

STATES OF JERSEY

OFFICIAL REPORT

WEDNESDAY, 28th NOVEMBER 2024

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

1. Urgent Oral Question

The Bailiff:

Very well, before we continue with the public business, Deputy Tadier, I understand you wish to ask your question. Very well, as I have already indicated, in keeping with the time that was available per question for the questions with notice, then I will give 10 minutes for this question.

1.1 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade of the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development regarding Condor's decision to remove the Clipper service.

Thank you for leave to ask the question. Will the Minister advise whether there have been any discussions concerning Condor's decision to remove the Clipper service in the weeks preceding Christmas, whether the vessel is being used on an alternative route during this period, and if the changes are linked in any way with the delays in awarding the tender of a future ferry service?

Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity: (The Minister for Sustainable Economic Development):

I thank the Deputy for his question. I will just go straight into short answers really for these. Will the Minister advise whether there have been any discussions concerning Condor's decision to remove the Clipper service in the weeks preceding Christmas? To my knowledge, no, there have not been. Whether the vessel is being used in an alternative route. I believe it is, by Brittany Ferries, though I do not know what that route is. If these changes are in any way linked to the delays in awarding tender for future ferry services. Absolutely not.

1.1.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

The Minister sounded sure on that last one, so he knows it is not in any way linked to the current tender process but maybe he can expand on that. I will not ask that now but I will let maybe another Member ask that. **[Laughter]** I note that between 1st ...

The Bailiff:

I do not think you can use your supplemental question to seed questions throughout the Assembly, Deputy. I will allow that to pass once but, please, do not list questions you would like other people to ask. What is your supplementary?

Deputy M. Tadier:

Thank you. I was thinking on my feet there. Between 1st December and 15th December, there are only 4 ferries leaving Jersey to the U.K. (United Kingdom) and they are overnight ferries. Does the Minister think that this is first of all sufficient for the Island in the run up to Christmas, which can be a very busy period for people travelling? Secondly, how does it fit in with Condor's operating agreement that they have either with Government or Ports of Jersey?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Sorry, just to clarify my response, first of all, to that last part of the question where I said absolutely not. From my perspective. So I must say, to my knowledge, these changes have nothing to do with the tender process. It may be that on the other party's side they have some thoughts in their head. I cannot speak for them is what I am trying to say. From my perspective, I do not believe this has anything to do with the tender process. With regard to the frequency, as I understand it, at this time of year, the minimum service requirement as required in the operating agreement, the current operating agreement, for passenger and vehicle ferry services to the U.K. is 2 per week and so the 4 sailings over 2 weeks that the Deputy refers to do seem to fit in that 2-per-week minimum

requirement. As I understand it, the schedule is still operating agreement compliant. That is my understanding of the situation.

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

The underlying issue that the questioner seeks is whether the Minister agrees that the question about the Clipper underlines ... coming at the same time of hearing the observations of the former managing director of Condor, as well as a front page article in the *Jersey Evening Post* today, does this not underline the importance of whatever company that is providing services to Jersey or Guernsey to have the investment capability of the right ships for the right journeys and the ability to actually fund them, lease them, or whatever?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

There is no doubt in my mind, as a general statement, that is absolutely correct. Again, I cannot speak to whether this particular incident or event around the timetable changes speaks to it as strongly as we think it might do. It may well do, but I cannot be sure. But it is my view, and it is one that I have stated quite clearly in this Assembly, that new providers of ferry services, whether it is the incumbent or a new provider, has to be able to show us their investment plans in terms of the new fleets, because the Island needs a new fleet, and they have to be able to finance that. There has to be a level of certainty around that. Those are things that I am personally looking for in any bids. Thank you.

1.1.3 Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

Does this question in any way undermine yet further ... or not undermine but give the Minister some concerns about the ability of Condor ... the financing arrangements of Condor as he understands them to be, does it not further reinforce his determination to ensure that whatever happens that the funding arrangements for a new operator can be absolutely guaranteed?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

The tender process is separate from this incident, or this incident is perhaps the wrong word but these events. What I can reiterate is that for me the ability to invest in a new fleet, the fact that the island needs and deserves a new fleet, and the ability to finance that new fleet are absolutely fundamental to the choice of a new operator going forward.

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

I think my question may have been partially answered regarding service level agreement. As the Minister is aware, there is a lot of people very, very upset with the disruption being caused at the moment. As we are coming up to Christmas, there will be an awful lot of freight coming into Jersey. Is the Minister satisfied that everything can be done, is being done, to facilitate that?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

As I understand it, yes, everything is being done that can be done. I think the Connétable is absolutely correct. Freight is always essential to this Island, it is the food we eat on a daily basis, but at this time of year it becomes particularly important. Again, these events do not necessarily speak to any wider issues but it is the case that when it comes to a new operating agreement we will be seeking to ensure that there is the right frequency of services, both freight and passenger services, under that new operating agreement.

1.1.5 Deputy A. Howell of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

I was just going to ask if the Minister believes it is satisfactory to just have 2 ferries a week at the current time, and if he will absolutely say that he is going to try to improve that, both to the U.K. and France, going forward?

Deputy M. Tadier:

Could I ask for a point of order? I think I might have inadvertently given partial or misleading information. It seems to me that there are 4 ferries that are bookable during that period that I referred to which take cars. So it is in terms of availability but when I have checked for the ferries running, it seems that they do run every day but only for foot passengers in terms of the availability. I wanted to clarify that. I do not want to mislead and to correct Hansard.

The Bailiff:

Thank you for that, Deputy.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

I thank the deputy for his clarification. He is absolutely right, the 2 sailings per week that I referred to were for passenger and vehicle sailings on the northern route. As to the question from Deputy Howell, I cannot remember from the top of my head exactly what the minimum service requirements are for the new services going forward. There are minimum service requirements that we have put in in the tender process. I cannot remember off the top of my head whether 2 vehicle and passenger sailings per week is part of that or whether it is more. But the minimum service requirements and the bids that we receive can be 2 different things and I will certainly seek to make sure that we have the appropriate level of service requirement for passenger and vehicle sailings to the U.K.

1.1.6 Deputy A. Howell:

Could the Minister also, when he is thinking of the tender, consider the school holidays, especially Christmas, the summer holidays and the half-terms?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Absolutely.

[9.45]

The Bailiff:

We have time for a question from the Connétable of St. Brelade and then a final supplementary. No other questions.

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

I am asking a question, although the Minister may not have the information to hand, but is he aware if the indicated reduced capacity this year is less than that which was provided last year?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

The Connétable is correct that I do not have that information to hand but I will certainly seek that information and, if received, I will pass it on to the Members.

1.1.8 The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Finally, will he ensure there is cargo capacity given that Santa Claus's sleigh gets overburdened at this time of year?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Absolutely. There is no doubt about it. It is worth me saying, as Deputy Tadier in his clarification alluded to, there are other sailings. These 2 per week, this is just passenger vehicle sailings. There are more freight sailings during the week. From that perspective, Santa should be fine.

1.1.9 Deputy M. Tadier:

I will clarify again that there are many sailings that are leaving in December for people from Jersey to go to the U.K., that seems to be largely for foot passengers and actually if you are trying to book a vehicle for the U.K. you are pretty much stuck. Does the Minister believe, first of all, that this is a satisfactory situation. Also can he give an assurance that whichever company is awarded the eventual contract to run services between our Island and the U.K. and France that there will be sufficient vessels to meet those expected services - not just the minimum service level agreement but actually a reasonable service level agreement - and that their ships will not be called upon to effectively work other lines for other countries that do not involve Jersey?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

I think the Deputy's suggestions are absolutely reasonable and I will certainly take all that into account as we do seek to award the tender. In terms of is this current situation satisfactory? No, I do not believe it is satisfactory because it is inconveniencing Islanders. To the best of my understanding, this is not due to maintenance, which is understandable, these things happen, this is due to a change of use of the vessel in question and it being taken on to another route. So Islanders are being inconvenienced in order to help, as the Deputy put it, other routes in other countries and that, to me, does not seem satisfactory.

The Bailiff:

Very well, that brings that question to an end. We now resume debate on the Budget. The next amendment is amendment 17 lodged by Deputy Wilson of St. Clement and I ask the Greffier to read that amendment.

PUBLIC BUSINESS - resumption

2. Proposed Budget (Government Plan) 2025-2028: seventeenth amendment (P.51/2024 Amd.(17)) - Le Squez.

The Deputy Greffier of the States:

Page 4, paragraph (g) - after the words set out in Appendix 2 - Summary Tables 5(i) and (ii) of the Report, insert the words, "except that in Summary Table 5(ii) - (i) the head of expenditure entitled "Le Squez" should be increased by £2,500,000; and (ii) the head of expenditure entitled "Infrastructure Rolling Vote and Public Realm" should be decreased by £2,500,000." Page 4, paragraph (o) - after the words "as set out in the Appendix to the accompanying Report" insert the words "except that - (i) on page 55, within Table 23, the line entitled "Le Squez" should be replaced as follows in the Table given; (ii) on page 55, for the words "has been reprofiled to allow a new youth facility in St Helier to be brought forward in the earlier years of the Budget" there should be substituted the words "will be prioritised in 2025 to ensure the provision of a facility and to ensure that the project is not delayed any further.", and on page 58, in Table 27, the project line for Infrastructure Rolling Vote and Public Realm should be reduced by £2,500,000 for each of 2025, 2026 and 2027."

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

May I raise the défaut on Deputy Scott?

The Bailiff:

Yes, the défaut is raised on Deputy Scott.

2.1 Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement:

Forty-eight years ago, Le Squez Youth Club opened its doors for the very first time. The club, I am told, was a timber classroom that had been dismantled and removed from St. John School and re-erected at Le Squez School, which is now called Samarès. As a result of the efforts of dedicated youth workers and volunteers, the centre flourished. Six years later, the centre's activity attracted

the attention of the Education Committee. The notes of that committee meeting at the time stated the following: “We are convinced that purpose-built facilities must be provided to allow the development of a more ambitious and energetic programme of activities in Le Squez.” The committee took a proposition to the Assembly and successfully gained approval to develop youth facilities in the east of the Island. Eventually the club moved out of its timber H.Q. (headquarters) into a new centre from where it still operates today. Forty-two years later, we find ourselves in the same situation as our predecessors. But if someone had told our predecessors 42 years ago that a youth facility would only be built in St. Helier, there may well have been a revolt. Because in those days, people could think on an Island-wide basis. What can we learn from this when it comes to addressing the needs of Le Squez today. Do we, as an Assembly, have the same determination as they did to do something about it? Over the last few days some Members have suggested I withdraw this amendment - the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning and the Minister for Children and Families. Some of you may even be sitting here now wishing I would just get the speech over and done with, accept the amendment is a non-starter and allow the Assembly to get on with discussing the really important issues instead. Well, the thing is I cannot do that because my representation to this Assembly is on behalf of the people who elected me. To challenge those of you who may not have the courage, interest or determination to put things right for the youth and community of Le Squez. This is a matter of social conscience just as much as a matter of prioritisation. So why am I asking the Government to bring forward the spending for Le Squez and why is it important? The youth club our predecessors invested in all those years ago has come to the end of its life cycle. It is a crumbling mess and unfit for purpose, and certainly not the cool modern space young people would prefer if they had a choice. It likely contains asbestos because it is so old. It struggles to accommodate the increasing levels of activity and is in need of maintenance and repair. These are the working conditions under which a youth work curriculum is being delivered today within an ever-growing community. So my question is, does this Assembly have the same foresight, the same courage and conviction as our predecessors to find a solution for Le Squez? Is it fair that the plans and ambitions for the facility prepared with the involvement of the community have been stripped away without any consultation, concern or regard for the people who live there? Is it fair to use the argument that St. Helier does not have a youth facility, a sufficient justification for removing the investment in Le Squez. If we are serious as an Assembly about serving future generations well, then investment in the timely provision of a new youth facility at Le Squez will not only improve quality of life for the many people who live there, but it will also avoid the need to use taxpayers’ money on maintaining and repairing a dilapidated building over the next 4 years. This makes no economic sense at all. In the comments paper prepared by the Ministerial team - and at this point I would like to thank them for engaging with me on the amendment - I am challenged on the fact that the scheme proposed by the Minister for Children and Families in October 2023 was not ready to go. Well, the scheme was ready to go but it stopped with the change of Government. To say that it was not, just is not right. The money spent by Government at the time had been spent on developing a plan and a solution that was ready to go. I know this because I have seen the email evidence from officers confirming the position and I quote the email between officers of 19th October 2023: “Next stage will be to get it costed, finished, update the feasibility and get Ministerial approval.” Then in an email to the Minister at the time, dated 21st October: “Please find attached the plans for the new Le Squez Youth and Community Centre and upgrades to Samarès School. We are now at the point to move forward with the project and for the architect to draw up the plans for submission to planning. We have undertaken a number of stakeholder engagements over a number of years, so it is really positive we have now reached this point and we have got £7.5 million in the capital programme over the next 2 years, so we are in a good position to move forward.” So feasibility done, Ministerial approval given and £7.5 million of capital available to deliver it. This amendment proposes sticking to the intention and to ask the Government to just get on with it. Please do not let this community down again. If it is serious about its commitment to Le Squez, then please show it. This is a facility that is really important to the local community, to grandparents, parents and the young people who live there. The

facility has served the community and surrounding areas well over the years and we want this to continue. The Government is in danger of sending messages loud and clear to this community that while they are prepared to do something they would rather prefer to leave it to another Government to pick up. There is a risk young people will disengage with their Government if they cannot be seen to be representing their interests too. In a recent high-level survey conducted by the Children's Commissioner earlier this year, young people were invited to express their aspirations for change. Top of the list, play and leisure facilities, functions served well by youth clubs. For young people in St. Helier, the Government's budgetary position accords with these aspirations but, for all of us who are concerned to ensure fairness, I am asking Members to think seriously about the impact that withdrawing resources from Le Squez for another 4 to 5 years will have on the young people and the community of St. Clement. The developments at Le Squez cannot and must not be ignored or kicked down the road again without an understanding of the consequences. My amendment is proposed on the principle of fairness. If, as an Assembly, we are serious about promoting well-being in young people and investing in future generations, then let all the arguments that are relevant to funding youth facilities in St. Helier apply to St. Clement too. There is a job to do in both communities and not just in one at the expense of the other. If Government has an authentic youth agenda then why not support my amendment and commit to investing in youth facilities in both communities at the same time. There is no need to create unnecessary inequity. It is a matter of choice, not affordability. Contrary to popular belief, I am not through this amendment undermining the proposals for St. Helier. Nothing could be further from the truth. I welcome the proposals but I just want to see the same concern and commitment made to young people living in Le Squez and the wider community of St. Clement. They have waited so long for this investment, so long, promised time and time again that this investment will be forthcoming, actively involved in shaping plans. So this is not about taking resources away from the needs identified in St. Helier as some might think. The effect would be to ask Government to continue investing in both communities so that young people in the 2 most densely populated areas of the Island can benefit equally. We are all aware of the call on the public purse but when it comes to investing in young people, unfairness in the allocation of resources should be avoided at all costs. There is nothing more disempowering to a community when the actions taken by a public institution reinforce stigma and the view that some communities are worth more than others. If Ministers wanted to, they could adapt and flex their approach. Young people in Le Squez deserve more from Government to show that it cares about their community too. I had hoped that efforts to highlight the unfairness of the Government's position with Ministers and convince them otherwise might have resulted in something more than an initial promise of an offer to tidy up the facilities outside. Sadly, nothing more has materialised and it is, quite frankly, an insult to the young people in the area who have spent time working up their proposals. Maybe just a little encouragement and support for the youth from this Assembly may spur Ministers on to consider their original decision. If funding for Le Squez does not materialise in this Budget, it will continue to rapidly decline, having been kicked into the long grass once again. It undermines efforts of the Connétable, local Deputies, local community groups to improve the quality of life for people in the area. The case for investing in revival and renewal of Le Squez is as equally compelling as the case being made for St. Helier. In the comments paper provided by the Ministerial team, they refer to my desire to accelerate the provision of new and used community facilities at Le Squez.

[10:00]

You bet. Given the delays that I have experienced already, I am raising questions about this Government's delivery intention for young people in Le Squez and the wider community in St. Clement. Is the Government willing to revisit their decision, having erased the aspirations and ambitions of young people in Le Squez to satisfy a balance on a spreadsheet? Is the Government genuinely interested and invested in hearing the voices of young people living in Le Squez and listening authentically. If so, can it explain to them where the money has gone that was set aside in for the 2024-2025 Budget for the development of their youth club? Is this Government standing by

its own rhetoric on the importance of sustaining well-being, putting children first and building safer communities? Perhaps, but maybe not, because we see little evidence to suggest this is the case when it comes to Le Squez. Ministers have also commented that the 3-year fixed financial allocation provided by the amendment does not match the cash flow profile. Surely Government would not be so inflexible on this point, knowing that capital projects ebb and flow mainly due to external factors. But this does not mean that the financial commitment should not be made. We know from the work on the new healthcare facilities programme, for example, that cash flow can be organised in any way you want it to be. So if the 3-year financial allocation does not work for Government, then let us talk about what will. But please do not assume that the only option open to the Government to fund the development of the club is to kick it down the road until 2028. Ministers have commented that they need to agree a different level of funding for the planning. As I have mentioned before, the preparation on Le Squez was complete so by bringing resources forward in this Budget, the capital work can commence. The comments paper really contains some confusing and contradictory responses to my amendment. Firstly, they suggest that there is no development funding for Le Squez, but then officers involved in preparing the response go on to say that the development has implications for Le Squez. Does this mean the community of St. Helier will be determining what facilities are eventually provided at Le Squez? Secondly, the St. Helier youth club is a destination for people. Does this mean young people in Le Squez will not have any local youth facilities unless they travel into St. Helier? Unfortunately, there is no one sitting at the Ministerial table who can advocate as strongly for the needs of young people living in St Clement in the same way that a Constable and 4 Deputies from St. Helier can for the proposed facility in St. Helier. So I am asking the Assembly to take account of this and to consider if sufficient consideration has been given by the Council of Ministers both to their own proposition and the amendment in the interest of fairness and balanced political judgment. I am asking Members to consider the possibility that if the Government were to rethink how they might use the resources available to them, could they prioritise youth? Youth, not parishes and facilities in each parish but youth. Can they fulfil an outstanding promise to the youth of St. Clement as well as St. Helier that they will deliver services for them? We all know that the elephant in the room constraining Government's ability to spend money on things is the development of the new healthcare facilities. We all agree that investment is needed but must this be at the expense of everything else? The purpose of my amendment is to plead on behalf of all those people in St. Clement, who live in Le Squez, who have placed their trust and belief in Government to do the right thing by them ... and it does not really matter to them which Government is in place, it is the promise of a new youth club that is the issue. They have had their hopes and ambitions dashed by the stroke of a pen. It is simply unfair to say that one community deserves investment over the other, particularly when the original investment was targeted and secured for the community. In conclusion, supporting my amendment gives some hope and removes any uncertainty for the people living in Le Squez. The same certainty cannot be guaranteed if the proposition carries to delay investment until 2028. If Members consider rejecting my amendment, I ask them to think back to the values held and the decisions taken by our predecessors when faced with similar circumstances. I call for the debate. Thank you. **[Approbation]**

The Bailiff:

Is the amendment seconded? **[Seconded]** The Connétable of St. Helier.

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

I am not speaking to the amendment. There is an amendment from the Council of Ministers?

The Bailiff:

No.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Sorry, I thought there was first. The self-styled plumber from St. John, who will be known to some Members, used to talk about “maintainance” and how bad the States of Jersey were at it. Maintenance to the rest of us. While I absolutely agree with a lot of the proposer’s views about youth facilities, I will leave other Members to respond to her in terms of the respective claims of youth centres in St. Helier and St. Clement. I should say in passing that I think it is a shame that already the idea of a competition between these 2 parishes has been suggested. I want to address my comments, if I may, to the fact that to finance this amendment the Deputy of St. Clement is looking to take an enormous amount of funding out of the maintenance of this Island and indeed out of the public realm. If I can look at maintenance first. Any Member who has travelled not a million miles from here will have noticed what happens to a community when there is no funding for maintaining the public realm. This applies of course to all 12 parishes, not just to St. Helier. All parishes have their issues, holes open up in the roads and the pavements, things go wrong, weather events cause untold damage and our road gangs from infrastructure - assisted, of course, by the parish workforce and honorary service - get to those problems straightaway. When we see on the national news images of the kind of life that people and councils in the U.K. have to live with, potholes that you can practically lose your bicycle in or the front wheel of your car, things that are never repaired. All of us have travelled to the U.K. and in some parts of the U.K. it looks as if they have not been maintained for years. They are so grimy and neglected. The effect of this amendment, if supported by the Assembly, will be to take that funding out of the 12 parishes. The Infrastructure Department will not be able to maintain roads, pavements, highways, banks, trees, sea defences, all the things that we take for granted perhaps in Jersey and which are, in some cases, so poorly supplied elsewhere. In terms of public realm in St. Helier, of course you only have to walk down Halkett Street, a formerly rather grey drab town street, repaired with a budget provided both by the parish and the Infrastructure Department and what we are seeing now is that empty shops are being re-let, people are spending time and money of course in Halkett Street and it has really taken off. If I had my way it would have been renamed Rue Ivy Forster but that did not meet with a lot of support from the public. Perhaps it is something I will come back to. The public realm in our capital is really important and I do not know how many times I have had to respond to calls from people who say that town is looking tired, town is looking drab when are you going to resurface New Street? I just replied to an email this morning about the state of New Street. I remember being told off by the present Minister for Treasury and Resources when I described, as a Back-Bencher, New Street as a war zone. I said: “When are you going to resurface New Street?” Now if this money is taken out of the Infrastructure budget, these projects will not happen. Projects will grind to a halt. I fully expect members of our road gangs will lose their jobs. I simply do not believe this is the right source of the funding that the Deputy requires. I will be watching and listening with great interest to how Members speak and vote on this matter, because there are Members who have voted, so far at least in this debate, against the Government at every opportunity. Is this an opportunity to vote against the Government because there happens to be an amendment that the Government does not support? Because if a Member votes against the Government on this one and then tells me they support the regeneration of St. Helier, they support the maintenance of our roads and footways around the whole Island, then I simply will not believe them. I would urge Members, whatever their views about youth centres - and this matter will be dealt with by other Members - they should not allow the infrastructure rolling vote ... it is not a particularly pretty phrase. If we go back to the former plumber from St. John, if we called it “maintainance” and improvement vote, I think maybe it would sound better. Infrastructure rolling vote sounds it is almost like something you can take money out of and it will not affect it. It will affect the way our Island looks and feels and I would urge Members not to support the amendment.

