would be great benefit in going to some of Jersey's lawyers, many of whom have very specific expertise in particular areas that could offer us very good advice and help on that. There is lots of reforms I would like to see to the Attorney General's office, not least the establishment of an independent prosecution service. But I think there are some good expertise in our local lawyers that we ought to benefit from.

The Bailiff:

Very well. There is one second left, so I think that draws to an end the time available for questions to this candidate. Therefore, I would like Deputies Gorst and Farnham to be brought back in to the Chamber, please. Greffier, can I ask if the Connétable of Trinity has maintained a presence and he

is capable of voting? Yes. Then I just note for Members' sake that although he was marked excuse the Connétable of Trinity has made contact and, therefore, will have a vote that counts in the Assembly for these purposes. . Just to repeat for the benefit of Deputies Gorst and Farnham that the Connétable of Trinity, who had been marked excuse, has made contact and, therefore, will be counted in the vote when the votes start. All 3 candidates have spoken and answered questions, so we now move on to the vote. As there are 3 candidates, pre-printed ballot papers will be issued and used. Members must write their own name and indicate their preferred candidate on the pre-printed ballot paper provided. If any Member wishes to abstain they will need to indicate accordingly on the pre-printed paper. I now invite the Usher to distribute ballot papers. I will just reiterate that Members should write their own name; the reason for that is because it is a recorded ballot on the paper. If a Member does not write their own name before indicating that will be treated as a spoiled vote and will not be counted. Members write their own name and then they indicate their preferred candidate. The vote will obviously be indicated by those who are remote by their presence online. Can I ask, please, does everyone have a ballot paper? Very well or does anyone not have a ballot paper? Right, then would people please complete their ballot papers in the way that I have indicated? Is there anyone who has not completed their ballot paper? Very well. Collect the votes, please, and show the boxes, please. Yes, so they are not full of any pre-printed forms or anything of that nature. Would you please collect the votes? Has any Member not put their completed ballot paper in one of the 2 ballot boxes? Then I ask the Viscount and Deputy Greffier to retire to count the vote. At this moment it is an opportunity for light entertainment, community singing, I may know someone that ... if only it were in accordance with Standing Orders.

[13:30]

If it turns out that people's names have been unreadable ... I am just speculating, **[Laughter]** we have a whole set and we can do it again and this time it will have to be block capitals. Let us hope that will not be necessary. Very well. The results of the ballot for Chief Minister designate can be announced: Deputy Gorst 21 votes, Deputy Farnham 17 votes, Deputy Mézec 10 votes, one abstention, no spoiled papers.

Deputy Ian Gorst (21)	Deputy Lyndon Farnham (17)	Deputy Sam Mézec (10)
The Connétable of St. Lawrence	The Connétable of St. Helier	Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier Central
The Connétable of Grouville	The Connétable of St. Brelade	Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade
The Connétable of St. Mary	The Connétable of Trinity	Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier Central
Deputy S.G. Luce of Grouville and St. Martin	The Connétable of St. Peter	Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier Central
Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour	The Connétable of St. Martin	Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier South
Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence, and Trinity	The Connétable of St. John	Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South
Deputy S.M. Ahier of St. Helier North	The Connétable of St. Clement	Deputy B.B.de S.V.M. Porée of St. Helier South
Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North	The Connétable of St. Ouen	Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central
Deputy I.J. Gorst of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter	The Connétable of St. Saviour	Deputy L.V. Feltham of St. Helier Central
Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter	Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville and St. Martin	Deputy R.S. Kovacs of St. Saviour
Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf of St. Saviour	Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat of St. Helier North	
Deputy Sir P.M. Bailhache of St. Clement	Deputy L.J. Farnham of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter	
Deputy D.J. Warr of St. Helier South	Deputy M.R. Scott of St. Brelade	
Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade	Deputy R.E. Binet of Grouville and St. Martin	
Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade	Deputy A. Howell of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity	
Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity	Deputy T.J.A. Binet of St. Saviour	
Deputy M.E. Millar of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity	Deputy B. Ward of St. Clement	
Deputy M.R. Ferey of St. Saviour		
Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement		

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter			
Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North			

Very well. As no candidate ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

Sir, could we ask for the abstention initially?