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

Firstly, I would like to thank Deputy Wilson for bringing this amendment and for engaging with our team prior to this debate. Any opportunity to discuss and highlight the importance of youth work and youth clubs in our parishes is a good thing and should be welcomed. The Minister for Children

and Families and I are both fully supportive of the Youth Service and the great work that it does delivering both Island-wide and in the parish of St. Clement but the Council of Ministers must consider the overall affordability and deliverability of the capital programme and inevitably we are unable to do everything everywhere all at once. C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills) have prioritised youth club provision in the town area as being desperately needed and there are very good existing facilities in Le Squez although it is accepted that they are in need of some improvements. The Minister for Infrastructure and I visited these premises last week to investigate for ourselves and we saw a very well-presented facility that has lots to offer our children and young people in the area. The whole area comprises of a sports hall which is compact by modern standards but is still very much fit for purpose. It also comprises an all-weather pitch where young people can play outside in safety. Within the youth club itself there is a table tennis area, a pool table, snack bar and various other little breakout rooms where young people can just be together in the safety of the youth club itself. The area is well served but we do accept that it is in need of some improvements. We have already identified some quick wins which can be made in the short term to make it even better and I have given Deputy Wilson an undertaking that I will explore these opportunities for the area. The proposed redevelopment of Le Squez Youth Centre is not ready to go as has been claimed; it is currently at feasibility stage. Detailed design works are still to take place and preplanning advice and planning approval has neither been sought nor gained at this stage. Le Squez Youth Centre is open, it is safe, and it will continue to deliver the current youth work offer for children and young people in that area, and it is still squarely within the capital programme for 2028. I believe that Deputy Wilson has set up a community development group for the Samarès community and I applaud her for this new initiative and the support that she has provided to our youth workers. I do, however, urge Members to reject the amendment. As the Connétable of St. Helier has already stated, it seeks to withdraw funding from the infrastructure rolling vote and public realm for 3 years to fund the project. Apart from anything else, this action might put the new St. Helier youth facility project in jeopardy. Thank you.

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

I was disappointed in this amendment because, while I would like to support it, I cannot, and that is because it would deprioritise the planned youth facility in St. Helier. Of course the improvement of youth facilities at Le Squez should proceed but not at the expense of the one in St. Helier.

[10:15]

There is a youth club at Le Squez whereas the children of St. Helier have been left without any youth club for many years. That means the 3,000 children aged 9 to 16 who live in St. Helier, where more than 70 per cent of homes are flats, have no youth club. Many have no outside space of their own but there is now the opportunity to put this right with a suitable site found for a St. Helier youth club which must not be delayed. We have to prioritise the St. Helier Youth Centre. As for Le Squez, which already has a youth centre, there needs to be improvements. The correct approach is outlined in the recommendations of the Children, Education and Home Affairs Panel's Budget comments which I will read, and I quote: "Further details should be published by the Minister for Children and Families and the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning about how the delays to the major projects at Le Squez will impact the Youth Service and Samarès School, including any mitigating measures that have been put in place in the interim." I am hoping for assurances on the work at Le Squez but that does not mean we take funding from the St. Helier youth project. While we should have the best youth facilities for all the Island's children right now, unfortunately, the Budget is a matter of priorities. I ask Members to keep in mind the well-being of those thousands of St. Helier children with no access to a youth club and to reject this amendment. Thank you.

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

I do not want to focus on pitting between 2 youth facilities because I want to paint a picture for the Assembly of the findings from the Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Panel during its review of the proposed Budget. It is throughout this process we have sought clarity and detail regarding the abortive or sunk costs arising from the reprioritisation of the capital programme but to no avail. Despite requesting this information months ago, we are still waiting for a response to an email sent after a hearing in September where we were assured such costs would be provided. Le Squez stands as this glaring example. How much has already been spent on this project, costs now seemingly lost. It is important to remember that this was not just a youth centre, it was intended to be a comprehensive community youth and family support centre, combined with critical upgrades to the Samarès School. When we asked the Minister which projects were delayed or cancelled under this Budget, we received a list of 10, many of these had progressed to the concept brief stage. The Minister explained that in the past too many projects had been started but not delivered on time due to capacity issues. Absolutely fair enough. But Le Squez was different, it was the only project on the list at a more advanced stage and I want to respond to Deputy Ferey's point on this. A feasibility study for Le Squez had been completed in October 2023. The project was ready to move to the planning phase, as Deputy Wilson has stated. Funds were then allocated in last year's Budget for 2024 and 2025, the Budget that this States Assembly had agreed to, to finalise the plans for planning and to begin construction, so just as Deputy Ferey stated. In 2024, we are at the end of 2024, we agreed that £3.5 million was assigned to advance this project. Where has this money gone? What has been done in 2024 to advance this project because a feasibility study had been completed and was signed off ready to go in October 2023. There was money put to get us to a point of having spades in the ground for this ... we could be here speaking right now about the St. Helier youth project going but also for things that have happened with the youth project in Le Squez and family centre and upgrades to the Samarès School. This is what the frustration is, this is what the questions are, what has happened in 2024 to not be able to advance this project? Where has the money gone that was assigned to this project for 2024 to be able to move it ahead? How disempowering for these young people who participated in extensive stakeholder engagement. There was an agreement that somehow this Le Squez Youth Centre needed to be improved or redeveloped. To say now that it just needed some maintenance and a coat of a paint, I am confused about that too. This has been going on for a long, long time and we spent money to make a feasibility study. Again, how much abortive costs have we had and wasted to get to this point? Now we have to wait to 2028 to start again. Now I would like to hear, can we pick up that feasibility study in 2028 and begin the process in a normal manner or do we have to start again, kind of like Fort Regent? I do not know how many feasibility studies were run on Fort Regent but it is the same point. It is the same point. How much abortive costs have gone into this and what has happened to the money in 2024, and how much more advanced could we be? I think as a States Assembly we should be asking that question. What happened in 2024 that we could not have moved this project forward so that we do not have to be pitting youth centres against each other. This is not what we should be about. We should be about understanding the process and development stages that they go through and answering questions, and that the Scrutiny Panel, when we ask questions, is given the information on time. What I am concerned about as well, I want to get assurances from the Ministers, that this does not also happen to the St. Helier youth project because again that also has to go through the different development stages. We got a response to some questions from the Scrutiny Panel where it gives a very good overview of all the different stages that a capital programme goes through from concept or big blue-sky thinking ideas all the way to utilisation. It is really useful to - and I strongly recommend States Members to look at this - to understand the different stages of a capital programme so we know what we are talking about. It would also be good then to really understand each stage's cost, et cetera, because it is not necessarily known how far we can get the St. Helier Youth Centre to some kind of delivery by the end of this term. I would like to hear from the Ministers how far can we get? Can we get a youth centre by the elections? Are we going to see the St. Helier youth being able to use their facilities? Or will it be a situation where in the new Government maybe we have reprioritisation again and then there will not

be a youth centre in St. Helier either. I am really worried about that as well. I really would like to call on the States Assembly to question how we got here. How did we get to this point where now we have to make a decision apparently between one youth centre and another? If we had been able to spend that money as agreed in 2024 to get Le Squez further along, we would not be in this situation now. It feels like youth projects are being yo-yoed around. It depends who is in charge and I really want to hear from the Ministers to understand what has happened in 2024 and then how far are we going to get even one youth project before the end of this term? Thank you.

2.1.5 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

There may be a modicum of truth in that maybe it does depend on who is in charge about where money gets allocated, but I do not think that has ever been any different, has it? We do have to acknowledge the fact that there is a different Council of Ministers here and it is within their gift to allocate spending as they wish, and I wish to talk about that. I am very sympathetic to this proposition. I think what Deputy Wilson is bringing forward here is absolutely the right thing to do because she is amplifying the voice of her constituents. She has seen that this is not just a new thing that has popped up, but since 2019 this has been on the table and it has been an ongoing process. It just seems that the wheels for change when it comes to investing in real people in our community, young people in our community, takes so much time, so much energy and so much effort just to get things to where they should be, where other things and other developments that happen can almost pop up overnight. I would like to explore that a little bit. What also makes me very uncomfortable is the fact that it has come to the point where this debate is now pitting St. Clement against St. Helier. We have often talked in debates about the divide of town and country. There is that famous book which we often refer to about *The Triumph of the Country*. This is even worse because what we are seeing here is a divide and conquer I think from Government, and perhaps successive governments, about putting not town and country against each other, but urban and urban. In fact, I am sure the boundaries between St. Helier and St. Clement are very blurred. Young people move back and forwards in particular, they will probably have friends in different parishes, they may even go to different youth clubs. I think that is absolutely normal and to be expected too. I do not like the fact the Member is being put into this position. I also do not like the fact that St. Helier Deputies are being put in a position where they are obviously having money threatened to be taken away from them. I would simply say that it is not the Member who is moving this who I think should take any of that potential blame, I would make the point that Government has within its power, within its budgets, ample resources, intent and money to deliver both projects without delay if they wanted to do that. I want to talk about, just very briefly, a quote that we had. When we were looking at this wider budget as an Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel on, I think it was, 20th November, we had the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development in, but we also had the Chief Economic Adviser who spoke to us. We talked about investment in the Island and we talked about the wider economy, as you would expect. We talked about investment and the future economy in Jersey and one of the things that he said, and I will quote this, it is in the public domain, it was a public meeting. His words: "I think bang for your buck, public investment is one of the biggest returns you get on any form of investment for a wider economy but that is in things like early education, good infrastructure and the like. We have some of those things already in place. We do invest quite low levels publicly. We spend large amounts; we spend large amounts on services as opposed to infrastructure and capital investment. I think we have done that over a number of years and reversing that trend I think would be important from a public sector point of view." What he is recognising there I think is what many people realise is that Government is not very good at investing in often real infrastructure that helps real people. I have made this point before that it is often very good at squirreling away money over decades and then on the one hand saying: "Look at these massive reserves that we have got, are we not doing great?" Absolutely important that we have those reserves but on the other hand still pleading poverty. I have made the analogy before, it is like the - I do not know if we can use the word - but the miser who lives perhaps in a very big, but rundown

house, who looks like he is living in poverty but has got millions of pounds tucked under his bed. It makes absolutely no sense, of course, because he could be having a different, or she could be having a different existence. You do get female misers of course, let us be perfectly equality-based here. When it comes back to the question of equality between St. Helier and St. Clement, I completely resent being put in this completely forced dichotomy that is being presented to us by Government. I have to accept the political reality that I vote with what is on the table here. I am not going to vote for money to be taken out of the public realm which would be used in St. Helier to be spent in another area, but I fully accept that if it was a St. Brelade's question that was coming up about Les Quennevais, I might fully think completely differently. What I would say, and I put this out to Government - and I put this to Deputy Wilson as well - is that I think 2028 is far too late. I would urge this Government to get on with its building of facilities in St. Helier which are very much needed, which absolutely need to be supported and which will benefit, not just St. Helier, but young people throughout the Island who come to St. Helier, but that she comes back and gets an assurance from Government.

[10:30]

I would like to hear some of those assurances today from Government to ensure that at least my vote goes with the Government side on this and not with the proposition because there is still an element of doubt in my mind on this. I would like to get a commitment from them that they will prioritise spending at Le Squez. I would like to encourage the Member for St. Clement to come back in next year's Budget ... if they have not made that priority to bring this back next year. I will be certainly very happy to vote for that proposition so that the work can get started and funding can be allocated in this term of office and not have to wait until 2028. Just a last remark, I had to chuckle when I heard Deputy Ferey talk about the "compact by modern standards", talking about Le Squez Youth Club. I think he might have been referring to ... there is a basketball court in there, if I remember rightly. I have been in Le Squez, I know it. I have been there as well. I think that is how they used to describe Hautlieu School, the old Hautlieu School when we were hemmed in I think to this tiny gym. It was much smaller ... it was probably about half the size of an actual basketball court. For young people who are 6 foot-plus to try and have a game of basketball, you could really only do it 3-a-side and then whenever you would do your layups, you would just run into the wall, so you would end up hitting the wall because the momentum took you there, so it was certainly compact. I think that if Deputy Ferey ever decides he does not want to be a politician, he would make a very good estate agent. **[Laughter]** I leave that thought with him. My sympathy ... and I know sympathy is not what the Deputy needs here, she needs votes for this. I would say to Government: "Do not be complacent in future just about the fact that you have got a parliamentary majority here that you can force this through. What you need to be looking at here is your moral obligation to young people throughout the Island and making sure that we provide that in the future." For the moment, absolutely I will look forward to developments in St. Helier, but I hope that we also get those developments within this term of office, irrespective of which Government is in power and which Members are on the Back Benches.

2.1.6 Connétable R.P. Vibert of St. Peter:

When talking about the St. Helier Youth Centre, I would remind Members who were there at the time that this was first proposed by Deputy Ward in 2018. Of course, I must clarify that that is Deputy Rob Ward, **[Laughter]** the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning because there can be some confusion. Interestingly, I think just over £3 million was allocated to that project and where has the money gone? I must ask that question, yes? One of the previous Ministers reallocated that funding and St. Helier lost out on a youth centre. We are talking around 1,600 children in the immediate area of where we intend to build the new youth centre. That is a very large number of children and there are no facilities in St. Helier. I had a recent media interview and they asked me what had changed since I was a teenager. One of the things I was able to say, and it had nothing to do with this

proposition, was that when I was in my teenage years I can recall at least 4 youth clubs within St. Helier. Now there are none in the central St. Helier area at all. There is a facility at First Tower which I think is just in St. Helier, but there are no others, and that is quite a small facility. The biggest change is that there is nothing in town for these children and we are building more units of accommodation in that immediate area, so there is a priority for St. Helier. I do question that the Le Squez development was ready to go because it was not. There are no plans that have been approved. Certainly the feedback that we have got is that there has been very little by way of preplanning advice either, so I do question how ready it was to go. I also question that because the Youth Service have told me that they wish to make some changes to the original proposals anyway. I think that, yes, there were plans but there were still revisions that certainly the Youth Service required. The Budget, we have a figure in this amendment of £7.5 million; the actual Budget, the latest estimate is around £9 million. Now it involves the demolition of the existing centre, so £2.5 million, what would we spend that £2.5 million on? Would that be the demolition and then where would we be? We would have no centre at all at Le Squez or in St. Helier and I think we have to think about careful planning here. If there is a large new centre in St. Helier, that will serve not only St. Helier but youth throughout the Island. If the Le Squez Centre is demolished then those children have to have somewhere to go during that time. If there is a new facility in St. Helier, that is going to probably be the closest youth facility to Le Squez. It is not an either/or, both will be delivered. I agree that there has been some reprofiling and in order to meet the budget for both, that is necessary. The Le Squez Centre is currently operational and there is no question that we will not continue maintenance on that centre to ensure that it is able to fulfil its role. The youth centre are confident that they can continue delivering facilities for young children from Le Squez through to 2028 which is where the reprofiling puts the build of the new Le Squez Centre. I can also talk about the Play Strategy. Again, in the same interview in fact I had, although the question was not asked, I noted the lack of facilities in the east of the Island. Therefore, within the Play Strategy we have to feature on how we end this east/west divide where there are numerous facilities in the west and relatively few facilities for the youth in the east. That is a very important part of that new strategy. We are not going to forget about the east and I intend that that should be covered and also that there should be a plan to how we rectify that situation. I will keep talking with Deputy Wilson to see if there are changes that we can arrive at or some form of compromise in the future that would deliver the Le Squez Centre slightly earlier; I am quite happy to do that. We must keep talking but I would urge Members to reject this amendment. Thank you very much.

The Bailiff:

Can I just make the observation that during the Connétable's speech there was a little bit of background noise that I could certainly hear and it could be distracting to speakers. Perhaps Members could be careful to, if they are going to exchange it, to exchange it very much *sotto voce*. Deputy Doublet.

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

I am quickly rewriting parts of my speech because Deputy Tadier made many of the points I was going to make and I thought he made them very well. I think all Members agree that St. Helier is important. I am not sure why the parishes are being pitted against each other in this manner because, yes, every family and every child in the Island uses St. Helier, and that is important. But children living in other parishes towards the east of the Island, like St. Saviour, St. Clement, et cetera, all of these parishes contain built-up areas with many families with perhaps similar characteristics to many of the families living in St. Helier. Those families and those children are important too. It is not just children from St. Clement as well who want to attend this youth club. I know that children do tend to visit friends and they mix into different youth clubs, so this is not just about the children of St. Clement. I wanted to pick up on a point that was made, I believe it was made by the Constable of St. Helier, it might have been a previous speaker, about the number of residents in St. Helier living in

flats. I had a look at the census data, and of course I do not disagree, there are many children who are living in flats and do not have facilities to play near their homes, but in St. Clement the same is true. There is a very high proportion of St. Clement residents living in flats, it is nearly a third of the population of St. Clement. There is need in this parish as well, there is need in the east of the Island generally. The children of St. Helier, yes, they need youth clubs, and the children in the eastern parishes also need youth clubs. We should not be making this an either/or situation, one child is not worth more than another. The language that the Minister used in his speech, that there has been some “reprofiling”, this term sits uncomfortably with me because it almost makes it easier to feel a bit more removed from the decision by characterising it in such a way that it is: “There has been a reprofiling.” It sounds quite benign, does it not? I would challenge the Minister to say that to the children who live in this area and who use Le Squez Youth Club, to say to them: “Sorry, children, you have been reprofiled.” What message does this send to those children because it is not just a bit of maintenance that is needed. I do not buy this argument that: “Oh, they have got somewhere to go” because when does it become a tipping point and that somewhere becomes a place that is maybe having a negative impact on their self-esteem? Children having a building allocated to them for their use, a building that is dilapidated and not maintained, what message is that sending to those children and what is it doing to their self-esteem being in those conditions? Those children are being failed at the moment, we are failing those children. Again, I will go back to the point, just because we are failing other children in other parts of the Island, and failing them in a greater sense, it does not mean that we should not address the failures in this part of the Island. In terms of the amount of time that is being pushed back to, that is another thing that makes it critical for me, because if it is going to be another 4 to 5 years, that is almost half a generation of children. If a child is starting to attend a youth club around the age of 11 or 12 when they reach secondary school, 4 to 5 years, that is the entirety of their later childhood and their journey through secondary school. It is just not good enough and I do not buy this message that we cannot do both. I do not buy it. This source of funding argument, I raised a question about this yesterday, I just do not buy it. I do not think that there should be arguments made about: “Well we cannot do this because if we do it, we cannot do this other thing.” Yes, I am a sensible person, I know of course that we have a certain amount of money to be spent on a certain amount of projects, but we are supposed to be prioritising what we are delivering to the children and the families of this Island. We need families to stay on our Island, we need young adults to have children, and if we are not providing environments where there are facilities for those children, then people are not going to want to have families on Jersey. That is how serious it is. Yes, I do not accept this argument that if we prioritise the spending for Le Squez it means there is not going to be a St. Helier Youth Club. No, I challenge the Government to do both and I urge Members to vote for this and to set out expectations that Government should be doing both, that Government should be thinking of and addressing the needs of children across the Island, including in the eastern parishes.

[10:45]

2.1.8 Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

I will keep my comments brief as we are hopefully going to keep momentum today. I put my light on after Deputy Tadier’s good comments but I want to reflect first on the quote of a movie title by Deputy Ferey who said: “Everything Everywhere All at Once.” Well, to those who suffer from many community-based projects, and I will look to Deputy Rob Ward and those in St. Helier from his 2018 proposals, but to those today in Le Squez, I think to “Annie” and tomorrow is always a day away. Unfortunately, for those who had their optimism from a capital programme set previously, a youth centre and associated facilities, we have heard not just a youth centre will be not just a day away but many years away. I am glad that the Chair of the Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel highlighted the abortive costs and the changing nature of the capital programme. This was highlighted by the Constable of St. Peter, who highlighted how money moved from where it was directed before. Perhaps that is something that the current government could address, providing

perhaps some great historic examples of transfers and current ones. Then I would like to move on to the comments about where the funding comes from. Right off the bat, the Constable of St. Helier broke this argument into one of, not just is it good to have a youth centre upgraded with associated facilities at Le Squez but where the funding is coming from. I say we have heard already that the enemy of a good plan is a perfect plan. If Deputy Wilson's plan was perfect in numbers but not in allocations, it is the failure of the Government to provide a good plan in where to fund it from or how to compromise. It is on this point I rose from what Deputy Tadier said, which is why not at least offer an olive branch, a compromise? If the full works starting in 2025 are not fit for purpose, if we cannot do that, why not commit to bringing plans forward that will be, as those who would like their capital programmes oven-ready or shovel-ready depending on what you are looking for. That would have been a really interesting compromise and one maybe, as a Deputy of St. Clement, I could have supported. I struggle with this because our constituents, our communities in the whole of the east of the Island had an idea for this and they had invested community trust in seeing plans move forward. Every time in any part of our capital programme and our wider programme we shift tack, then we erode that trust. It is incumbent on anyone in a change of Government to consider where stability lies in this. I believe it was at the beginning of this year, though - I am scared to quote Hansard now, I think, given how things happen in here - it was the Chief Minister who, on being questioned, I recall, committed that this year, the 2024-2027 Government Plan would be followed. So the question is where is that £3.5 million, where are the plans, where is the pragmatism and the compromise? I struggle but I want to support my constituents.

2.1.9 Deputy A. Howell of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

I am very supportive of improved youth facilities in St. Clement and St. Helier. I know that play is really important for all our young people. I support Deputy Wilson but I believe that at the moment we have to prioritise facilities in St. Helier as they have no facilities. I ask that, in the meantime, we look at FB Fields and facilities there, and Le Rocquier School, they have got a wonderful playing area at the back, and see how we can work smart for our children in this area. If the youth facilities have to be demolished then they will need something in the interim. As a Government we want to do our best for all children on the Island, so please can we all work together and come up with a proper solution. At the moment, please, can we just go ahead and support the Minister for Children and Families and the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning in their stance. Thank you.

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

We have 2 primary youth clubs in St. Saviour that we share with our neighbouring parishes which works very well. We have a club at Maufant which we share with our friends in St. Martin and we also have another one in Grands Vaux which we share with St. Helier. Children are not worried about parish borders, they will go wherever they wish and wherever their friends are. There is always room for improvements and I have just recently signed an agreement with the Grands Vaux Youth Club to sponsor one of their leaders for 3 years. I do wish to see greater improvements in youth clubs. Something the Deputy said did bother me a little regarding St. Clement, that the building is very dilapidated and probably has asbestos. That did worry me. Asbestos is usually okay until you disturb it but if the building is dilapidated, I do hope that the building has been checked out for safety. I wish the Deputy well, I am not sure how I am going to vote on this yet. It is a very emotive subject, so I will wait to hear from colleagues. Thank you.

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

It is very interesting to hear some of the speeches because they could be my speeches, at the risk of being confused. The word "frustration" was used right at the beginning of this, and I can say that if there is one person that has a frustration over youth facilities, it is me. In 2018 a youth facility was agreed for the centre of St. Helier in the Common Strategic Policy of that Government. Money was allocated and it was voted for by a significant number of people who are in this Assembly now and

that importance was identified, parallel to the beginning of a new facility in St. Clement, I would say. Despite my push as a Back-Bencher that did not happen with successive Ministers for Education and so on, and I know there have been quite a few, a bit like the Manchester United manager. We got to 2022, and in March of 2022 I amended the Island Plan to allocate a place, Nelson Street, for a youth facility. I have seen the plans for that, I have seen the plans for the brewery site, I have seen plans for other sites which I will not mention. Because I do not think it is fair to mention them because people might not know about them, it might be a place that they want to sell and they do not want it to be spoken about. Lots of plans have been put in place, nothing acted upon, because it was not possible to do both. It was not possible at that time, it was not possible from March 2022 onwards up to where we are now to produce that facility in the centre of St. Helier. Just let me read out some names: Cyril Le Marquand Court, Northern Quarter, Merchant Square, the brewery site itself, Mayfair Hotel and more, all of those are homes that are being developed in that area. Many, many children will be in that area and we have developed that without any youth facilities in the centre of St. Helier being developed at that time and over the last 2½ years, and in the 4 years previous to that. We are in a position now, there is a desperate need for youth facilities there so that the Youth Service can do their work. That new facility, when it is built, will be a centre for families in the area during the daytime. Indeed, I will go further and say if we had built the town school, that town school could be used partly, not only La Passerelle Junior, which is currently in porta-cabins, but with facilities on the roof of that school it could be open to the local community as well. So these projects are desperately needed. The pitching of those projects against another one I find very unfortunate, very unfortunate, indeed. Now in terms of delivering both, I would ask Members of the previous government and the one before that, why were they not delivered? Why are we only now talking about a youth facility in the centre of St. Helier? Because in the few months that we have been here it has been a pleasure to work with Deputy Ferey and the Minister for Infrastructure, find a site, find the money, have the plans and be ready to develop that as a site which is desperately needed. That is what we have to do. Any risk to that site ... when we talk about letting down children, we have let down the children of the centre of St. Helier for years and years and years. There are thousands of homes and children in that area that have no youth facilities whatsoever, despite my efforts. It is only now that we are getting to that facility and what we get is an amendment that will take money away from that facility and put it at risk. Yes, I would absolutely love to do both. Obviously there is a way we can do both and that is to have a proper Reform Government that would have a fair taxation system and allocate money accordingly, but that is for a couple of years' time. I would say to St. Helier Deputies, if you want to get down the line of pitching St. Helier against somewhere else, then you have got to decide on a side to sit on, hopefully it will be for St. Helier. Probably not, do not know, but if you do not want to do that, let us look at the reality of this. A youth centre does exist in Le Squez and there is some work that is going to be going on. There is going to be the repurposing of the outside of it to increase the area outside and the basketball courts and realign them, which is happening now. One of the approaches that we do need to take, and I agree with this in terms of capital projects, is to use the money and allocate it appropriately at the time, so if there are delays, let us put it into something else. Absolutely, but there is a real priority. I will say this to this Assembly, if you are going to lead, you have to lead and you have to make priorities. I am happy to have the priority of a really desperately-needed youth facility in the centre of our town that can intervene with young people at an early stage using the wonderful skills and dedication of the Youth Service. I do not say that as an empty thing, we all know that, we all agree with the work they are doing. That early intervention in young people inside of town can make such a positive impact into the future but there are no facilities there to do that at the moment. My plea is to say, please, do not put anything away when we have finally got to a stage where we can build something. If you want to, anyone here, you can have it named after you, I do not mind. It is not about that. Whatever, do whatever you want, it does not matter, but we have to get that right for the children of St. Helier. Yes, there is a practical issue here. If we were to go through the ... we have to time this properly as well. Another reason, and this has to be considered by even those St. Clement's Deputies who

perhaps will have this pitting one against the other, which I think is a shame, if we do not build a facility in St. Helier which is a large facility, a really, really good, purpose-built, state of the art, modern for young people in that centre, St. Clement will be demolished and we will be in a situation where there are no youth facilities for we do not know how long. Now having worked in a place where they did discover asbestos, it was in the labs, when it was not disturbed we were okay, as soon as they went to rebuild that it added cost and it added time on to that build. We have to be in a position where there is a fallback in order to do that. I have got to say in the planning of Le Squez, that was not considered as well as it should have been. Now I do not want to pit one against the other, I would love to do both. The allocation of money is a reality this year that we have inherited, and we are going into the future, but we have to be real about what we can do. If you do not want to prioritise St. Helier, then I would ask you to speak to the children, the parents and the families in the centre of St. Helier where we are packing them in, we are packing in the homes, we are packing in the building, we are packing in the families: "Go and live there, that is the place to be, because that is where we are building, but we are not going to provide any youth facilities. The school", which I am really hoping we can move forward at last in the next few weeks and months, "will not be built. You can just get on with it because we want to pitch one against the other." I hope the Assembly can vote against this amendment today but recognise that of course we want to do everything. Of course we do. It has been 6 years since 2018 where everything was not done and one large project at the centre of St. Helier was not done, even though this Assembly voted for it and money was allocated. We are finally at the stage where that can happen and I urge Members do not do anything to get in the way of that. Of course we want to help out at Le Squez. There is work going on across our schools all of the time, there is work going on across our facilities all of the time. Yes, I would like to throw a lot of money about like that, but yesterday there were votes on not putting money into some of the other projects we want to get on with, so we cannot. Where are we going to go?

[11:00]

Finally, just to say - and sorry I have taken a little bit of time, but I am trying to calmly work my way through this because I think it is a really important point where we are - the word "fairness" was used. It is completely unfair to leave the children of St. Helier, in the centre of St. Helier, and the families in the mostly densely-packed, populated area of our Island without any youth facility. It has been unfair to do that for the last 6 years and we all have to take responsibility for that. I always feel I could have pressed more as a Back-Bencher, I did not feel I was listened to enough. I blame myself for that. I feel that Ministers, successive Ministers, could have done more, including myself. I am trying to do that now, and we are getting somewhere to do that now, but we have to take on that project because it is an important project for the future of so many people in town. We cannot simply go away from today saying: "Oh, we have got a nice idea, we will just do both." How is that going to work? Where is the practicality? Where is the money coming from? What is the timings? How do they fit together? Where are we in the actual planning process and the plans for it? Where are we? Is the Youth Service still going? Are we going to delay everything? That is what has happened in the past. Everything has been a priority but those priorities have not even moved forward when they have been made a priority. I have to say, and I know some of the Members of this Assembly will not like me saying this because they simply do not want to believe this, we have prioritised and we are getting things done. We will get this done and we will move forward on this, so please give us an opportunity to do that. Of course we can work with the Deputy of St. Clement to try and do as much as we possibly can. I think the very notion ... I do not believe the Deputy would believe I would go and do anything else. This is where I come from, although I am not sure what people believe in me at the moment in this place, but there you go. It is really important that we get this right. It is really important we get this right for St. Helier and the rest of this Island. The youth facilities that are there we should not talking down. They are open, they are doing a great job, but we have got this opportunity to produce something in St. Helier which will be state of the art and we have got a model then as well for the rest of the Island too. I urge Members to reject this amendment

simply because it puts an obstacle in the way of something that is desperately needed and has not been acted on for 6-and-a-bit years. So, let us get this done now and then move on for the rest of the facilities as quickly as we can with a prioritisation as we can do it. Thank you.

2.1.12 Connétable M.O'D. Troy of St. Clement:

Before I use my prepared speech, I need to caution the Constable of St. Helier and other Members on the emotional blackmail that is produced in this Assembly. I talked about it yesterday. It is not the case that if we build a youth facility at St. Clement that potholes will not be filled because if that were the case, how many potholes could we fill if we did not build a youth club in St. Helier, so that argument is nullified. Secondly, I have to also suggest that the youth of St. Helier are pretty well looked after compared to St. Clement. They have parks aplenty, gyms on every street, cinemas, Springfield Stadium, Fort Regent, fast-food outlets everywhere, snooker and pool facilities and a bus centre that goes to all areas east and west. This is not about St. Helier versus St. Clement, this is about the needs of youth across the Island. Now I will go to my major speech because it says exactly where we stand. I am not standing out of duty but out of conscience to clarify a need in our parish for significant investment in our only youth club. We have no wish to delay or cancel a youth club in St. Helier. Let me make that absolutely clear. We do not want to cancel the youth club in St. Helier since we can see that their need is greater than ours and they currently have none. Part of a States Member's job is to look at your representatives of the parish but also you have a greater role, to look at the needs of the Island, and you have to pair the 2 together, and it is difficult sometimes. My only wish for them is that they get it delivered soon and do not have to wait as long as we have. We got £3.5 million in a previous Budget. It seems to me that sometimes these budget debates are a waste of time because we vote things and we do not get our money's worth, and that is pretty disastrous. We are wasting an awful lot of time today, and in previous days, and it will be a wonder to see whether these things come to fruition that we vote on. I say this because in office I have been privy to significant plans for FB Fields, now delayed or cancelled, and also a scheme for Le Rocquier School at an initial investment of £70 million. I saw those plans and I went to various meetings and then that was watered down to £40 million and now it looks as though we will just have an all-weather pitch. Nonetheless, we are grateful for that; I will just document that. Four years ago I was pleased to be told that there was £5 million for an imminent refurb or possible relocation of our youth club, possibly on the edge of FB Fields, and now nothing. As a parish with support from our Deputies or procureurs, we have made significant advances in mental health care with the provision of targeted mental health pathways supported by volunteer mental health practitioners. We have expanded our community services and payments for those in dire need and we have recently opened a St. Clement Community Hub at Le Clos Mourant, formerly Le Squez. This is a mini version of the Parish Hall brought to the Le Clos Mourant and Le Marais area and has an incredible effect for the area and its community. We are currently working to find a suitable area for a youngsters playground and Deputy Karen Wilson has created a new initiative entitled St. Clement community development which will see the joining-up of all assets of the parish, be they people or buildings or land. These services cover most of our parishioners' needs, except our young people, our youth, the next generation. The youth club is a community within itself. It nurtures mutual understanding, respect, good manners, camaraderie, further education, well-being and fitness, and produces better outcomes for all. We are a parish of 10,500 residents crammed into 4½ square kilometres with a great many disadvantaged through all age groups. Our young are a large proportion and cannot wait much longer. I therefore urge Members to help us out here and join me in voting for the proposition. If not, can we have our £3.5 million, give it to the parish, and we will do it ourselves. Thank you.

2.1.13 Deputy B. Ward of St. Clement:

I too am struggling, like my fellow St. Clement Deputy, Alex Curtis. I too want to know where that money has gone. I was not aware that money had been allocated and it is now not there. Where is it? There have been some very compelling arguments and debates this morning on both sides and I

feel that waiting for a further 4 years is really just too long. Why can we not be clever with our planning and start with St. Helier and when it is up and running, then we get the work done on improving our services for our youth in St. Clement, a stepped process. You may say: “Well where are we going to get the money from?” Well, I have been on this Island 45 years and every February and March we hear: “Oh, we have found some more money.” Different departments have underspent. Why can we not use that money that is found or comes to light in February and March to build our youth centre in St. Clement? Not immediately, because we do not want to have no facilities either in St. Clement while we are waiting for St. Helier to be done, but with a very clever stepped planning process, when one is just about completed, we can then start and get moving on that St. Clement’s so we are providing some facilities. I think that is some solution that monies can be used from the underspends of this year so it will not be impacting on our Budget per se. That is all I want to say, so thank you very much for listening. Thank you.

2.1.14 Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade:

A lot of what I was going to say has already been said, so I will limit myself to just a few comments. As has already been said, this Island has committed itself to putting children first. It should not be a competition between St. Clement children or St. Helier children or St. Brelade children. I am bemused, the spending was there, the money was there, the scheme was ready to go, there was a plan, there was a solution and suddenly all that changed with the change of Government. There has been no consultation, as I understand, from the parishioners of St. Clement and I agree with Deputy Wilson that this is not a fair distinction. It makes no economic sense to put sticking plasters on the existing crumbling infrastructure of Le Squez Youth Club. In my comments around the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel I referred to this as a short-term Budget and I think this is an example. It is also an example of Government not listening to parishioners. There should not be a choice. Le Squez should not be dropped. This is about both priorities. I agree with Deputy Wilson when she says the Council of Ministers’ position perpetuates the view that some communities are worth more than others. I think the decision should be reversed and I would support this amendment. The money was there, the plan was in train. I concur with Deputy Wilson that Ministers should simply get on with it. But I think there has been insufficient consideration given to the impact of not doing so. This is another *volte-face* as a result of the new healthcare facilities. It also affects trust in Government. In this case, broken promises might result in broken windows. This is the theory that visible signs of decline lead to a lack of interest and promote apathy and antisocial behaviour. Residents and visitors feel unsafe. Small issues, if left unaddressed, can escalate into larger problems. Changing priorities at this late stage may well have unintended consequences. As I said at the beginning, we are supposed to be putting children first. We are supposed to be supporting families to thrive. We are supposed to be encouraging people to remain in Jersey and bring up families. Deputy Ferey and Deputy Vibert tell us that the project is not ready to go. Well, it is more ready to go than the St. Helier project, which strikes me as embryonic. No feasibility has been done. There does not appear to have been any costs provided, certainly not to the E.H.I. (Environment, Housing and Infrastructure) panel. Le Squez project is different, I would argue. If the project had been progressed through 2024 using the £3.5 million at the same pace as it had in 2022 and 2023, we would have plans by now and probably planning permission. Deputy Jeune asked a good question: “What is the consideration of the impact on St Helier?” How will we know that this will not happen again in St Helier? It is a good question. What is the plan? What is the timescale for St. Helier? It is certainly not going to be built in 2025 in the way that Le Squez would have been developed. Just in response to what Deputy Ward was saying, this amendment is about St. Clement, not about what might or might not happen in St. Helier. I concur with Deputy Tadier, we should not be waiting until 2028 to move this forward and I will be supporting the Deputy in her amendment.

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

I recognise people's wishes to ensure that those in St. Clement get the very best facilities, especially in an area that is so well occupied, as the Constable told us. There is no disagreement that expanding and upgrading the facilities at Le Squez Youth Club is an important project, and that is why it is in our programme of work. As has and will be said on various occasions during this Budget debate, we cannot do everything at once. Our resources as an Island and as a Government do not allow for that. As Ministers, we need to consider competing priorities, taking a broad view of what is needed across the Island, and that is why we are unable to accept this amendment today.

[11:15]

As Deputy Ferey mentioned ahead of this debate, we went to visit Le Squez Youth Centre and Samarès Primary School last week. The fact is there is a facility in place. It could be bigger and it could be upgraded. Indeed, it will be bigger and it will be upgraded. But there is a workable facility available. It is not a crumbling mess, as described by Deputy Wilson. It could do with some T.L.C. (tender loving care) but it is not a crumbling mess. I was far more concerned when I went next door to the school to see water leaking inside a school more than 12 months after Storm Ciaran. That is what caused me real concern and that is where my focus is on at the moment. Compare that to the north of St Helier where we do not have a facility. Nothing. The youth in that part of the Island also deserve a serviceable youth centre. If a finite amount of money is available to spend, it should be clear where the priority sits. Deputy Wilson spoke about the work 42 years ago. Well, 42 years ago, as the Constable of St Peter said, there was plenty of activity in St. Helier: Aquila, Seaton, Hermitage, to name a few. I am sure there are many more than that. The decision to focus on St. Helier is backed by the Youth Service. If Members do not wish to believe the Council of Ministers or trust our logic, then hopefully they can believe our youth workers on the ground, 2 of whom joined us on our site visit. During our visit to Samarès and Le Squez, we saw some options for quick wins to improve the existing provision. For example, we can make better use of the outdoor space and ensure it is available year round. I will be happy to take forward those possibilities with colleagues. There is a practical issue with this amendment as well, which I will come back to shortly. We are asked if we are listening. We are listening. We need to make access to the FB Playing Fields, and I have asked officers repeatedly to do that. I am probably going to have to write to them to instruct them, because we have got a nice area where youngsters can utilise, and many do, but there is no need for them to walk around the road when they can just go through a gate, which unfortunately remains locked. We are looking at the sports provision at Le Rocquier, as the Constable said, but we have to be realistic. An £80 million plan, well I think that was for Fantasy Island. But we are in Jersey, we need to be realistic, but we can do something. The Constable of St. Clement was the only Constable to identify a potential skatepark in his parish, which I visited at the site with him. I am working with the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning to get more access to school estates out of hours. It is a shame that Deputy Tadier is not here because I could be an estate agent. I would describe the court as "*bijou*" in the youth centre, but next door - right next door - there is a much larger hall. Why are we not using that for our young people in the evenings and on Saturdays and on Sundays? On the day we visited the school, the school had actually been using the court in the youth centre because their hall was being used for something else. I pay tribute to the Constable and the Deputies for the progress they are making. Anyone who looks at St. Clement's accounts, as I did last night, will see they support at least 6 youth organisations within their parish. One of those is St. Clement's Sports Club, whom I have met with to talk about their ambitions. They help hundreds of youngsters each and every week. I know that the Council supports that initiative very well. We have heard that St. Clement is ready to go, yet when Deputy Wilson quoted from an email, she quoted it was at a position to draw up the plans. Well that does not sound to me as though that is ready to go. That sounds to me as though we are ready to draw up plans. Members could approve the money in this Budget but that would not make the project deliverable. Most of the funds would very likely remain unspent in 2025. Meanwhile, the amendment would prevent other projects which are deliverable from being taken forward. My other interest in this amendment is that it seeks to take all the money from the

budget for improving our public realm. That is a budget which we, as Ministers, have already cut by some 50 per cent. We have halved that budget. Money for enhancing our public realm has been a target in amendments in this Budget to the extent that if all the amendments lodged were adopted, we would be taking a figure in excess of £3.5 million from a £2.5 million budget. We could spend nothing on our public realm and invest the money elsewhere. But that is not a decision without consequence. Many places, towns, cities, villages invest extensively in their public realm. In Jersey, we quite simply do not do enough. This is investment in Jersey, in our product, and improving what we can offer to Islanders and visitors alike, both young and old. It makes areas of the Island - especially in town - more modern, attractive and inclusive. It shows that we care about our public places, and that will encourage private enterprises to invest and show commitment to the Island, and the Constable of St. Helier gave a good example of the work we did together in Halkett Street. After all, if we do not care, why should anyone else? If I thought that the public all thought St. Helier was perfect and could not be improved by further investment, then I would not be arguing for public realm investment. But that is far from the truth. Everyone I speak to wants to see St. Helier improved, and that will not happen with a budget of zero. It is also a key objective of the C.S.P. (Common Strategic Policy). I would invite Members to look at the comments paper, and in particular the images on pages 3, 4 and 5 of that paper as to what we can achieve within St. Helier. I would like us to be able to spend many millions of pounds annually on our public realm, not only in St. Helier but across the Island. But I have to be pragmatic, just as we are asking other Members to be pragmatic. As part of balancing competing priorities we have £2.5 million to invest in the public realm. I ask Members not to take that figure to zero, leaving us with nothing to invest in improving our public places. For the reasons I have given, I ask that Members support the creation of a new north of town facility as a priority, enhancing Le Squez from 2028 and continue investing in the public realm. Respectfully, I ask Members to reject the amendment.

2.1.16 Connétable D. Johnson of St. Mary:

I begin by saying I have considerable sympathy with the proposer in bringing this proposition. The matter has been delayed despite various promises, and I fully appreciate why she needs to bring some certainty to the situation. Equally, I am concerned as to what might happen in the general scheme of things if the money mentioned is withdrawn from the public realm. In her earlier speech, Deputy Jeune - who has now left the Chamber I see - made reference to the Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel's concern as to a number of matters and the lack of detail. She also made fleeting reference to Fort Regent - sorry, I see Deputy Jeune is here, just moved her seat - which prompted the panel to propose an amendment, the 19th amendment, which I assure you, Sir, I am not going to discuss in detail. But it is perhaps worth reading out the final paragraph: "The full redevelopment project - beyond feasibility - will require a further sustainable funding model. This model will be developed by the Minister to the extent that the necessary funding will be included in the Proposed Budget 2026-2029 to be brought to the Assembly for approval." For my own part, I would take some comfort if some assurance was given on behalf of the Council of Ministers that they will indeed act as if a similar amendment would be included here in respect of the Le Squez project. That would bring some certainty to the situation. It would produce facts and figures, so that the situation could be monitored and would enable the full funding to be dealt with and identified at the time of the next Budget. With that, I can do my speech and I hope that a member of the Council of Ministers might give their opinion on that. I apologise for not getting my question in before the Constable of St. John spoke.