The Greffier of the States:

Deputy Wilson abstained.

The Bailiff:

As no candidate has received more than half the votes cast, the candidate with the lowest number of votes, Deputy Mézec in this case, shall withdraw from the contest and a further recorded vote for the office of Chief Minister designate shall take place. There are now only 2 candidates remaining; Deputy Gorst and Deputy Farnham. Simply by dint of the order that they were drawn from the hat, we will use the electronic voting system. Any Member wishing to vote for Deputy Gorst should press the P. button. Any Member wishing to vote for Deputy Farnham should press the C. button. Any Member wishing to abstain from the vote should press the A. button as usual. Members participating remotely should indicate their vote in the chat in the usual way. Any Members not in the Assembly I invite to return to their seats and I invite the Greffier to open the voting. The vote is now open and I ask Members to cast their vote. I repeat, any Member wishing to vote for Deputy Gorst presses the P. button. Any Member wishing to vote for Deputy Farnham presses the C. button. If Members have had the opportunity of casting their votes - Greffier, do we have all the remote votes in - then I ask the Greffier to close the voting? The voting is as follows: Deputy Gorst 22 votes and Deputy Farnham 27 votes, no abstention.

Deputy Ian Gorst (22)	Deputy Lyndon Farnham (27)
The Connétable of St. Lawrence	The Connétable of St. Helier
The Connétable of Grouville	The Connétable of St. Brelade
The Connétable of St. Mary	The Connétable of Trinity
Deputy S.G. Luce of Grouville and St. Martin	The Connétable of St. Peter
Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour	The Connétable of St. Martin
Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity	The Connétable of St. John
Deputy S.M. Ahier of St. Helier North	The Connétable of St. Clement
Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North	The Connétable of St. Ouen
Deputy I.J. Gorst of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter	The Connétable of St. Saviour
Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter	Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier Central

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf of St. Saviour	Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville and St. Martin
Deputy Sir P.M. Bailhache of St. Clement	Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade
Deputy D.J. Warr of St. Helier South	Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat of St. Helier North
Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade	Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier Central
Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade	Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier Central
Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity	Deputy L.J. Farnham of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter
Deputy M.E. Millar of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity	Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier South
Deputy M.R. Ferey of St. Saviour	Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South
Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement	Deputy B.B.de S.V.M. Porée of St. Helier South
Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement	Deputy M.R. Scott of St. Brelade
Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter	Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central
Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North	Deputy L.V. Feltham of St. Helier Central
	Deputy R.E. Binet of Grouville and St. Martin
	Deputy A. Howell of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity
	Deputy T.J.A. Binet of St. Saviour
	Deputy R.S. Kovacs of St. Saviour
	Deputy B. Ward of St. Clement

Accordingly, Deputy Farnham has been appointed as Chief Minister designate. **[Approbation]**

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

May I just take this opportunity, first of all, to thank my fellow candidates for a very fair and forthright election? **[Approbation]** Can I thank my supporters for their support and the help and advice they have given me throughout the week? Can I thank all Members for their participation and just say that I hope we can have a more united Assembly? I want to reiterate the door is open to all Members in relation to forming a Government and taking the Assembly forward. Thank you. **[Approbation]**

The Bailiff:

Thank you very much, Deputy Farnham. That concludes the public business for this meeting. The Chief Minister designate is reminded that he should submit his list of Ministerial candidates to the Greffier by 9.30 a.m. on Monday. The list will then be circulated to Members and published on the States Assembly website. In accordance with Standing Orders, the Chief Minister designate may

state the reasons for his nominations but is not obliged to do so. The Assembly stands adjourned until 9.30 a.m. on Tuesday, 30th January where Members will be appointed to Ministerial office.

ADJOURNMENT

[13:41]