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

I want to share my thoughts on the proposed changes to funding for the Le Squez and St. Helier centre. Both of these projects are incredibly important and it is regrettable to hear that funding was there and now it is not for Le Squez. I fully understand the need to support and not delay neither of those projects. However, I cannot agree with the idea of prioritising one project over the other,

especially when it comes at the expense of a St. Helier youth centre, which in my opinion is urgently needed. I believe we should not have to choose between the 2 or between neither of parishes, as exactly how Deputy Doublet said. Every child is equally important no matter in what parish they live. However, if we are forced to choose due to funding, the reality is that the need for a youth centre in St. Helier is far more urgent than renovating one that already exists. St. Helier is home to the largest youth population on the Island. From the latest census data, 19 per cent of about 38,000 people registered in St. Helier are under 18, equalling about 7,200 youth in St. Helier. Keep this figure in mind; 7,200. Many of these young people come from migrant backgrounds or disadvantaged situations. They are already facing significant challenges in their daily lives, and they need support, guidance, and a safe place to gather. Contrary to what the Constable of St. Clement said, that there are plenty of activities for the young people to do in St. Helier, I disagree, as very few of the ones listed by the Constable would be accessible to minors, and almost everyone I spoke with, young or older, continues to say that there is almost nothing to do for our youth on this Island. The St. Helier Youth Centre could be a lifeline for these young people, offering them a space to build community, engage in the positive activities, and stay out of trouble. Delaying this project any farther would only make these challenges worse. I fully support getting the Le Squez centre back on track. It is clear that this project is already far along in terms of planning and design. But if additional funds are needed to move this project forward, I believe we should find that money elsewhere. We should not take away funding from important infrastructure work and from an equally important youth facility, especially when the need in St. Helier is so pressing. While I represent St. Saviour, I am ongoing in touch with families and communities in St. Helier, and I hear first-hand about the struggles they face. Our youth centres are a crucial support system, and we cannot afford to let one project delay another. As I have said many times before, including in my previous proposition to make the Jersey Youth Service a statutory provision, this Youth Service is critical to the future of our young people, and it must be supported in every parish it serves. I understand that difficult decisions have to be made, but I believe we should not sacrifice one vital youth facility to fund another. Instead, I urge the Government to work with the Deputy and St. Clement's representatives to find alternative sources of funding for Le Squez within this term of office so both projects can move forward as originally planned, and the youth in both areas to have the suitable facilities needed and how I always say, where there is a will, there is a way. However, we simply cannot afford to delay the St. Helier Youth Centre any longer either. For this reason, I cannot support this amendment in its current form.

2.1.18 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier South:

I am going to make it my personal mission with this speech to try to convince the Constable of St. Saviour, who said in his speech that he was not sure which way he was going to go ultimately in it. My 10 year-old niece who, until very recently lived in my constituency, recently moved to St. Saviour. She told me she wanted to move somewhere with better political representation, obviously. **[Laughter]** She is specifically in Grands Vaux; on the St. Saviour side of Grands Vaux. She has gone from living somewhere where she was spending up to half an hour in the car every morning creeping through traffic, being driven to school, to somewhere where her school is now literally on the other side of the road to her home. She has gone from somewhere where all of the children in the area she was living in were in different schools to one where they are now in the same school and she can go a few doors down, knock on a door and ask if a friend can come out and play. She is now attending Grands Vaux Youth Centre, which I am now hearing a lot about because of that. The Constable of St Saviour said that children do not care what side of the border they are on. That is right. She is not asking anyone at her youth centre whether they are on the St. Helier half or the St. Saviour half of Grands Vaux. But this does lead to an important point though, which is wherever the borders are, the proximity of the youth centre to where you are and where the children live and where they can safely get to does really matter. In the centre of town there is no dedicated youth centre for the children who live there.

[11:30]

The nearest ones are ones that I think you could reasonably say would not be appropriate for young children to be walking to get to, especially unaccompanied or even in groups of friends because they are so far out there. That is why I would urge him that it is, in my view, right that the urgency of the new youth centre in St. Helier is addressed because there are hundreds upon hundreds of new homes planned in that area, thousands of children who are not near in proximity to a youth centre that they can just pop along to with their parents feeling that the child is safe to make that journey and everything that goes with it. Whereas it is the case that though the youth centre at Le Squez does need work being done to it, there is at least a facility that is operational there, that is serving young people there, serves as a hub for those children to be able to go to, interact with one another, and take up all the benefits that come with being able to go to a youth centre with dedicated youth workers to it as well. That is why I am pleased that it feels now like we are in a position where the development of a youth centre for those hundreds and hundreds of children in town is going to be delivered. I was alongside Deputy Rob Ward all along the way as he was campaigning for a youth centre in St Helier - that journey starting in 2018 in the C.S.P debate - so this has been going on for a long time with all sorts of different sites being looked at. Some progressing. I saw wonderful designs for a whole host of different sets and now we are at the point where, and I understand it was brought up in a previous Scrutiny hearing from the Minister for Children and Families, that because of the changing plans for the old brewery site on Ann Street we are in a position where that, as a dedicated space, could not be more perfect in terms of its location, in terms of its proximity to the new developments around and that the use that had been designated for it previously has now been abandoned. That is on a site where work is being done on the housing around it with Andium, in partnership with Dandara, who I know are all absolutely keen to get on with it. Andium themselves have expressed to me previously their frustration at having not been able to proceed these things quick enough. We are in a position now where we are going to make really good progress, if we are allowed to do so. There has been talk of emotional blackmail. I think that has counted for both sides of this debate, in all honesty. I do not think it is fair to suggest one side has been guilty of it; both certainly have been. We are talking about our young people. Of course we are going to get passionate about it. I, for one, do not blame a Deputy of St. Clement for wanting to bring an amendment that puts constituents first. All of us ought to do the same thing from time to time. I do not blame her for that at all. But Members have spoken about ... I took some notes of some quotes here from some Members: "Not wanting to pit one parish against another", "Ridiculous to say one community deserves investment over another", "Not sure why parishes are being pitted against one another", "Do not buy this message that we cannot do both." But we have to look at the wording of the amendment before us to find the answers to those questions, and that is in the second part, subparagraph 2, where these words will be removed from the Budget if this amendment is accepted, and those are the words saying that this: "... has been reprofiled to allow a new youth facility in St. Helier to be brought forward in the earlier years of the Budget." Those words disappear from the Budget if this amendment is accepted. Then that is the mandate to not do what this Government had planned to do, which was to deliver on something that was being spoken of since way back in 2018 and deliver a fresh new facility for young people who otherwise have nothing in that area. It is deeply frustrating not even in relation to this debate but in frequent debates where we talk about capital projects where we make all sorts of lovely promises and then reality hits and things get reprofiled, they get reprioritised, and let us be clear that that is not always because of budgets. It is actually often to do with capacity, the timing in which you deliver things. Do we have enough trades people? Do we have enough materials? Are we going to inadvertently spike costs because of putting too much demand in a short period of time? Are we going to sequence projects effectively? I mean there is a potential sequencing in the scenario of this amendment being accepted where a youth centre in Le Squez could be closed for a period while work is being undertaken and there is no youth service in St. Helier at the same time. So there would be a period of time where lots more young people, if it is not sequenced properly, would have no provision at all. It is not just about the funding, it is about all those other considerations; tradespeople, materials and effective sequencing of projects to make sure things work in the meantime. I would urge

Members to reject this amendment. I have no doubt whatsoever that the Minister for Children and Families, his Assistant Minister, the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning and the Minister for Infrastructure are more than happy to engage with the representatives of St. Clement, to make sure that the needs of those young people around Le Squez can be catered for as effectively as possible. If tweaks to plans have to be made in order to do that, that is a conversation absolutely worthwhile happening. But I really urge Members, please do not vote for an amendment that seeks to take out the words about the prioritisation of a new youth centre in St. Helier, in an area where there is nothing currently. I have to say I find myself often feeling slightly embarrassed when I am walking around in that area, because I represent that area and I live by Millennium Park as well, where I am often stopped by constituents who talk to me. Occasionally some will point out their unease about the amounts of young people congregating in that area, particularly in the evenings when it is dark. I sometimes have to bite my tongue because I want to say to them: “Well, what do you expect? What do you expect young people to do when there are not alternatives?” With respect to the Constable of St. Clement, he did refer to things to do in that area that are not appropriate for younger children to be doing, that they do not have the facilities in that area to be doing. What do you expect when there is nothing for younger people to do? The disquiet that can sometimes cause for some people who feel uneasy about young people not in a more supervised environment when they are congregating. I do not have a huge amount of sympathy with that but it is embarrassing to have to face that conversation with people and how much better it would be for those young people, for everything that goes along with it, for them making friends, for them getting the support that the Youth Service so brilliantly provides. All of that is wrapped around in a dedicated facility in that area, in a place that more and more children are living, because of decisions that this Assembly has made about homes being developed in those areas. Let us get things the right way round. Get that new youth facility built in St. Helier for those children who lack it, and let us get the youth centre at Le Squez brought back to the standard that it ought to be and that the children in that area deserve for it to be, but let us sequence it in the most effective way we can, and that means rejecting the amendment.

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

I did not intend to say a great deal, and I am now going to say even less because Deputy Mézec has just discussed in more detail than I was going to, and very helpfully, the reprioritisation and reprofiling work that was done in the summer to try to work out when all these projects were going to happen. I am going to limit myself to simply saying there seem to have been some questions, I think from Deputy Curtis - who is not here at the moment - about a missing £3 million or £3.5 million. It has not gone missing. It remains in the Consolidated Fund. It has not been spent. The same Budget that was allocated for Le Squez has simply been moved to 2028 and 2029, but we do not have a column for 2029. But the same budget is there, and the £3.5 million has not been taken or filched. It is there, and it will be made available for Le Squez from over 2028 and 2029, to allow that project to complete in due course.

2.1.20 Deputy D.J. Warr of St. Helier South:

It is interesting because I do not want to be pitting one parish against another. I was interested to see this use of the word reprofiling, and I think one of the previous speakers talked about you cannot reprofile children. There is a famous line in *Through the Looking Glass*, the sequel to *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, and it is a novel with which I am sure the Assembly Members are familiar. In it, the White Queen tells Alice that shortly before Her Majesty turns into a sheep that the rule in this looking-glass world is: “Jam tomorrow and jam yesterday, but never jam today.” In essence, it describes a situation where things are always promised, but never materialised, a bit like the Le Squez Youth Centre project. As I researched my speech, I came across an answer to a written question tabled by Deputy Baudains of St. Clement, dated 15th July 2013. I paraphrase, Jersey Property Holdings Maintenance has, in consultation with the Youth Service, held off undertaking

work on the roof, which has deteriorated to the point of being porous and no longer fit for purpose until funding could be secured. I understand funding was found because the alternative was to condemn the building and shut down the youth centre. Here we are 11 years later, 11 years down the track, with history repeating itself, only things are not quite yet as bad as last time. The facility is still usable, but now we discover it is deemed that the needs of the young people of St. Helier are a priority over the youth of Le Squez. Who would ever trust a politician? I understand the argument. At least the young people of St. Clement have something, while those of St. Helier have nothing. The problem I have is that Le Squez was promised jam yesterday. But as with the line in the novel, that does not appear to extend to jam today. It is the same old bureaucratic and political double talk used to get out of broken promises, but of course we can have jam today because the Gas Place site in the centre of St. Helier has a readymade solution that could be delivered in a year or so. It is called the old gas company showrooms. Right now they are being used for storing building supplies for the northern quarter development. We have a solution, even if you want to call it a meanwhile use, in plain sight, a solution that requires tens of thousands of pounds not the millions a new long-term facility might provide, for which, incidentally, I do not believe we have the money. The term “a bird in the hand is worth 2 in the bush” comes to mind when it comes to repurposing this site. We can have 2 wins, a win for St. Helier and a win for St. Clement. We simply need to use our imagination, cut our cloth to match the funding that is available now, not tomorrow, not next year but now, that jam today. I end with a prophetic quote from *Through the Looking Glass*: “You can’t change the past but you might learn something from it.” Members, please learn from the past. Do not pit the youth of one parish against another with promises of jam tomorrow. We have an opportunity to deliver for both today and I urge Members to support the amendment.

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

I have been trying desperately hard not to speak on this one and I would like to say that with our backs to the wall we can find a solution. We were promised sporting facilities in the east of the Island in subsequent Government Plans because, as you will notice, the west of the Island is really well served but the east of the Island, people seem to think once you get through tunnel there is nothing there. It has never materialised. We have been told again about Le Rocquier but there is no money for that. Then we have the play facilities, which are really short on the Island. We have play parks, which luckily some of them are being done up now, and play is so vitally important for children. The Youth Parliament said there was nothing for older children. There were play facilities, which they liked, but there is nothing for older children. People often ask me: “Why do you like being a Constable?” One of the reasons I like being a Constable is because it takes for ever, and sometimes never, if you are in Government but if you are a Constable you can get things done if you want to. On my village green there was nothing for children and I had an opportunity to get some logs there, so we have a natural playscape. I will say now that I passed it by the procureurs and they said: “Oh, no, I think that is going to be a bit dangerous, I do not think you should do that.” So one afternoon when I knew that we were going to have, luckily, donors, we saw some logs. Emily Jennings, who is very good at play, she saw logs. We had somebody with a tractor who said they could move them, so we moved them on to the village green at the end and that was great because at the same time I was trying to raise funds to put the playground in. We now have a fantastic playground there, which used no public money, ratepayers’ money, well, £2,500, and that is used every week by most of the classes from Mont à l’Abbé School, which shows that it is very interactive. We have children there who suffer from autism and we fenced it in because there are children who are bolters.

[11:45]

We have that, but I still thought we have not got anything for the Youth Assembly. So we have this amazing Viking swing there and I said we did not have the funds for that and I knew I was not going to use ratepayers’ money but I went ahead - and I am probably saying more than I should here - and I thought: “Build it and I will get it funded.” So I built it and we had it funded and we have enough

now that we can pay for play inspectors. People say: “You are lucky.” It is not luck. It is having the foresight and the pragmatism to get something done. I do say that we do need a youth club in St. Clement and we have a fantastic Constable in St. Clement who does so much for his community and the Deputies are very good there. It is a very built-up area. We also do need the youth club in town. We have constraints from the Government. We do have reserves and how much would it cost for us to build 2 youth centres? It is not building a new hospital, it is not building a new incinerator. It is building 2 youth centres and I believe that if this Government could find the money and build this, we will save money along the way because youth centres absolutely enhance children’s lives. We pay for a youth worker in Maufant. Yes, that is across the border in St. Saviour. When I became Constable - I do sound like I am blowing my own trumpet and I apologise for that - I felt that we were not doing enough for the children. We do an awful lot for the elderly in the parish and we were not doing very much for the children. I invited the youth workers to a rates assembly and the children came in and spoke, and we do have a lot of people who attend our rates assemblies and they can get quite heated. From that we got a chairman and we got a treasurer. Our treasurer is amazing, he is one of our procureurs, and he is an accountant. He set up a charitable trust, so we now have a charitable trust, which I am now helping St. Clement to do. We had a fantastic youth service there but they needed extra facilities and we could not afford for the children to go on away days and things like that, so we get corporate sponsors in and we do that. I just think that there should be money found. Somewhere there will be money. It is not running into tens of millions to do this. They are not huge, huge projects but I think what we will save in the long run with children’s mental health and all the other facilities. In Le Squez, it will be a hub for the community; in St. Helier, it will be a hub for the community. I cannot express how much that is worth; you cannot quantify it. So I would say to this Government please find some money, build these 2. You may even find that you can get some sponsorship as well. If you want some help on that, I will help you because I have spent years trying to get sponsorship for all sorts of charities and things. Just build it, people will use them and you will save so much money along the way with having satisfied youth and community. So please just do this.

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

I am pleased to follow the previous speaker. I know that she is incredibly passionate about facilities for our young people and delivering for her constituency, but I do want to answer back the assumption that we may save money by proceeding at pace with 2 projects at the same time. As a former civil servant, I can say that one of the biggest time and money wasters within the civil service can be when politicians promise everything at the same time, over promise and under deliver. What we have heard time and time again during this debate is about broken promises. I think the Constable of St. Clement made the point that we vote for things time and time again that do not get delivered. I was comforted and pleased when we had the discussion around the Council of Ministers table about how we would approach our capital programme and funding that capital programme. I was even more pleased, as a former project manager, to see a Gantt chart attached to those discussions. What that did in a very practical way was looked at each project, where each project was and where we were realistically going to be spending money on those projects. Where we reprofiled, we reprofiled the money to where we would be realistically spending it rather than doing what could be quite an easy thing to do, maybe more palatable now to people, saying that we will put money here, there and everywhere, but then 2 years down the line finding that budgets have not been spent because the projects were not at that point in time where they were shovel ready. What we have now and I am really pleased, as Deputy Ward has reminded us, after a very long period of money being allocated for St. Helier but again a project not being ready, so promising but not delivering, we now do have a project that is ready to go in St. Helier. I am also concerned about the broader effect that this amendment may well have on both of those youth projects. I do not think anybody is denying that both projects are incredibly important. My understanding is that the Le Squez project is really just a sketch. There are not plans. There is planning processes to happen and even if money was budgeted for in this

Government Plan, it is unrealistic to be thinking that it would be spent in this time period. If we were able to get the resources, get the planning permission and find the suppliers, because that is another thing that we have to balance across our whole capital programme is the availability of suppliers, if we were to do that and run both projects in tandem, my understanding is that the current plan would be to use the current Le Squez site. What we may well end up with is no facilities in either parish for a period of time, whereas what we have on the table now we will have a delivered facility in St. Helier and then when Le Squez then starts, and the facility during that time may well have to close for a period of time, we will have a facility in St. Helier available. We will be shortening the time where we will have no facilities available. So I do need to caution about the unintended consequences of approving an amendment, which on the face of it may sound nice, it may sound like we would end up with a facility in Le Squez, but actually is quite impractical, could cost us more money because we will set hares running across the civil service. Trying to do 2 projects at the same time, we will be stretching our resources, and that will only lead to more expenditure and more money. I would like to give Members the comfort that as the Council of Ministers we took a very practical and pragmatic approach to how we delivered our capital budget for this time period. I also wanted to take the opportunity to answer back one of the claims made from the proposer around asbestos in the current Le Squez building. My understanding is that there has been an asbestos survey for the current building and users can and should be assured that they can use that building safely. I would not want them thinking that they were unsafe using that building. I would urge Members to reject this amendment but do that in full comfort that youth facilities across the Island are indeed a priority and work is not stopping. We are just taking this in a very practical, considered and measured way and we are not going to overpromise on what we cannot deliver.

2.1.23 Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North:

I ask Members to bear with me because I find myself in a very interesting position, good position I think, because I was a St. Helier Deputy in the previous term when we agreed at the States Assembly to build the St. Helier Youth Centre in central St. Helier. I did support Deputy Ward to build it in Nelson Street and I did support the St. Helier Gas Place and I was the Minister for Children and Education that put plans in place and I am the St. Helier Deputy that agreed in this Government Plan more plans for St. Helier. I think it is bit unfortunate that we are really going to St. Helier via St. Clement. This conversation started from the comments paper. This conversation started from responses to Scrutiny saying St. Helier first, St. Clement second. It has not started from this Assembly. It has been an assumption by Connétable Vibert that the money disappeared or by Deputy Rob Ward, the Minister. The money did not disappear. The money was there for the St. Helier Youth Centre. The assumption was made that nobody worked on the St. Helier Youth Centre for the last couple of years. I would like to reassure Members that one of the first difficulties that we have is the Constable of St. Helier did not want to build at Nelson Street and I understand why. We have gone backwards and forwards trying to go through pre-planning advice that has been requested and I get pre-planning advice that it is possible. It was Deputy Alves who came with me to see Paragon House that is for sale, it is connected to the Library Place and it is a really good location to the Millennium Park. Deputy Binet, in the autumn, came with me and looked at this place and said it is a really good place for the St. Helier Youth Centre and they have gone again to the pre-planning advice. I think to claim that there was nothing done for developing a youth centre in St. Helier is a claim that you need to know what happened during 2023 to progress. The plans were drawn, like sketches for Paragon House. I would like to put it on the record, because it is important that the Assembly is aware, that nobody deserted a St. Helier youth centre. Another claim in the Assembly was that St. Helier has only one youth centre, by the Connétable, by the Minister. Actually St. Helier has 3 and I believe it is not enough. It is definitely needed, I am not arguing, but we do have St. James and we do have Move on Café and La Pouquelaye. We have children at La Pouquelaye that need to be driven to First Tower and it is a really highly residential area, but I understand that St. Helier central is extremely important and needs to be delivered. Deputy Mézec spoke about sequency and I agree, there needs

to be sequency and it is a trajectory. As Deputy Millar, the Minister for Treasury and Resources, confirmed, it was £3.5 million that was not used. I would like to ask ... I have a confirmation from the officer from 10th January 2024. We are talking about just before the vote of no confidence. The confirmation said: "The feasibility is confirmed and we have progressed to the planning stage. There is a risk that we will not get planning permission by end of 2024 and construction can start in 2025, delivered by 2026." Somebody in this Assembly is thinking is it possible to work on several projects at the same time, and I understand the capacity and I completely agree with the Minister for Infrastructure to talk about capacity, but there are different stages. There is a feasibility stage, there is a design stage, planning application stage, bylaw stage, tender stage. All these stages do not require millions. We all know that the planning is not going as we planned, some projects can be delayed and some projects can be progressed quicker. This is why we did have an agreement within the Treasury and it was confirmed at the Scrutiny Liaison Committee hearing that if one of the projects received planning quicker, as the skatepark, the money can be found because it is about the delivery for the young people. Yes, I am sure that J.P.H. (Jersey Property Holdings) has limited capacity but during my time to deliver projects like Mont à L'Abbé extension, like the canteen at the Haute Vallée School or other capital projects that were delivered in 2023, sometimes we did use local company architects because they can support us and they can have some speciality.

[12:00]

Maybe it is not the most economic but we do need to progress. If we would like to revive the economy, infrastructure projects are one of the projects that bring the economy up. I think if the plan in 2024 would progress and we would use this £3.5 million that was allocated, we would not need to use all of them and we would have planning application by now. We would not have this debate and we would not be reprofiling, because I would like to ask what was delivered in 2024. Do we have anything in the planning stage? I would suggest if we had 3 projects in the planning stage and 2 of them agreed at the same time, maybe in 2026 we decide which project we would reprioritise but to say we will continue this in 2028, oh, brilliant, so we will not have anything done until 2028 when it was a very helpful community project, family support for Samarès school and area of Le Squez. We are talking one of the schools that has the highest Jersey premium that lives in the flats. I am not saying which one is more important. The only thing that I am saying is the Government, if they would engage with Deputy Wilson, as they are promising now to engage, they might find a solution to progress several projects to the planning stage, not to the building. When the planning is granted, you can decide and we can discuss at the next Budget, but now we are basically saying one project is progressing and the other is put off until 2028. Another thing that I picked up is which budget is it coming from. I think that the capital project is allocated for the youth centre and I know that Deputy Wilson proposed the public realm, but it is 2 different budgets, and again it can be engaged. I know that I have spoken a bit longer. I will try to close. I have been told several times that maybe I was too ambitious and I will take it. I am proud to be too ambitious because if I am ambitious I might deliver three-quarters but if I am completely unambitious and every time somebody ... it is not possible to deliver 100 per cent. To be unambitious and not deliver is even worse, so I will stick with what I feel. If we would like to make sure that our young people have aspiration and they believe in us, I think this Government need to have an aspiration.

2.1.24 Connétable M. Labey of Grouville:

I will emphasise the points made earlier but I will not spend any time on them about the desert in the east of the Island for public access play and sporting facilities, some of which are provided by private individuals and organisations, which is quite absurd. But I will speak about something that has not been mentioned and that is the Youth Justice Strategy, which my colleague behind me has intimated to us as the Scrutiny Panel. That strategy says quite clearly that early intervention is vital and early intervention can be done in many ways, but one of the ways that was listed, and I think I support entirely, is that of the Youth Service that can identify individuals that are at risk, individuals that

could become trouble or a problem in future years. I am very fortunate, I have a youth club in Gorey village, which is very active. Hundreds of young people go to it every week and we have a new youth worker who is extremely active. I switched on some Christmas lights last night. The tree was decorated from decorations made by the children at the Gorey Youth Centre and they were fantastic. That is the sort of work that can be achieved. In this case I would not normally argue against facilities in the east of the Island but St. Clement has a facility and has youth workers and, thanks to the work of my colleague on my left, has many people active in that area. Grouville has youth workers and outreach workers, and we are very proud of the work that they do and they do keep us in touch with any issues arising. However, I would say that that is not just people. It is a place, it is a hub. It is a place where children can gather and meet where those individuals can then assess their issues and their problems and that is where we need to concentrate our minds in this case because I believe, with a third of the Island's children, St. Helier needs that facility in a greater emphasis from this Government. I will not be supporting this.

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

I rise now because I have seen that Deputy Warr has returned to the room and I would like to carry on his jam analogy. Unfortunately jam spread too thin leaves no taste and unfortunately you can have all the jam in the world but not enough knives to spread it on your toast, again you have jam that is sat there and not able to be eaten. I am noticing a common theme in what a lot of people are saying about the different types of youth facilities. As Deputy Warr mentioned about the site at Gas Place, the site at Le Squez on the Ann Street brewery site, these all require planning permission to be able to be used as a youth facility, other than the facility at Le Squez which is currently able to be used as a youth facility. It is safe and it is able to be used. The site that Deputy Warr references on Gas Place would need to go through planning permission to be able to be used as a youth centre. Then all the equipment and materials on the site would have to be moved out, so that would cause delay and time. It is not just a quick snap of your fingers and these things can be good and ready to go. The Le Squez facility does require planning permission. It needs architect's drawings, it needs a pre-app advice. It also needs building control. This does all take time, but again it has a facility that is still able to be used and this is my point. This is not about pitching St. Helier against St. Clement, as other Members have said. It is about providing something as soon as possible for the youth to use. St. Clement has a facility. It might not be ideal, it might not be perfect and I agree, it does need to be modernised and it needs to be brought through. I would urge the Minister for Infrastructure at some point when his budget allows or if he has a gap in resources, that he has something that he can use, that he would expedite the facility at Le Squez to move up his priority list. We also have to remember this is a rolling Budget and I think the Connétable of St. Helier was very fair in his assessment of this. Public realm does not just influence St. Helier. It influences every parish. Every road is part of the public realm. All these projects come out this public realm budget. I would also mention again to Deputy Warr that this impacts Havre des Pas, an area that we had an amendment brought in one of my first budgets within this Assembly to increase funding to that, which was rejected by this Assembly and so we have budgets lacking to improve the areas of Havre des Pas. It is a shame that the second part of the Deputy's amendment was to remove the reprofiling for the youth centre in St. Helier and there was not a way to amend it so she could have pushed for the support of Le Squez so that it happened sooner or when budgets allowed. Unfortunately, I believe where you have a centre that is available for young people to use, we need to get a youth centre where there is not one, where there are a lot of young people. As the Connétable of Grouville just alluded to, early intervention happens at youth centres. The Youth Service needs a facility in which to carry out its service and that just does not exist in St. Helier and we need to push for that. I will be, unfortunately, voting against this amendment. We do need a facility where there is not one.

2.1.26 Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

I would like to speak briefly about economics. Firstly, I believe personally that early intervention makes good economics. Not only does it improve lives and it improves futures, it also reduces costs, not only economic costs in terms of delivery of public services to pick up the pieces when lives go wrong but it also improves the cost to life by improving lives and avoiding people reaching crisis points in their lives. Investing in our youth is a good investment in our society and it is also a good investment for our public service of the future. Also we have to take into account the current economic context in which we are debating this Government Plan. If I recall correctly, we can look back at Government Plans of the past and consider how former governments have dealt with difficult economic circumstances by introducing fiscal stimulus projects. Fiscal stimulus projects are often used when there is a construction industry calling out for work, expressing concern about their future. Of course, I have heard Assembly Members speak very regularly over this past year about their concerns as we have seen companies go under because of difficult circumstances. When there are difficult circumstances in the private sector that, in my view, is time for the public sector to step up, to increase its infrastructure projects, to increase its delivery, to take up that slack in the system. Some Members unfortunately have pointed out that this project would need to go through the planning application process. I think Deputy Gardiner pointed out the position that this project was in in January and it is worth re-emphasising that because it has been a choice of this Government to not progress this project to a point where it would be ready to be delivered and constructed in 2025. That was an opportunity, that is an opportunity lost and I hope that the Government will be able to explain to members of the construction industry why they are not producing shovel-ready projects for them to deliver.

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

I am just going to speak very briefly. I find myself in a really difficult position, having done the job. I do not want to sound as though I know it all, because I do not. I made mistakes and lots of them, but what I do know is that I was part of governments that were finding solutions, not pitting one against the other. The Constable of St. Helier knows, as a former Deputy of St. Helier, I put St. Helier in the Government Plan for the first time. We are seeing that and now I have got the unseemly situation where I am seeing that the urban parishes of St. Clement and St. Helier have been pitted against the other. The Government are causing, if I may respectfully say, their own problems by not finding solutions. You find solutions, you rise to the challenge and you do not pit one against the other. I regret that we are in this position. It should not be like this. This is not what I am used to and I do not like it. I will be supporting my fellow Deputy of St. Clement because I think the Government need to find a solution and not just a problem. The last speaker - for no loyalty reasons at all, I did not know that Deputy Moore was going to speak - is absolutely right. The construction industry is on its knees and it needs shovel-ready projects. Planning is not working, it is not fast enough. We all know that. What is being done, I have not heard much. I will be supporting Deputy Wilson and my colleagues in St. Clement because, of course, St. Clement is our neighbour with only a strip of St. Saviour in between St. Helier and St. Clement, and we need to support them.

The Bailiff:

Does any other Member wish to speak on this amendment? If no other Member wishes to speak, I close the debate and call upon Deputy Wilson to respond.

2.1.28 Deputy K.M. Wilson:

I would first like to give my heartfelt thanks to Members for their consideration they have of this amendment. I think what we have had today, quite unexpectedly in my view, is a debate that has opened up a whole stream of issues about how we make choices and how we approach the needs and the priorities of our community and our Island. The words through the debate that came to me really were about struggle. What I wanted through this amendment to do was to give some hope to people, not to continue the struggle but to give them a belief that as an Assembly we could move mountains.

We could create a different world where people of a certain age, young people, their voices were valued and were being heard. I struggled, I must admit, when I heard some of the language that we have used in this debate and the first point I want to make is that this is not about pitching one parish against another.

[12:15]

I have repeatedly said my concern is to make sure that we can fulfil the needs of both communities in this regard. To consider comparing the needs of a community with how a road looks I find really concerning because for me that challenges the issue of where the focus is. I want to come on to the point around deprioritisation, reprofiling. What kind of a message does that send out to people? I urge the Government to consider what that has meant in this debate to the young people who are hearing this debate. It is really important for me that some of those comments and those languages can be explained to them. Deputy Jeune talked about abortive and sunk costs. I know that the Minister for Infrastructure and I have probably sparred a little bit about the indefensible use of public money. I stand by my word on this. There have been so many costs lost as a result of things that have been considered, planned and developed in terms of proposals. Please, please can we stop this? Can we just commit to doing something that we say that we are going to do? That just as much applies to stuff that has been planned for St. Helier as it does to St. Clement. We do need to know where the money has gone. I accept that Deputy Millar has a schedule for 2028 but the thing is I want to go on a world holiday in 2028 but I do not know whether I am going to have the money to afford it. To make a promise that the money is going to be there in 2028 I think is a problem and I think that is where we are. We have had that said to us so many times: "The money is coming, the money is coming, the money is coming" and when we get there we find that we have not saved up enough or we have not committed to opening the savings account. If we have got the money today, and we do have the money today - I do not accept that we have not, we do have it - let us just get on with this now. Deputy Tadier talked about investing in future economy and investing in early education and infrastructure and this issue about how we are talking about the notion of reserves and then still pleading poverty. We are sending out so many conflicting messages to people. We do need to be really clear about our intentions and I am asking the Government to tell the young people of this Island what is your intention for youth services. Please do not debase it to a discussion on where a capital project is going to be developed. Let us talk about what the agenda is, what the infrastructure requirements are, what the investment is, and let us have a proper plan. I welcome engaging with the Ministers and the Assistant Ministers on the discussion but I urge them to come up with something different. They could have put another amendment into this. We could have seen something that I would have been happy to accept but unfortunately, I think as somebody said yesterday, the computer says no. We have spent a long time today and I do feel it has been a really, really important time because we do not really get to talk about the important issues that affect our social conscience, that underpin the values that we carry. This for me has been one of those today. Deputy Curtis talked about optimism and community trust eroding. Please in your considerations can I ask people to make sure that they do not lose the trust of young people, they do not lose the trust of communities, who have invested so much time and effort in trying to get their proposition through the door? I wanted to refer to Deputy Robert Ward about his frustration. I feel that, I absolutely feel that, I share that with him, but his job is to champion his frustrations in ways that deliver for young people. I want him to be able to work with us to see how we can alleviate some of those frustrations and come up with, as Deputy Ozouf has just said, some solutions. I work with an amazing Constable. He has put so much effort [**Approbation**] into advocating - he has got me all emotional now - for the young people in our community. He started the idea that there is an ambition that we need to realise for young people. He started the work on that. I am literally jumping on the back of his coat tails to try to see if we can mobilise for some of the values that people have, that he has, that he shares, that he has gathered from the community to make something happen. Deputy Miles talked about putting children first. I could not agree with her analysis of her speech more. She talked about if we do not

address the issues around building infrastructure, building capability within our communities, the consequence is that it will and does ignite antisocial behaviour. We have got problems in St. Clement because we cannot provide sufficient facilities for people to engage in meaningful activity. That is a real social concern. That is a real social issue that we cannot ignore. I welcome the fact that Constable Jehan and Ministers attended Le Squez, but speaking to 2 youth workers is not what drives this amendment. It is the words, it is the concerns, it is the needs of the community that we have spoken to, many, many people we have spoken to that we are reflecting here today. Deputy Kovacs talked about finding some money from elsewhere, as did the Constable of St. Martin. I think that is the challenge. That is what I am asking people to do. Please look and find and get some money to put into this scheme and get it off the ground. Deputy Mézec talked about proximity. He talked about it is really important that you have to get to somewhere that you can get to so that you can use it. The thing is if we do not invest in the community facilities at Le Squez, people are going to have to travel and I think that is a bit of a double standard. We have talked about sequencing and we have talking promising jam today and jam tomorrow and I could not agree more with Deputy Warr in terms of the things that he said. Trying to find and address solutions has been problematic, so can we find a different way to address the way in which we address a problem, we find a problem and how we look for solutions around that? I was interested to hear Deputy Feltham's comments on how if we support this amendment it might send hares running in the civil service. I want it to. I want them to be able to understand the responsibilities they also have to listen to the voice of the people, the civil service listening to the voice of the people and delivering for them. Deputy Gardiner talked about the Jersey premium being at the highest level in Le Squez. This is true and what I want to say on that is that when you are thinking about this amendment, think about need, not just in terms of it being defined by numbers or where to put something, but think about the need of people who live in a flat on the 11th floor with 3 children, who cannot travel into town, cannot access the facilities and rely on the local community infrastructure for their support. I want to conclude by just calling and making reference to the issue about the connection with our economy. I talked in my earlier speech about how this amendment was really designed to talk about other issues that are connected to the way in which community works, how it connects to our economy, how we build a future for people and what kind of infrastructure we are putting in around our local communities. So there are choices that can be made that can address and balance all of those in one go and what I am asking for is to consider the value and the opportunities that by investing in Le Squez and the development of this youth and community facility, the impact it will have on other aspects of the public service that will result in less demand for healthcare, less demand for social support, greater levels of employment and helping to generate a community that is viable, economically active and is able to make a contribution to the wider Island. This amendment is about examining your social conscience and digging deep to get with the kids and deliver on this project. Thank you very much. I move for the amendment ... for the appel.

The Bailiff:

Do you ask for the appel? Yes. The appel is asked for. I ask Members to return to their seats. The vote is on amendment 17, and I ask the Greffier to open the voting and Members to vote. If Members have had the opportunity of casting their vote, then I ask the Greffier to close the voting. The amendment has been defeated:

POUR: 15		CONTRE: 31		ABSTAIN: 0
Connétable of St. Lawrence		Connétable of St. Helier		
Connétable of St. Clement		Connétable of St. Brelade		
Deputy L.M.C. Doublet		Connétable of Trinity		
Deputy I. Gardiner		Connétable of St. Peter		

Deputy K.L. Moore		Connétable of St. John		
Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf		Connétable of Grouville		
Deputy Sir P.M. Bailhache		Connétable of St. Ouen		
Deputy D.J. Warr		Connétable of St. Mary		
Deputy H.M. Miles		Connétable of St. Saviour		
Deputy J. Renouf		Deputy G.P. Southern		
Deputy H.L. Jeune		Deputy C.F. Labey		
Deputy A.F. Curtis		Deputy M. Tadier		
Deputy B. Ward		Deputy S.G. Luce		
Deputy K.M. Wilson		Deputy K.F. Morel		
Deputy M.B. Andrews		Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat		
		Deputy S.M. Ahier		
		Deputy R.J. Ward		
		Deputy C.S. Alves		
		Deputy I.J. Gorst		
		Deputy L.J. Farnham		
		Deputy S.Y. Mézec		
		Deputy T.A. Coles		
		Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée		
		Deputy C.D. Curtis		
		Deputy L.V. Feltham		
		Deputy R.E. Binet		
		Deputy M.E. Millar		
		Deputy A. Howell		
		Deputy T.J.A. Binet		
		Deputy M.R. Ferey		
		Deputy R.S. Kovacs		

The Deputy Greffier of the States:

Those Members voting pour: the Connétables of St. Lawrence and St. Clement, and Deputies Gardiner, Moore, Ozouf, Bailhache, Warr, Miles, Renouf, Jeune, Alex Curtis, Barbara Ward, Wilson, Andrews and Doublet. Those Members voting contre: the Connétables of St. Helier, St. Brelade, Trinity, St. Peter, St. John, Grouville, St. Mary and St. Saviour, and Deputies Southern, Labey, Tadier, Luce, Morel, Le Hegarat, Ahier, Rob Ward, Alves, Gorst, Farnham, Mézec, Coles, Porée, Feltham, Millar, Howell, Tom Binet, Ferey, Kovacs, Rose Binet, Catherine Curtis, and the Connétable of St. Ouen.

2.2 Proposed Budget (Government Plan) 2025-2028 (P.51/2024): nineteenth amendment (P.51/2024 Amd. (19)) - Fort Regent Development

The Bailiff:

Very well. We now come to amendment 19. Yes, Minister.

Deputy M.E. Millar:

I think amendment 19 has now been accepted.

The Bailiff:

Well, it was not read as accepted at the beginning, so has it now been accepted?

Deputy M.E. Millar:

It has been subsequently accepted after the original reading. I thought the ...

The Bailiff:

Well, I am afraid it still needs to be read and debated, but it may be the debate will be extremely short if the Government is accepting it. Very well. I ask the Greffier ... it is the nineteenth amendment brought by the Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel and I ask the Greffier to read the amendment.

The Deputy Greffier of the States:

Page 2, paragraph (g) - after the words “Summary Tables 5(i) and (ii) of the Report”, insert the words “except that, in Summary Table 5(ii), after the Head of Expenditure for Major Refurbishment and upgrades, there should be inserted Heads of Expenditure entitled Fort Regent Development with an allocation of £0 to be shown against the new Head of Expenditure.” Page 4, paragraph (o) - after the words “as set out in the Appendix to the Report” insert the words “except that on page 57, after Table 25: Major Refurbishments and Upgrades – Breakdown of Grouped Head of Expenditure, there should be inserted the following words: “Fort Regent Redevelopment. Fort Regent Redevelopment is established as a head of expenditure to transparently identify funding provided by Government in support of a programme of works, in conjunction with the Government’s chosen development partner, on this major publicly owned asset.

[12:30]

Establishing the redevelopment project as a head of expenditure ensures that all work carried out and monies spent on the site are subject to the proper level of Ministerial and States Assembly oversight. The Minister for Infrastructure and Council of Ministers will work with the States of Jersey Development Company to identify the appropriate funding and source for funding of feasibility work by no later than 31st March 2025. It is recognised that the project will be iterative and involve extensive public engagement at all stages and that this and the necessary design and works will require significant funding. The full redevelopment project - beyond feasibility - will require a further sustainable funding model. This model will be developed by the Minister to the extent that the necessary funding will be included in the Proposed Budget 2026-2029 to be brought to the Assembly for approval.”

Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity (Chair, Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel):

The panel has asked Deputy Curtis to be the main rapporteur for this amendment. You will be glad to know that we have just discussed that it will be a very, very short speech but, of course, he has prepared to be the main rapporteur so we will be likely to hear a short version. If that is possible.

The Bailiff:

Yes, it is certainly possible to have a short version. **[Laughter]** I can understand how over the course of the last half day that may have seemed that it was not possible, but it certainly is possible.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

We are very happy for it.

2.2.1 Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement (Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel - rapporteur):

I will start how I originally wrote this and sum up quite quickly. “A wizard is never late, Frodo Baggins, nor is he early. He arrives precisely when he means to.” That is, of course, Gandalf the Grey in Lord of the Rings. Well, a Government is not a wizard and does not always get to act precisely when it means to. When on asking the Minister for Infrastructure on the merits of this amendment his main comment was it was 12 months too early, the panel thought that it was a prudent and harmless thing to do. We are glad the Council of Ministers agree with this position and have chosen to accept this amendment, and I hope all Members agree with this shared position. **[Approbation]**

The Bailiff:

Is the amendment seconded? **[Seconded]** Does any Member wish to speak on the amendment?

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

Clearly, I am not a wizard **[Laughter]** and I got my timing wrong, so we are more than happy to accept. Thank you.

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

A short point of clarification, really. The quote is from the Fellowship of the Rings and the saga was the Lord of the Rings. **[Laughter]**

The Bailiff:

But it was correctly attributed to Gandalf the Grey. **[Laughter]** Deputy Renouf.

2.2.3 Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade:

Very, very quickly, I am feeling slightly envious, I must admit, and slightly left out. The amendment refers to a separate heads of expenditure. The next amendment we will be discussing also refers to separate heads of expenditure. The Government has not chosen to accept mine and I just wonder whether the Minister could explain in her summing up why the 2 cases are so different.

The Bailiff:

Well, the Minister will not necessarily be speaking at all to this amendment because it is the rapporteur. Does any other Member wish to speak? If no other Member wishes to speak, then I call upon Deputy Alex Curtis to respond.

2.2.4 Deputy A.F. Curtis:

I thank the Minister for Infrastructure for his comments and I will call for the appel.

The Bailiff:

The appel is called for. Members appear to already be in their seats, so I will ask the Greffier to open the voting. The vote is on the 19th amendment. If Members have had the opportunity of casting their vote, I ask the Greffier to close the voting. Yes, the amendment has been adopted:

POUR: 44		CONTRE: 0		ABSTAIN: 0
Connétable of St. Helier				

Connétable of St. Lawrence				
Connétable of Trinity				
Connétable of St. Peter				
Connétable of St. John				
Connétable of St. Clement				
Connétable of Grouville				
Connétable of St. Ouen				
Connétable of St. Mary				
Connétable of St. Saviour				
Deputy G.P. Southern				
Deputy C.F. Labey				
Deputy M. Tadier				
Deputy S.G. Luce				
Deputy L.M.C. Doublet				
Deputy K.F. Morel				
Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat				
Deputy S.M. Ahier				
Deputy R.J. Ward				
Deputy C.S. Alves				
Deputy I. Gardiner				
Deputy I.J. Gorst				
Deputy L.J. Farnham				
Deputy K.L. Moore				
Deputy S.Y. Mézec				
Deputy Sir P.M. Bailhache				
Deputy T.A. Coles				
Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée				
Deputy D.J. Warr				
Deputy H.M. Miles				
Deputy M.R. Scott				
Deputy J. Renouf				
Deputy C.D. Curtis				
Deputy L.V. Feltham				
Deputy R.E. Binet				

Deputy H.L. Jeune				
Deputy M.E. Millar				
Deputy A. Howell				
Deputy T.J.A. Binet				
Deputy M.R. Ferey				
Deputy R.S. Kovacs				
Deputy A.F. Curtis				
Deputy B. Ward				
Deputy M.B. Andrews				

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

Sorry, could I ask that Deputy Alex Curtis moves all of the amendments from now. [Laughter]

The Bailiff:

I am prepared to take a ruling from the Chair provided he includes a quotation from the Lord of the Rings Trilogy on every occasion. Very well.

2.3 Proposed Budget (Government Plan) 2025-2028 (P.51/2024): twenty-second amendment (P.51/2024 Amd. (22)) - Digital Services Platform

The Bailiff:

Yes, we have 10 minutes and the next amendment is the twenty-second amendment brought by Deputy Curtis of St. Clement, so this may be a quick one as well. I ask the Greffier to read ... sorry. Yes, I understand you are only moving the last paragraph, Deputy.

Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

That is correct.

The Bailiff:

Right, in which case I ask the Greffier only to read the last part of the proposition.

The Deputy Greffier of the States:

Page 4, paragraph (o) - after the words “to the Report” insert the words “except that - on page 61, after the words “support other systems” there should be inserted the words “From 2025 and beyond, the delivery of the Digital Services Platform shall be built and designed following open design principles”.”

2.3.1 Deputy A.F. Curtis:

To Deputy Tadier and the Assembly’s delight, I hope this will be brief as well. Firstly, Members will note that I have had this amendment read without any financial implications. Originally, this amendment aimed to achieve 2 things: greater funding for the Digital Services Platform at the expense of a reduction in funding to the Digital Care Strategy; and secondly, a commitment from Government on some principles of delivery. I have withdrawn the funding reallocation proposed from the Digital Care Strategy budget, but I have kept in the narrative, which the Government agree with. Firstly, to address the funding, originally I had looked at the options of funding and in the spirits of governance and accountability, which I will touch on in amendment 21, I look to the Digital

Care Strategy, which proposed a £2.12 million increase in funding with a single line of justification in the Government Plan, a justification nonetheless, though. I am now content to leave these budgets alone. The Minister for Health and Social Services has outlined via written questions his plans for the budget, a breakdown of projects, and the Chief Information Officer has said he is content with the split of budget between these 2. It also gives the Minister for Health and Social Services no “get out” card for 2025 on the delivery of digital care. He is getting what he asked for and, therefore, cannot justify any missed delivery against a budget reduction. I look forward to the Assembly holding him to account. I do, however, want to talk very briefly about how we deliver I.T. (information technology) and digital, but I will not do so to any length. What is remaining of this proposition is something uncontentious. In fact, it is acceptable by the Government because they believe they are already doing it. That is to include the words “open design principles”. The Government Plan in this Budget debate is easily getting messy and confused and so I will leave a longer debate on I.T. methodology and strategy to another debate. But I have included these words because I am concerned with how we deliver I.T. I was concerned when I had a role in shaping it. I have a concern now I have less of a role. That is about how we deliver value for money and we adapt with the times. The Government has long published guidance on its website, still pages referring to the States of Jersey, a set of digital design principles. While I will not read them all out, one of them says: “Use open standards.” Now, much as in construction or in education, repeatability, commonality and openness are important for good value delivery. I have a concern that we will not be following this guidance. I am reassured that the leadership in what was Modernisation and Digital assures us we are, but these words provide us just a little bit of reassurance that we as an Assembly can hold the Government and the delivery of digital projects, in particular just the Government Digital Services Platform, to the standards they are already subscribed to. Why is it important? As I say, open standards help with cost, partly because anybody can know how to implement on top of them. Of all the projects, the one that has received a 71 per cent reduction in budget, the Digital Services Platform is there to deliver a new front end to Government, a new way for citizens to access our services and some of the greatest loss of trust I feel citizens have in how we interact with Government and how they can trust that the services and processes work for them or work against them. Delivering more services, whether it be Treasury or for Social or for Health or for Infrastructure and D.V.S. (Driver and Vehicle Standards) is important. So I trust the Government will search hard for money to fund these, perhaps with cross-charging for this platform. But in the meantime I would like to think that an eye to the future on how we deliver that and a clear mandate to deliver in the open within the flexibility this affords the department will be adopted. Lastly, on the topic of not going too long, I decided to include this in the Government Plan originally or the Budget from the repeated messages of the Minister for Treasury and Resources that many debates about anything financial or of substance have a life in a budget, and I hope in 2025 the Minister for Treasury and Resources will support debates outside the Budget where they are on substantive topics. So I look to return to this Assembly with more in the new year. With that, I make the proposition.

The Bailiff:

Is the amendment seconded? **[Seconded]** Does any Member ... just one moment. Yes, Chief Minister.

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

I am pleased to follow Deputy Curtis and I am pleased he has not made a “hobbit” of quoting Tolkien. **[Laughter]** I think we all share the same ambitions with the direction of travel with Modernisation and Digital. I recognise the work the Deputy has done in the previous Government, and under the new wording relating to our commitment to continuing to follow the principles we are happy to accept that.

The Bailiff:

Are you proposing the adjournment or do you wish to speak?

2.3.3 Deputy T.J.A. Binet of St. Saviour:

I just wanted to offer a brief word of thanks to the Deputy for agreeing not to take any money from the digital health funding because I think it would have been catastrophic. So I am very appreciative of that.

The Bailiff:

Very well. Could I just ask if anyone else wishes to speak in this debate? Because otherwise, if not, we can finish it before the adjournment. But if anyone does wish to speak, then obviously it is time to adjourn. So could people just put their lights on if they are intending to speak? Very well. Then I close the debate and call upon Deputy Alex Curtis to respond.

2.3.4 Deputy A.F. Curtis:

With an eye to the time and an eye to next year, I shall leave it there. I call for the appel.

The Bailiff:

The appel is called for. I invite Members to return to their seats. The vote is on the 22nd amendment and I ask the Greffier to open the voting and Members to vote. If Members have had the opportunity of casting their vote, then I ask the Greffier to close the voting. That amendment, too, has been adopted:

POUR: 44		CONTRE: 0		ABSTAIN: 0
Connétable of St. Lawrence				
Connétable of St. Brelade				
Connétable of Trinity				
Connétable of St. Peter				
Connétable of St. John				
Connétable of St. Clement				
Connétable of Grouville				
Connétable of St. Ouen				
Connétable of St. Mary				
Connétable of St. Saviour				
Deputy G.P. Southern				
Deputy C.F. Labey				
Deputy M. Tadier				
Deputy S.G. Luce				
Deputy L.M.C. Doublet				
Deputy K.F. Morel				
Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat				
Deputy S.M. Ahier				
Deputy R.J. Ward				

Deputy C.S. Alves				
Deputy I. Gardiner				
Deputy I.J. Gorst				
Deputy L.J. Farnham				
Deputy K.L. Moore				
Deputy S.Y. Mézec				
Deputy Sir P.M. Bailhache				
Deputy T.A. Coles				
Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée				
Deputy D.J. Warr				
Deputy H.M. Miles				
Deputy M.R. Scott				
Deputy J. Renouf				
Deputy C.D. Curtis				
Deputy L.V. Feltham				
Deputy R.E. Binet				
Deputy H.L. Jeune				
Deputy M.E. Millar				
Deputy A. Howell				
Deputy T.J.A. Binet				
Deputy M.R. Ferey				
Deputy R.S. Kovacs				
Deputy A.F. Curtis				
Deputy B. Ward				
Deputy M.B. Andrews				

LUNCHEON ADJOURNMENT PROPOSED

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I propose the adjournment.

The Bailiff:

The adjournment is proposed. The Assembly will stand adjourned until 2.15 p.m.

[12:42]

LUNCHEON ADJOURNMENT

[14:15]

2.4 Proposed Budget (Government Plan) 2025-2028 (P.51/2024): sixth amendment (P.51/2024 Amd. (6)) - New Healthcare Facilities Programme Expenditure

The Bailiff:

We move on now to amendment number 6, which is brought by the Chair of the Hospital Review Panel. I ask the Greffier to read the amendment.

Deputy D.J. Warr of St. Helier South:

Sorry, Sir, can I just tell Members that I have a medical appointment at 4.00 p.m. It should be fairly short; I will be back as quick as I can.

The Bailiff:

Thank you very much, Deputy Warr. Greffier.

The Greffier of the States:

Page 2, paragraph (g) - After the words “Summary Tables 5(i) and (ii) of the Report” insert the words “except that, in Summary Table 5(ii), after the Head of Expenditure for New Healthcare Facilities, there should be inserted Heads of Expenditure entitled Overdale Acute Facility, Kensington Place Ambulatory Facility and the St. Saviours Health Village, each with an allocation of £0 to be shown against the new Head of Expenditure.” After paragraph (g), insert the following new paragraph and redesignate the subsequent paragraphs accordingly, “(h) to request the Minister for Treasury and Resources to take the necessary steps, in accordance with Article 18 of the Public Finances (Jersey) Law 2019, for a transfer of appropriations from the Head of Expenditure entitled “New Healthcare Facilities” to the Heads of Expenditure entitled Overdale Acute Facility, Kensington Place Ambulatory Facility and the St. Saviours Health Village, to take effect by 30th June 2025 in order that these Heads of Expenditure provide a breakdown of anticipated budget for each of the specified elements of the New Healthcare Facilities project.” Paragraph (o) - after the words “as set out in the Appendix to the Report” insert the words “except that, on page 69, after the words “A summary of the Outline Business Case will be published to the Assembly in September 2024” there should be inserted the following words: “The Minister for Health and Social Services will publish supplementary information in successive Government Plans about the Overdale Acute Facility, Kensington Place Ambulatory Facility and the St. Saviours Health Village Heads of Expenditure for the New Healthcare Facilities Programme, in the same way as is provided for other major projects in the Government Plan.”

2.4.1 Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade (Chair, Hospital Review Panel):

Members will know when they watch a documentary it often starts with a compilation of great shots from the programme to encourage you to watch. It is called a pre-title tease in the trade. So, in that spirit and by way of a pre-title tease for this speech, and in the hope that I can persuade Members to stick with me for about 15 minutes, we are going to be travelling from Overdale to the historic Maginot Line in France, discussing the diagnosis of a heart problem and examining a box full of rocks. Let me start, though, by going back to basics and recall that the New Healthcare Facilities programme is made up of 3 separate projects. By far the biggest project is Overdale, of course. There are 2 other projects, the Ambulatory Facility at Kensington Place, which includes the existing hospital at Gloucester Street, and the proposed new mental health facility at St. Saviour. It is with these other 2 projects that this amendment is concerned. Let me emphasise this is about the non-Overdale parts of the programme. This amendment leaves the Overdale project untouched. It concerns the non-Overdale parts of the project. The amendment asks the Government to take 2 actions. First, to publish separate heads of expenditure for the non-Overdale parts of the New Healthcare Facilities programme and, second, to publish supplementary information in successive Government Plans about the Kensington Place Ambulatory Facility and the St. Saviours Health Village in the same way as is provided for other major projects in the Government Plan. The aim of this amendment is very

simple. It is to bring greater transparency to the funding for the non-Overdale parts of the new hospital programme. Without that transparency, neither we in this Assembly nor the public can know whether or not what is being proposed represents good value for money, whether it is part of a coherent strategy, and whether the various projects are being properly funded. In the end, this poses a long-term risk to the programme. Without the searching examination of the budgets for those parts of the programme and public discussion of them now, it would be that much easier for a future Government to unpick the plans with the argument that they were never properly scrutinised in public. We ask for greater transparency. The Government says it is committed to transparency, but words are cheap and it is by actions that the Government must be judged. The Government has refused our request for greater transparency. That is underlined by the Minister for Health and Social Services' assertion in the Assembly 2 weeks ago about the amendment, and I quote and I have triple checked this: "I do not think there will be a time when it is ever completely appropriate to have separate heads of expenditure." The panel disagrees and I hope very much that the Assembly will not accept this statement, which means that potentially we would never know the budget for the redevelopment of Kensington Place or the budget for the Health Village. There is no reason why the construction of health facilities should be separated from all other Government procurement processes. The Budget is full of capital projects where the overall budget is published: Mont à l'Abbé, the crematorium, the new youth centre, army and sea cadets H.Q. and so on. These 2 very big, significant health projects, Kensington Place and St. Saviour, which would be among the biggest projects on the Government's books were they separately listed, should be separated out and the monies allocated to them made public. The figures already exist. The Minister has in confidence shared the outline business case with the panel, for which we are grateful. We know how much money is allocated to Kensington Place and St. Saviour. However, the Minister does not wish those figures to be made public. The Minister has only offered one substantive reason for turning down this amendment and that is the need to retain what is referred to as commercial tension around the construction contract for Overdale. Value for the taxpayer trumps transparency. It is our contention that there is no contradiction and the value for money argument is a smokescreen. The Minister says that if separate heads of expenditure are created it will reveal to potential contractors how much money is available for the construction contract at Overdale, which in turn would encourage them to bid up to the maximum amount. This argument does not stand up to examination. First of all, it is wrong in fact. A separate head of expenditure for Overdale would not reveal to potential contractors the total funding for the construction contract, not even close. As I say, the Minister has shared the outline business case with the panel in confidence. I cannot reveal the monetary figures, but I can say there are 21 items listed under the Overdale part of the project, 21 categories. Then, of course, you add the Kensington Place and St. Saviour projects, so you could say that the £710 million breaks down into 23 items in total. Again, I do not want to go into specifics of numbers, but I will say that only a handful of the 21 items relate to the main construction contract. The rest of the spend concerns obvious things like architecture and design fees, site clearance, medical equipment, landscaping, many other significant items of expenditure that you would expect. Publishing the overall Overdale head of expenditure would not reveal how much is set aside for the construction contract and it is wrong to suggest that it would. Were this amendment to be passed, the sum of money reserved for the construction contract would still be buried inside a much, much larger total, as it is now. It is a bit like having a cardboard box with 23 different sized rocks inside it. You do not know the size of any of the rocks, you just know the size of the box. That is the £710 million made up of 21 separate items for Overdale, plus St. Saviour and Kensington Place. Now, you take out 2 rocks, Kensington Place and St. Saviour, and put the remaining 21 rocks in a slightly smaller box. You still do not know the size of any rocks inside the box. You just know the box is a bit smaller. The construction budget for Overdale is still buried within a much larger hole. Second, the logic is flawed, which I can illustrate with an historical analogy. After the First World War, both the French and the Germans knew that trench warfare had stopped the German advance and ultimately caused the German defeat. The French drew the conclusion that their military strategy should double down on creating an

impregnable defensive fortification, the Maginot Line. The Germans concentrated on how to overcome a defensive line by lightning fast, highly mobile tank movements backed up with aircraft, blitzkrieg. The French planned for the last war; the Germans fought a new war. Eventually, of course, everyone caught up with the Germans but the point is the French planned for the wrong war. Similarly, the Minister's arguments regarding the hospital funding are based on the last hospital project, the wrong project. The previous hospital programme had a single delivery partner appointed early. Of course, once that construction partner knew the total construction budget, they were in a strong position to bid up to that figure because the Government had no other options available and the single contractor was embedded in the project planning. This contract is deliberately different. It is subject to competitive bids. Any contractor trying to bid up runs the risk of losing the contract to another bidder. So not only will potential bidders not know how much of the total Overdale head of expenditure is reserved for the construction contract, they will also know that if they bid high they might be undercut: competition. The Government seems to be hinting in its comments that it may end up with only one contractor in the end after all. That has never been the intention, and in any case I would say again they still will not know how much is allocated for construction at Overdale. Finally, as a belt and braces fallback, the amendment delays publication of the 3 heads of expenditure until the end of quarter 2 next year, the end of June. According to the Minister's own timetable, contracting should be finished by then. If it is not, it will be well advanced. The Minister argues that negotiations will continue throughout the building, but the contractor still will not know how much is allocated to them. If the Minister was so worried about the date in our amendment, he could have brought an amendment to our amendment. So for 3 reasons the Minister's arguments against this proposition do not add up. We are not asking to reveal the amount of money set aside for the Overdale construction project. Competitive tension will be maintained by the competitive bidding process, and the figures will not be published until the bidding process is over or so close to being over as to not have a material influence on the bids. If this amendment fails, there are a number of consequences of which I think the Assembly should be aware. There is nothing to stop money being moved around within the single head of expenditure. If there is an overspend on Overdale, for example, the Minister could simply shift money from the other 2 projects. It is a single head of expenditure and money can be moved within a single head of expenditure without any public notification. We do not know if the Kensington Place head of expenditure gets us a quarter of a hospital, half a hospital, a whole hospital. All we have is the phrase "meaningful progress". That could mean anything to anyone. This Assembly and the public is entitled to know more. We do not know whether the money being set aside for Kensington Place and St. Saviour is realistic in terms of what is being proposed because we do not know what is being proposed either. So we cannot possibly know whether it adds up to a coherent strategy. We do not know whether we can afford the running costs of all these sites. Indeed, we do not even know whether the running costs have been properly factored in. Might we end up starting to build something we cannot afford to complete? We do not know. All we know is a secret but very large amount of money has been allocated to do something or other on the other 2 sites. The huge risk here is that we get a long way down a road and then realise it is either the wrong road or that we cannot afford to finish the journey. That is why we need to know in the first instance how much money has been assigned to these projects and, in the second instance, what the money is going to buy, the 2 parts of the amendment. The Minister says, in effect: "Trust me." Well, I am up for that, but trust is a 2-way street. I will be happy to trust the Minister when he is happy to publicly justify the figures in his business case.

[14:30]

Incidentally, it is nothing to do with whether I or anyone else trusts the Minister personally. That is immaterial. It is about having processes which prove that decisions around public money on the new hospital facilities are in the public interest. It is the difference between reassurance and assurance. The Minister offers reassurance: "Trust me, I will look after public money well." That might be fine when it comes to a private business where it is your own personal money at stake, but this is about

public money. Reassurance is not good enough or else we would not bother to scrutinise public spending at all. We want assurance. It is the difference between me saying to my wife: "I have been having chest pains, but do not worry, I am absolutely fine" - that is reassurance - and me saying: "I have been to the doctor. I have had blood tests. I have had scans. Here are the reports. You can see that I am absolutely fine." Assurance. We think it is appropriate for the public to see how much money has been allocated, the justification for that money being allocated, and the processes that are in place to ensure that it is spent in the way the Minister says it is going to be spent. That is how public procurement works. It is not: "I am not going to tell you how much money I am spending, I am not going to tell you on what it is being spent, and I am not going to justify the expenditure either, but trust me, it will all be good." I am sorry to say that the panel did not gain much confidence from its questioning of the Minister for Treasury and Resources on the subject of political oversight of the Minister for Health and Social Services' plans within government. I hope I can avoid making a fool of myself again by quoting from our scrutiny hearing. We asked the Minister: "To what extent would you challenge the Minister for Health and Social Services over, let us say, allocations within that huge overall sum of money and say: 'Are you sure that that is the right thing for us to be doing? What evidence are you presenting to me to justify that?'" Her answer was: "I do not see that as my role." When we asked her about the Kensington Place and St. Saviour plans in particular and how much she was questioning expenditure there, she said: "Not in the great scheme of things." When we asked her about her understanding of what meaningful progress meant in regard to Kensington Place and, in particular, would it mean that there would be spades in the ground or whether it was just design work, she said: "There may be spades in the ground in Kensington Place, I do not know." It is surprising to me that there seems to be little challenge within the Government around the non-Overdale parts of the Health Facilities Programme, which could potentially lock us into future funding commitments that are unaffordable. But in the apparent absence of that challenge within government, it is even more important that this Assembly and the public are put in a position where we can see what is going on and can ask questions appropriately. We should not let public desire to get Overdale built, which I fully accept, override our need to scrutinise the other projects within the programme. Finally, there is a bigger issue at stake here. In the Minister's public hearing with the panel, the Chief Officer indicated a desire for a more general move to use generic heads of expenditure. For example, he suggested there might be a total capital budget for C.Y.P.E.S. with no separate heads of expenditure for the projects within it. I think this Assembly should send a signal that this is not a move that we welcome or support. It is vital for public confidence in major capital investments that we know the amount that is allocated for each project. It is the only way we can know whether the project is financially justified. I fear that under cover of darkness we are being marched towards a destination that we cannot see. As a panel, we say let the light in. If all is well, the Government has nothing to fear from illuminating the public debate that will result.

[Approval]

The Bailiff:

Is the amendment seconded? **[Seconded]** Deputy Binet.

2.4.2 Deputy T.J.A. Binet of St. Saviour:

I think it might be helpful to Members ... I was going to wait and try to speak towards the end as principal responders often do, but I just think it might help to inform the debate and hopefully save perhaps a lot of unnecessary speeches because I think the case for the amendment has been very well made and I am very much hoping that the case for rejecting it may well be made in these 3 pages. So I will start by saying that I am asking Members to reject this amendment because I want the new hospital facilities team to maintain the strong negotiating position that they have currently. In doing so, I will seek to contain my comments to points of basic principle, which I am hoping will help set out the key issues for Members as clearly as possible. In basic terms, we have a situation where, yet again, we are being asked to place financial information in the public domain that in my view, the

view of the Council of Ministers and the entire new hospital facilities team, considers poses a major risk to getting the best value for taxpayers' money for the biggest capital project in the Island's history. On the face of it, the amendment seems simple enough. Once the acute hospital is contracted and under way, we just set about revealing the total sums to be spent on each of the 3 sites. But I ask Members to bear in mind that in the process we will be giving our new principal contractor - because it is quite likely that we will have a principal contractor and that they will have the lion's share of the work on the site - a very clear picture of the contingency and optimism bias money that we have available to be claimed for the changes, alterations, additions and amendments that always emerge once construction begins, particularly on a project of this size. I have to admit that in a recent Scrutiny meeting I had suggested that more financial information might be revealed once the contract was signed, but with the benefit of hindsight and having had time to think the implications through in more detail, it is clear that it would be extremely unwise for the reasons I have just mentioned. In any event, so far we seem to have enjoyed popular support from the public for our ongoing commitment to revealing as much information as we can as soon as we can while being as commercially sensible as possible at all times. With that in mind, I can see no possible logical reason for trying to mend something that very clearly is not broken. It is not as if there has been a public outcry over our approach. I do not have an inbox full of emails from the public asking for more details in addition to those that we have already provided. I should add that having attended most of the public engagement and consultation meetings myself, it is a question that has hardly ever been asked. From my experience, the public now want 2 things: one, for us to hurry up and build the new hospital; the other, for us to make the best possible use of their money. They already know that we are doing both. Just by way of further assurance for Members, I would just remind them that the project is subject to a very high level of financial governance. In the first instance, the project's expenditure was managed within the central accounting system at site level and the process of management of financial information is undertaken within the Treasury function. The monthly financial information is reviewed by the new hospital programme team and it has additional oversight as part of the group reporting requirements from the following: the Accountable Officer for Health and Community Services, the senior responsible officers for the new hospital facilities programme, the Strategic Accounts Department, the Treasury and investment management team, the Government's Executive Leadership Team, the Council of Ministers and me in my capacity as Minister for Health and Social Services. Of course, very importantly, there is one other body that has access to all the financial information and that is the Hospital Review Scrutiny Panel. That is the panel that is bringing the amendment. Members who have read the report accompanying the panel's amendment will notice that the panel has made the following claim: "It is currently impossible for the public, the States Assembly or the panel to scrutinise the expenditure allocated to them." Well, I am afraid that is not strictly correct. Detailed information may not have been made available to the public or the Assembly but it certainly is and has been available in full to the panel. That is very important. They have already had access to the full outline business case and I am happy to provide all ongoing information and to be held accountable by them throughout the process. Within this scenario, if the project team were to go over-budget on any specific element of the project or on the project in its entirety, they, the panel, would be fully aware. Indeed, they would be able to make public any individual shortcoming without necessarily revealing the overall information that we wish to protect. Information, incidentally, that most other countries protect as a matter of course. Before closing, I would just like to tackle any claim of inconsistency that might arise as a consequence of the Council of Ministers accepting an earlier amendment agreeing to the establishment of a single head of expenditure for Fort Regent. Here I need to be clear that there is an absolute distinction between that possible project and that of the new hospital. In the case of the new hospital, there is very likely to be a single main contractor, albeit that we will be putting as much work locally as we can. That is where the problem is most apparent. In the case of Fort Regent, if it is to happen, the strong likelihood is that it will be overseen by the Jersey Development Company and involve a much wider range of smaller contractors rather than the likely scenario at Overdale. I do not mind saying

that if the situation arises later in the process for delivering Gloucester Street and the Health Village, whereby the projects are broken down into a series of smaller, separate developments, we may well be in a better position to take a similar approach to that suggested for Fort Regent. In the meantime, I maintain my position very strongly and for good reason. In the light of all that I have said, I would simply ask Members to continue to support the course of action that we have adopted since the last election and reject this amendment, which if adopted would undoubtedly make it more difficult for us to minimise our expenditure on this vitally important project.

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

May I ask a point of clarification of the Minister?

The Bailiff:

Deputy Binet, do you give way for a point of clarification?

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

Yes.

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

I wonder whether the Minister is able to briefly explain what is in St. Saviour Village because I am not sure that there is a wide awareness. If I am wrong, then please tell me.

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

Well, I would draw attention to the fact that we have had numerous consultations with neighbours, with the public. We have made it very clear what the intentions are. Overall, the Health Village is for items like mental health care, dementia and so on, and the unit in town will be for outpatients, essentially. We are trying to at the moment rationalise the whole of the health estate and try and provide facilities in a central unit in the centre of town. I hope that is helpful. I am happy to provide any more information that the Deputy may want.

Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North:

Another point of clarification if possible?

The Bailiff:

Do you give way again for clarification?

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

No problem at all.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

I apologise if I did not hear this correct. Do we have a contracting principal or you are in the process of appointing a contracting principal?

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

We are in the process of finding a contractor.

The Bailiff:

Very well. Does any other Member wish to speak on this amendment? If no other Member wishes to speak ... Deputy Alex Curtis.

2.4.3 Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

Other Ministers playing a little game on the lights. No worries. I really have very little to say. I am going to try and keep all of mine quick today, as Members have seen. Deputy Renouf as chair of the

panel has, in my view, represented the panel's views clearly and well. I think the case is made, but I will respond to the Minister for Health and Social Services briefly on commercial tension. The panel has, as the chair says, offered solutions. If the timeline for creating or allocating monies to heads of expenditure is wrong, that could have changed. It could have changed from at the point of contracting instead of at the end of Q2. The Minister highlighted that disclosure of a budget creates the ability to understand contingency on any one project, and the Minister could have said: "The contingency is one rock we will keep aside. We will keep the general head of expenditure for the New Healthcare Facilities programme. We will separate these out and we will have a contingency head of expenditure which at least" ... or a general head of expenditure that could then be used to increase allocations to one project. There are many ways to cut this, but none of those were offered back. The panel thought that should our proposal be too far, which we do not think so, we do not think the commercial tension is broken, that the Minister could have found an alternative. Budgets do get disclosed and the Chair has highlighted examples of projects. Just earlier we heard about Le Squez and one argument back from, I believe, a Minister was that perhaps the funding proposed by Deputy Wilson was inadequate. I think a figure of £9 million surfaces. Well, hang on a minute, this would cost £9 million. In rebutting an argument, certain Members of the Government are clearly happy in disclosing exact figures it would cost to build things and, indeed, every other project has a head of expenditure that says this. Lastly, to touch on scrutiny, the Scrutiny Panel is asking for this to perform scrutiny in a way that is effective. The Minister may think the Scrutiny Panel having information is sufficient for scrutiny to be performed. We do not believe so. Members of the current Council of Ministers, many of them have been scrutineers and I would ask to those who are sitting there: how would you perform scrutiny on a project where should you find that your road is heading to a ravine that you cannot disclose it? Likewise, if you think that the road is heading somewhere wonderful, you equally cannot disclose it. The panel may have views; it may not. They may be incredibly positive; they may be incredibly negative. The panel cannot tell this Assembly in any meaningful way and it is finding its hands incredibly bound.

[14:45]

So I will leave it there to keep brief, but to remind Members the panel does not believe the commercial tension exists in the way the Minister says it does. The Minister had options. Budgets do get disclosed and, finally, Scrutiny needs to function.

2.4.4 Connétable M.O'D Troy of St. Clement:

I have nothing prepared but I do have some comparisons to make. We are discussing over 5 days a Budget of just over £1 billion. We are going through it with a fine-toothed comb because it is not our money. It is our taxpayers' money and we have to show them value for money. What we do not do is give the Chief Minister and the Minister for Treasury and Resources blank cheques, but we seem to give the Minister for Health and Social Services carte blanche. We know more or less what the hospital at Overdale is going to cost. We know nothing whatsoever about the other 2 projects. I mentioned this before. If we vote for the hospital project later on today, it triggers a set of events. It means that we have to or we accept the situation that we have to build some more infrastructure down in Kensington Place and we do not have anywhere to put mental health, so the St. Saviour's Hospital site is certainly more than just a dream of the Minister for Health and Social Services. So I urge all Members in the name of transparency to vote for the amendment and give the public what they deserve. That is a sight of what is coming forward. Because this is going to cost more than this year's budget when you wrap it all up and it is not right to use smoke and mirrors to defend what one person knows and not let the taxpayers know what is going on.

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

Just to mention very briefly, having been in Ministerial the best part of 10 years, I understand commercial confidentiality. Can the Minister assure the Assembly that the Scrutiny Panel has been given full and unredacted access to all relevant material?

The Bailiff:

I am afraid you have spoken once already.

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

It was just that the question, I wanted to provide that assurance.

The Bailiff:

I am sure, but we are not in a position. This is speech time and I am afraid you have spoken, so someone else may have to do that. Deputy Ozouf.

2.4.6 Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

I do not quite understand how we are in this position. As the Connétable has said about the ... I am not going to say double standards, but on one side we can quote a number for Ministers advancing in their debate on a youth centre but we cannot do other things. The Minister for Health and Social Services has spoken but the Minister for Treasury and Resources is here and she has not spoken. The Chief Minister is in the precinct somewhere. The Assistant Minister for Treasury and Resources is somewhere here, and there is 2, if not 3, Assistant Ministers for Health and Social Services. So they can answer Members' questions and the Assembly needs to be given the importance that it deserves. We are having a debate, although I note that most of the debates we have had have been effectively won by the Government. But I am going to keep on going and support the right to speak and ask questions that are, I think and I hope, valid questions and I will not be speaking too long and watching the clock. I am afraid that I want to support the Minister for Health and Social Services in advancing the issues of health services. I think at the end of the day the reason why this Assembly is in such a difficulty with this Budget is because of the lack of progress and the continual delay of the previous hospital issues. It was 10 years ago - I do not like harping back to the past - I think to this day that the Assembly approved an outline budget of £297 million for, yes, a not imperfect thing. People had views, but an outline case fully budgeted on the previous Finance Law, a budget allocation of £297 million for the hospital refurbishment on the site. That was brought forward in concurrence with the Minister for Health and Social Services and the Treasury who had worked up a plan. It was all there, liquid waste was there and the rest of it. The numbers were there. I do not understand the issue of why it is so problematic to give guidance. I have overseen, as this Assembly's Minister for Treasury and Resources and Public Services President, buildings of incinerators, dare I say it police stations, dare I say it lots of other things. I advanced issues concerning Andium, the £250 million loan where there were specified projects of what we wanted to do. There are ways that you can make sure bidders do not know what the other ... bidders can bid properly in a competitive way. There are ways. We have done it in the past. Having complete and absolutely no information about which buckets of which expenditure and where we are heading for is a very uncomfortable situation. I say I used to regard myself and I still do as being a good personal friend, but personal friends are set aside. The Minister for Health and Social Services, he and I have been neighbours all our lives. I want to see what happens. I am particularly interested ... my Constable has just spoken. I do not know. I have not had any explanation. I asked for a point of clarification because I have asked others. I know I have not been around, but what is the St. Saviour's Village? I had a pretty clear explanation but if a St. Saviour's Village is being proposed in the parish that I and my Constable and other Deputies represent, we would quite like to know what was actually in it and at what stage is it. Is it a vague concept? I think there are 2 fields that have been bought next door but I am not sure. I think that there is lots of things I do not know. I know I have been out of this Assembly for a while, but I have asked others and they cannot tell me. So I am concerned about that. Having genuinely to have to

worry about whether a debate was going to be passed or not as a former Minister for Treasury and Resources ... and we did always because we worried about arguments being put forward in this Assembly which would change Members' minds. The chair of the Scrutiny Panel has been, I think, very reasonable in asking for information that is not just held secret but can be as appropriate made public for the public to have confidence in the decision-making of those that they put in this place to hold others to account and transparency. Trust, transparency and confidence, they can be dealt with. They have been dealt with everywhere in every other aspect of every capital project that I have been beaten up or congratulated for delivering. I do not understand why the rules have changed from the rules that used to exist about an appropriate level of transparency. If I am wrong, please let a Member of the Council or somebody else correct me, that we do not know what the different heads of expenditure, what the rough budget is for now, what was originally under the last ... not the last Government, the last but one Government, was a new hospital, which was apparently going to solve everything. We do not know what we are getting, what we are going for. What is the target? Is it a complete new mental health facility? Is it a partial one? I just do not know and it is not because I have not been listening. Other people do not know. I think the Ministers have an obligation to explain why they want to keep stuff secret, why they want to keep stuff in different pots or in one large pot where they can shovel it around, because you can under the new Public Finance Law. You can make all sorts of things ... they were not available to me previously and I just do not understand. I express the hope very respectfully that this debate does mean something and that Members might change their mind and not be told how to vote, because at the moment it just seems to be a rather curious state of affairs that we win things or we win arguments but we do not seem to win debates. I offer no criticism. It just is a very odd sense and I am very uncomfortable. I am very uncomfortable about what is happening in St. Saviour and that is the reason why I stood. I am sorry I have wasted 6 minutes; I hope not.

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

Well, you can lead a horse to water but it will not necessarily drink, and if it does not drink, it might get a bit thirsty and complain about it. This is quite a curious situation, is it not? Because we have Members who are not part of scrutiny complaining about the lack of transparency. I have to sympathise there because there is certain information that is only provided to Scrutiny Panels. I remember last year in the Budget when I was Chair of the Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel having a concern about this, about not ... there was an actual proposal in the Budget and the panel did not feel that it had enough information in order to advise the States Assembly to say: "We have properly scrutinised this." But what we did, what we proposed to the States Assembly, was how about we put all this money in a fund and you get provided with this business plan, a more detailed business plan, and you make the decision. The States Assembly rejected our proposal. I guess that part of the reason for this is that the States Assembly is organised in a certain way where any Member of the States Assembly can volunteer for a scrutiny role to have access to certain information in the areas that they are interested in. So we do need to make a distinction in terms of the actual information that is available to Scrutiny Panels generally on a confidential basis because there are reasons why you would not want that to be more broadcast. I believe that the Minister has explained that the information that the Scrutiny Panel wants that is available is provided to it. It is not appropriate to say: "You are hiding things from us" if it is not there. It reminds me of a sketch I once attended, a comedian talking about his girlfriend accusing him of having information that he did not have simply because he never had asked for it because he was a bloke and he did not ask for that information. Sorry if I am being sexist here. But the actual point is if the information is not there, it is not there. That arises in respect of when we talk about the secondary sites, when we are talking about Gloucester Street and the Health Village. If the information is not there because we are at the concept stage, that is where we are. There is no hiding there, it is just a fact. Now, I know that the Minister has not got an axe to grind. Why would he be hiding this information from Scrutiny? If it were there, what would be the actual problem? Because I know that he basically is seeking best

value for taxpayers. I believe that is even the reason why he stood for election and that is why he has put so much energy into this project. It is to deliver on behalf of the public in what he believes to be the way that produces best value. That is a staged approach. If we have not reached the stage of designing in detail the secondary sites, then that is where you are. Generally, time and time again ... and it surprises me that the Council of Ministers needs to remind the Assembly, particularly given that there are so many Back-Benchers who were in the previous Council of Ministers, the whole reason why the way in which the hospital project was changed in its approach was to accept that we were not building one massive, great, big hospital. We were building it in stages because that was more manageable for the Budget. The actual lending that was available or the loan and the actual conditions was no longer available by the time we took up our seats in terms of the States Assembly. The other thing that I will mention in respect of the St. Saviour's Village is that there have been meetings at the Parish Hall at which ... Deputy Ozouf has mentioned he is a Deputy of that parish but he may not recall attending any of those meetings. There may be a reason for that because perhaps he did not attend them.

[15:00]

So the basic message here is there is nothing to be produced in respect of this suggestion that things should be broken down when the actual project is not being approached in that way, other than more work which makes things slower. It means delivery is slower. It means there is even more expense. So that is the reason why the Council of Ministers, which has seriously considered all the amendments brought forward in respect of the Government Plan, that is the reason why on this occasion it does not feel it can support the amendment to Scrutiny. Nevertheless, I know that the Minister wishes to assure Scrutiny that what information is available, ask for it and he has committed to provide it. But if it is not there, it is not there. For that reason, I believe on his behalf I will ask the States Assembly to reject this amendment so that we can be more economical with time and with Government resources.

2.4.8 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

When I heard the reference to making the horse go to the water I was wondering if the Deputy might talk about policy on the hoof, but that was not to be. It made me think that you cannot always lead a horse to the water but if you want an easier job you can lead a Shetland pony to the water. They are a little bit smaller and they may well drink, "neigh" bother. But also I am not sure what this exactly has got to do with the hospital ...

The Bailiff:

No.

Deputy M. Tadier:

... when it comes to ... I will leave the other one for later then, Sir. **[Laughter]** We normally say never 2 without 3. It feels unlucky if I do not get the third one in. So it does remind me ... I thought the Deputy was going to go down the route of the horse saying ... because I used to have a horse called ... we used to call it Blacksmith because every time you would try and mount it, it would make a bolt for the door. But again, the references and links to the hospital are not immediately forthcoming so I will leave those there.

The Bailiff:

I think that is your full minute of jokes, Deputy, so if you would like to move on from there, then that is fine.

Deputy M. Tadier:

All right. Now to the 14 minutes of speech. **[Laughter]** This will be one of the shorter speeches. The way I look at it, and I have never been convinced by the confidentiality arguments that we hear,

not just in relation to the hospital but generally coming from Government. I will give you an example. We know that the ... I will call it a fiasco because that is what I think it is as a Back-Bencher, not necessarily as a scrutiny chair. But this whole process we have had about the ferry tender, I have members of the public calling it a shambles to me. I am sure others have heard that. One example is that if the Government had been transparent from the beginning and published things which were entirely able to be published, i.e. the criteria for which companies were tendering, there is absolutely nothing confidential about those kind of things. The way I understand confidentiality usually is that if it would be prejudicial to the commercial partners that you are doing business with, that is one of the primary concerns. You would not want to expose them to anything coming out that would put them in a difficult position. So, for example, when it came to the hospital, if you had a constructor working for you who said: "Look, I am going to build something for you but I am doing you a particularly good deal and I do not want my other customers finding out that I am giving the Government a discount" you may well find that the company would not want that coming out in public. That is perfectly understandable. I also think that when it comes to, for example, the parishes' administration, if our Constable was presenting something to the Parish Assembly, for example - and it is not entirely hypothetical; he wants to build a flat on top of the Parish Hall which may have pros and cons - we would say: "How much is it going to cost you? Have you got 3 quotes for it? Once you have done that, we will say yes or no and we will have a debate about whether it is a good idea or not, but we need the facts." So I do not see that there is anything commercially sensitive about that. Simply setting first of all envelopes and budgets does not mean that you have to spend that and a negotiation process will still take place. Where there is more than one tenderer, they will try and be competitive with each other, and I think that is also understood. So I reject a lot of the confidentiality arguments that are trotted out not just by this Government, by previous governments also. The second point and final point I will make here is that it is also absolutely right that we have more detail, that we know about it, that the public know about it, because this is public money. I do not think it is right necessarily and always helpful for Scrutiny to receive confidential information which does not necessarily have to be confidential because it then puts them in a difficult position. I have always tried to resist as far as possible ... I fully accept there are times when you need to have confidential hearings, confidential briefings, and you receive information in confidence and that confidence is always respected and I hope it will be always by my panel certainly. But I would much prefer to sometimes not have information at all than have information that I cannot use. Because imagine a scenario where a Scrutiny Panel for whatever reason comes to a debate or produces a report and says: "We believe that the Government in this case is wrong but we cannot tell you why we think they are wrong." That is a very invidious position for any Scrutiny Panel to be in. It is perfectly fine when a Scrutiny Panel says: "We have looked at the Minister's plans and we fully agree with them. We have tested them out and there is nothing wrong with that, you can have confidence." But when a Scrutiny Panel says: "We do not agree with this. They need to show their workings" I think that is the key thing here, is that all Members need to have access to a minimum of information and it is courteous for the public also to have that information. So for me, this is very clearcut and I will be supporting the amendment.

The Bailiff:

Does any other Member wish to speak on this amendment? If no other Member wishes ... Deputy Gardiner. Members will remember the ruling which says that the first time I say the words "I close" then that is it, it is too late to put your light on.

2.4.9 Deputy I. Gardiner:

I will be very quick. If I look through the proposed Budget Government Plan just now, very quickly, as we go, for Fort Regent we have £6 million, Springfield pitch and floodlights, £845,000, and it is mentioned here how much it will cost. It is under a million. Going to the Common Strategic Policy and Priorities, which we all know, in the Common Strategic Policy and Priorities we do have £1.6

million for school meals that we allocated previously but it is still very clearly stated, which includes meals providers and infrastructure. My point, we have a very clear split for much lower numbers. Nobody is asking to split £710 million into the bullet points, what does it mean, but we do have 3 different major infrastructure projects. We just allocated Fort Regent a line in the Budget. Three of them together will not be delivered at the same time. It will be in phase 1, next one and next one. The Minister who is coming ... maybe Deputy Binet will continue as the Minister and nobody knows, but what I do remember from being a Minister, when you actually did not publish something, proper publish something, there are consequences when the change happens. I will bring the Assembly to a change that happened to the growth budget that was allocated to me because this is what I know that I did. I have £2.75 million. £500,000 was allocated to update terms and conditions of the teaching assistants. I earmarked them. Another £500,000 was allocated to the early years provision in childcare. I earmarked them. We all knew that vote of no confidence came and until now we do not have updated terms and conditions for teaching assistants which should be signed by the end of January. But because nothing was put in writing, nobody knows ... I mean, basically I have been told nothing happened, even though that is somewhere in the emails. We are not speaking about £1 million, £2 million, £3 million. We are talking about ... and I am really grateful for the Connétable of St. Clement raising the point: 3 major projects all together is higher than our annual budget for everything. Can we see at least bigger numbers for 3 different projects that whoever will continue in the year or 2 or 3 or 5 or 10 will see what we decided, where we started. Because currently I have no idea where we are standing and if other Members do have an idea ... I understand that the Minister for Treasury and Resources, according to the response to the panel, also was not involved much in this finance management. I do ask Members of the Assembly ... it is not about we need to build a hospital. Nobody is asking if it is 700 or 800 or a million. We just want to have heads of expenditure and this is the basic corporate governance accountability.

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

I am not going to speak for long. Deputy Renouf asked before lunch what is the difference between this proposition and proposition 19. The 2 amendments are just not the same. Amendment 19 seeks to create a single head of expenditure for Fort Regent which will reflect the costs of Government on any work in Fort Regent. This proposition splits the existing single head of expenditure for the hospital into multiple heads of expenditure for the New Healthcare Facilities project, so it is quite different from 19. It also adds a new paragraph to the proposition with requirements for the Minister for Treasury and Resources to allocate funds within a timescale that may not be achievable. It also amends the Budget itself, so it is simply not the same as amendment 19. I would also like to pick up on Deputy Gardiner's last comment. This is not comparable to any other project we have on. We talked this morning about a youth centre at Le Squez for £7 million. The new hospital facilities is £710 million. In context, I am told by the Treasurer, this is like the U.K. building H.S.2 (High Speed 2) 5 or 6 times. That is the significance of this project in terms of Jersey's funding. I am frankly surprised that Members do not seem to understand the basic principles of commercial sensitivity and how you negotiate a contract. If you are going to buy a car, you do not go in and show them your bank statement with £30,000 and say: "This is the amount of money I have to spend." You play your cards very close to your chest. There is a limit to how much money that can realistically be shared to make sure we get best value. This is not our own money. If you want to be open with how much money you have to spend when you go to buy a car, that is fine. That is your money. This is public money that we are spending and we have a duty to get the best value for that money. Just to touch very briefly, one of the reasons why it is difficult to divide into 3 is that Overdale has such a disproportionate element to the Budget. It almost gives the game away itself. There are benchmarks available that serious contractors, professional contractors, will know how to calculate contingency and optimism bias amounts if the figures were revealed. That does not help us in the negotiation. We have said that we will load the 3 budgets into the accounting system and we have undertaken to keep the same budgets in the same proportion as the outline business case. The details of each of the

schemes are set out and work is ongoing in terms of the scope of the Kensington Place and Health Village elements, but the intention has been stated publicly and is part of the documentation provided. The new Healthcare Facilities Panel works, as does everything else, within the rules of the Public Finances Manual and the Public Finance Law. The Hospital Review Panel have access to information which sets out the direction of travel for Kensington Place and the Health Village. They have a breakdown of the site financial information. Work is ongoing on the development control plan for Kensington Place and the Health Village. The team will adopt the same approach as the extensive public engagement for acute services. The public have been kept very well ... have been given multiple opportunities, as have States Members, to see what is being proposed. The rules have not changed and those same practices will be followed for the other elements of the project. We also have to consider that there is a basic point that we may face potential difficulties in finding a main contractor, given the state of the healthcare construction market. There are lots of new healthcare facilities and hospitals being built in the U.K. It is a very competitive market and we need to be able to compete as effectively in that as we can. The strategic outline case is public and it sets out the direction for each of the sites. There has been Budget supplementary information which gives information on each of the sites. The Minister and his team I am quite sure have shared as much information as they can with the panel, including on a confidential basis, but I think we have to reflect that there does have to be some degree of sensitivity about these figures. To say we do not buy into confidentiality is, frankly, naive and disappointing. So that is all I would like to say.

[15:15]

The Bailiff:

Does any other Member wish to speak on this amendment? If no other Member wishes to speak, then I close the debate and call upon Deputy Renouf to respond.

2.4.11 Deputy J. Renouf:

Mercifully, we are making progress, I think. I have to say I have listened to the Government's argument with increasing dismay. At the heart of the Government's case is an argument for exceptionalism. The Minister wants to run the process in a completely different way to any other project and outside the normal rules of political engagement. He is effectively seeking to keep the scrutiny process secret. I do not think that is the right way. The Minister is effectively seeking a blank cheque, as the Constable of St. Clement said, and he is only prepared to discuss what number he is going to put on that cheque with the Scrutiny Panel. The Minister says there has been no public outcry over this, that people are not clamouring to hear more. Well, we are in a slightly Kafkaesque situation here. Of course, they might be more worried if they knew what was being planned. The public do not know. It is completely wrong to say that the public have been kept fully informed. Even most Members of this Assembly do not know what is planned. Indeed, I do believe the Minister is not fully aware himself yet of what is planned. What he does have, though, is figures. He has overall figures for money he wants to spend over this Government Plan period, this Budget period, on these 2 other sites. We come back to this point about a strong negotiating position and the risk and the fact that the principal contractor will get the lion's share of the work and so on. I come back to this point. Many of the items when that figure would be revealed for the Overdale part of the project would not be the Overdale construction contract. It would not even be close to it. Many of the items under the overall Overdale project are nothing to do with that construction contract. I have already said that there are 21 items listed in that list. Here is the problem. I would like to give more details to make my case but the Minister ... but I cannot because I need to respect the confidentiality the Minister has asked for. But I will repeat that they include items like medical equipment, architecture and design fees, which have already been spent largely. They include very significant sums of money for items which are nothing to do with the construction contract, nothing to do with it. Revealing the total amount for Overdale does not compromise the negotiating position for that construction element. The point has been well made that, yes, this is a bigger project than normal,

but the same principles apply. We have had cases from the past. I looked back. Les Quennevais School, budgeted at £45.6 million, way before construction was agreed. Delivered for £45.6 million. I think that is the right figure. Revealing the overall figure did not compromise the negotiations when it came to the construction of the school. More recently, the Enid Quenault Centre, £15 million. Again, the figure revealed long before the amounts were ... before the construction contract was begun, and delivered on time and on budget. So I hope I have made that case. I can say no more without breaching the confidentiality to which we are committed. Deputy Scott mentioned that the information will be made available when it is there. She may not have been in the room when I said the precise problem we have is that the information is there. The Minister has it, we have it, but he does not want to make it public. So, yes, we do have the figures in Scrutiny and that is, of course, useful in terms of the dialogue between the Minister and the panel. But as Deputy Alex Curtis said, this is about Scrutiny being effective, not just a talking shop, being able to do its job. At the moment, under the rules of engagement that we have and under the information that the Minister has given us, this is how it goes. I know it goes like this because this may be a slight caricature but this is essentially a conversation we have had in the panel. We say to the Minister: "Thank you for sharing figures with the panel. We have concerns about the X million that you have allocated against Kensington Place. It may not be good value for money." The Minister replies: "I do not." The panel says: "Right. Thanks very much, Minister." That is about all that we can do. There is nothing more meaningful we can do. We can tell the public we are not happy, but without this amendment I say to the Constable of St. Saviour we cannot give them any evidence. We can just say we are not very happy. How far does that get us? It is meaningless in terms of effective scrutiny. We cannot hold the Minister to account. We cannot hold the Minister to account behind closed doors. The Minister's argument requests a disproportionate amount of secrecy to achieve his aims. Publishing the heads of expenditure allows sensible scrutiny. Future Assemblies I think will not look kindly on us if we abdicate our responsibility to ensure that there is transparency around capital spending on the non-Overdale health estate, and I think the Assembly will also regret allowing a complete rewriting of the scrutiny process. We are asking for the bare minimum. The bare minimum. This amendment would allow effective scrutiny without compromising value for money for the taxpayer regarding Overdale, and I urge Members to support it.

The Bailiff:

Thank you very much, Deputy. You call for the appel? I invite Members to return to their seats. The appel is called for. The vote is on the sixth amendment and I ask the Greffier to open the voting and Members to vote. If Members have had the opportunity of casting their vote, then I ask the Greffier to close the voting. The amendment has been defeated:

POUR: 17		CONTRE: 28		ABSTAIN: 1
Connétable of St. Clement		Connétable of St. Helier		Deputy K.L. Moore
Connétable of St. Mary		Connétable of St. Brelade		
Deputy M. Tadier		Connétable of Trinity		
Deputy L.M.C. Doublet		Connétable of St. Peter		
Deputy S.M. Ahier		Connétable of St. Martin		
Deputy I. Gardiner		Connétable of St. John		
Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf		Connétable of Grouville		
Deputy T.A. Coles		Connétable of St. Ouen		
Deputy D.J. Warr		Connétable of St. Saviour		

Deputy H.M. Miles		Deputy G.P. Southern		
Deputy J. Renouf		Deputy C.F. Labey		
Deputy C.D. Curtis		Deputy S.G. Luce		
Deputy H.L. Jeune		Deputy K.F. Morel		
Deputy R.S. Kovacs		Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat		
Deputy A.F. Curtis		Deputy R.J. Ward		
Deputy K.M. Wilson		Deputy C.S. Alves		
Deputy M.B. Andrews		Deputy I.J. Gorst		
		Deputy L.J. Farnham		
		Deputy S.Y. Mézec		
		Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée		
		Deputy M.R. Scott		
		Deputy L.V. Feltham		
		Deputy R.E. Binet		
		Deputy M.E. Millar		
		Deputy A. Howell		
		Deputy T.J.A. Binet		
		Deputy M.R. Ferey		
		Deputy B. Ward		

The Greffier of the States:

Those voting pour, the Connétable of St. Clement and St. Mary and Deputies Tadier, Ahier, Gardiner, Ozouf, Coles, Warr, Miles, Renouf, Jeune, Kovacs, Alex Curtis, Wilson, Andrews, and online Deputies Curtis and Doublet. Those voting contre, the Connétables of St. Helier, St. Brelade, Trinity, St. Peter, St. Martin, St. John, Grouville and St. Saviour, and online the Constable of St. Ouen, and Deputies Southern, Labey, Luce, Morel, Le Hegarat, Ward, Alves, Gorst, Farnham, Mézec, Porée, Scott, Feltham, Millar, Howell, Binet, Ferey and Ward, and online Rose Binet.

The Bailiff:

Very well. There was one abstention, yes.

The Greffier of the States:

Sorry, the abstention was Deputy Moore.

2.5 Proposed Budget (Government Plan) 2025-2028 (P.51/2024): sixteenth amendment (P.51/2024 Amd. (16)) - New office

The Bailiff:

Very well. We now come to the sixteenth amendment lodged by Deputy Ozouf and I ask the Greffier to read that amendment.

The Greffier of the States:

Paragraph (m) - delete paragraphs (m) and (n) and redesignate the subsequent paragraphs accordingly. Paragraph (o) - after the words as set out in the Appendix to the accompanying Report, insert the words: "except that on pages 85 and 86 the section entitled "Investment in the new office" should be deleted."

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

I am fully aware that Members are tired and they are having a long Budget debate, and I know that many amendments that are being brought forward are not able to achieve success, but nevertheless I am going to press on because I believe this is an important matter of public interest which I do not think there has been a lot of discussion about. I will not repeat the comments that were made on the importance of the Social Security Fund and all of the points that were made on the importance of that fund being so important to our pensioners. The withdrawals of the funds are matters of public interest, as we clearly had with almost a vote, and I know some Ministers were placed in a difficult position on that. I think also therefore it must follow that the investments that are made from this important fund are of the highest quality, the highest probity and do not have risk. Members will know the changing way maybe that the investments within the Common Investment Fund are now run. They are run on a very different basis than they were 15, 20 years ago. They are investment advisers of the very highest quality and there is a very huge competition about investment advisers, because the good news is that because we are such a strong Island, people want to invest our money and so we get the best. Now in the Common Investment Fund, we get the Minister for Treasury and Resources and the Assistant Minister for Treasury and Resources, because he was Chief Minister at the time when we made those reforms, made it that we get very good value because there is almost a competition. It is a matter of prestige to advise Jersey because of our quality and our probity and reserves compared to our head of population. In this issue, I want to make sure that Members are ... because we are in this conflicted position. We are dealing with taxpayers' money, and as we have learnt, and if anybody has read one of the judgments of your court recently, they will know the importance of this Assembly being the final body, and so what we say, what we decide matters. We are privileged, as a small Island, in being able to have those abilities. The inherent issue that has troubled me from the start about this is that effectively, as we have seen, is the changes of the law that are required, or changes in regulations. In a sense, this Assembly is becoming both tenant and landlord and it creates the uncomfortable situation that, as the tenant, we could renegotiate or amend the terms. A future Assembly ... I have got no evidence of the future, but I know that this Assembly will still be able to change the law or change the rules about the investment. They will be able to do this, because we can, so there is an even greater importance of any investments being made by this such important fund to be ... not to create a problem that could occur later. I do not want to put future Assemblies in that invidious situation where they are faced with a budgetary problem and so it might be convenient to cut the rent or renegotiate the terms. Any Member that can say that will not happen, well, it is happening, because we are making rules that change the rules of the Social Security Fund and we are having to bring them into law under regulations. There is a regulatory law coming later, right at the end of this Budget, which is going to change what we discussed yesterday, the use of the £20 million. That is going to need to be passed by regulations. Those regulations may or may not have been scrutinised, but then we can bring it in straight away, so we cannot guarantee the future. I think that it is very important that therefore in any investment that is being made of this fund, which our pensioners rely upon - I am not going to repeat all the arguments - that there is no possibility that a future Assembly, for convenience of a short-term budgetary problem ... that the spreadsheet does not allow the number to work and that you can change the number.

[15:30]

Because there is no doubt at all that the States is going to be the de facto landlord and the fiduciary tenant or whatever. In other words, they can change the rules. Now, that blurs the roles that I have ever seen in relation to investments in the Social Security Fund. I will say that if this would be a

proposition that was for just the building of the bit of the States building - the new Cyril Le Marquand House I think is what it is going to be called - for the people that work for the Social Security Fund, that would be fine. Members may not be aware that it is the Social Security Fund that own Philip Le Feuvre House. I learnt early on in my political career: when the president of the Social Security Committee came forward with a stretched budget, we were discussing a very difficult capital programme allocation, and the president of Social Security attended upon the Finance and Economics Committee and said that he was doing his capital project anyway. Well, he could, because it was for the fund and anything that works to the purpose of the fund's operations, its administration, its collection, its officials, they can be housed and that is fine. I do not know, I think the new States building may be 20 per cent of those people, if that. The new States building is vast and it is huge. It is the largest office block, I think, in St. Helier and it is about 20 per cent. So if would be 20 per cent, then there would be no case, absolutely, but suitable checks and balances would have been carried out by the fund. I am happy to give way, but ...

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

I just want to ask a point of clarification.

The Bailiff:

Yes, if the Deputy is prepared to give way for a point of clarification, it can be done now, yes.

Deputy M.E. Millar:

I am sorry, I slightly missed it. What is the 20 per cent figure that the Deputy is referring to?

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

I am sorry if I am not being clear. I am trying to be as brief as possible. If it would be the 20 per cent ... so all the people that look after the Social Security Fund, all the good officials that collect contributions and then organise the pensions and so on, they are allowed, under the Social Security Law - I will quote the Minister in my summing-up the actual article of the law - they are permitted ... the fund is permitted to own the building that it operates out of and all the administration cost to doing it. That is why Philip Le Feuvre House has been always owned by the fund and any refurbishments of ... which we were surprised when the Social Security president came along and said: "I am doing it anyway" because they did not put it in the capital money. He could do it because you could draw it from the fund. That is the law, but it is not that. It is not that. If there is any doubt about the legality of what I am saying, I am happy to call the Attorney General, or if somebody is going to respond, but that is my understanding and I do not think the law has changed. The fact that Ministers are having a quick discussion about it, maybe they do not understand what the law is, but I certainly do. I think I do, unless it has changed, and I apologise if I do not. So the fund exists to provide security for pensions and benefits, so there is currently a discussion going on about whether and if or not, but it is only ... and I say the 20 per cent, so if 20 per cent of the staff are in the new States building, that is fine, 20 per cent of the £92 million or £91 million is fine, no issue. No ifs or buts, it can be used from the fund. The rest of it is an investment and that is different. That falls outside of the rules of the fund. It is an investment and when you do an investment you want basically investment advisers to think about what the best investment is for the return: what is the risk profile; is this the best investment, et cetera, et cetera. What I have challenged Ministers about is if the investment adviser had said: "Look, we think a real good investment of this pension fund is investing in Jersey commercial property" then that is fine. Experts have decided that is a good diversification among buying gilts or bonds or shares or risks of high ... and risk of course is very important. It is about getting a return. The Assistant Minister for Treasury and Resources has been both a Minister for Social Security and somebody who works in investment, and I am sure the Minister knows a thing or 2 about this sort of thing. They will understand risk and return. Now, what is happening here, as I can see ... and I was not around for the controversy about the building of this building. I know that

many of my constituents are asking why the States have got a new office and they do not have a hospital yet, but let us not go there. Now we have got the place built and now we want to buy it. Well, I was outside of the Assembly at the time and I did not know that the intention was to buy it. If that was the intention, why are we being only made to make this decision now? There is a 3-year option to buy it. So what I am advancing is an argument of: has this been through the same absolutely proper, tough - really tough - investment analysis with expert advisers to say: "This is the best use of the Social Security money for the purposes of the pension holders"? If you believe there is 20 per cent, that is fine, automatic, almost done, but it is not. I got the calculator out and I worked out that this was a 4.1 per cent return. It is £91 million; £3.6 million rent. Well, that is 4.1 per cent return, probably some adjustments for tax. Well, the last time a commercial property in St. Helier was sold - and I have done my research - it was 7.1 per cent, so this is a very ... effectively that means it is very expensive for the return. So if I would be an investment adviser - and I am not one, but I know a thing or 2 about property - I would say: "Why am I spending ... why am I only getting 4.1 per cent return for commercial property in St. Helier?" The going rate for commercial property in St. Helier can only be judged ... it is not me saying it. The last office block that went through ... and some of these are S.o.J.D.C. (States of Jersey Development Company), so everybody knows all this: 4.1 per cent return, so that is not very good. It is really not very good at all. I hope Members understand that. It is not very good. It is an expensive asset. It seems like a very expensive asset for a poor return. You get more than that by putting it in the bank. Secondly, what is going to be the marketability of this building in 25 years' time? We are told ... I am trying to get the answers out as to why we need to own it. We have already sold the land. I am not going to say whether that was right or wrong, but we sold the land, got a developer to build it. They have entered into a 25-year lease. It increases by R.P.I. (Retail Prices Index). What difference does it make whether the States own this building or not? We have not even moved into it. Ministers have not moved into their new nice offices. I hope they are nice, because they should be. It is a very expensive building. I congratulate it, it is a green building and all the rest of it, but let us look forward in 25 years. What is the largest office block in St. Helier worth? I would suggest the world might be looking a bit different. I would suggest that, unfortunately and fortunately, we are going to need less administrators because that is going to be done through A.I. (artificial intelligence) and we are going to be able to get more people on frontline services in the Minister for Health and Social Services' hospital and the Minister for Home Affairs police force, looking into financial crime and the other things that we are seized upon in terms of being Members that care about what services we provide in our society, whether that be ... I cannot find any other Ministers to look at to say all the things that they need done, social workers and so on. We have got a population problem, an ageing society, and so where we can rid of backroom jobs and get computers to do them or move them out of Island, we are going to jolly well do it. This is a big massive office block - and let us not say it is not, it is absolutely huge, it is the biggest one in St. Helier, I think, and it is the most expensive - in the wrong part of town from offices, what it is going to be used for? Have I got any information from the questions I have been asking Ministers about what the residual value is? It will probably have to be repurposed. What is that going to be worth in the end in 25 years? Is this really a good investment? I want Ministers to make the case. I know they like it, I know they want to move in, but would it not be better to move in for a year and find out whether it has got any defects and hold the developer to account for the defects? They are buying it straight away, in 2 weeks, if we give permission, and I think that we should basically deal with that. It is about trust and confidence. Delay is possible. It does not make any difference whether they are going to buy it this year or next year. We are short enough of cash and most constituents of mine have said: "Why are we not using the money for building the hospital? Lend the Minister for Health and Social Services the money. That is what I think." They may be wrong. This is about use and probity and transparency and properness of the use of the Social Security Fund and I want to hear why this decision ... which if I am right on my earlier points, this is 80 per cent of the £91 million is an investment. It is an investment. If the Minister for Treasury and Resources does not understand, maybe she can get somebody else to

answer. It is an investment. It is not an infrastructure; it is an investment. If there is not an understanding of that, then I urge Members ... I know most amendments are not getting through, but if I have raised some questions that are raising some real, valid questions in Members' minds and if Ministers have not considered this, then I would ask them to consider putting this decision off. We have got the right to buy it for 3 years. It does not need to be done now. Put it off for one year if you have got any doubt. I listened to the debate and I am sorry I have spoken for so long, but I hope I have made the points I have made.

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

I was wondering if I might ask the Deputy to give way for a point of clarification, please.

The Bailiff:

Will you give way for a point of clarification, Deputy Ozouf?

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

Very readily.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

I thank the Deputy. It is just obviously the Deputy has referred to the Social Security Law and the use of the Social Security Fund. I was wondering if he would be able to clarify which part of the law, which articles of the law he is referring to in terms of the use of the fund for investments, please.

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

Things have moved very fast and I will do so. I can either give way on somebody else, but I would need to bring it up on my iPad or call the Attorney General, who will basically make very clear the point that I am making, but I cannot. I do not have ... I will get it up in a minute, but cannot do it now.

The Bailiff:

Deputy, would you like us to call the Attorney General?

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

I can answer the question, I just need to get it.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

I just wonder if it is Article 30, in which it says that: "Any monies forming part of the Social Security Fund may from time to time be paid over to an investment manager and may be invested in accordance with such directions as may be given by the Minister for Treasury and Resources." I wonder if it is that Article, in which investment is entirely at the discretion ...

The Bailiff:

I think we cannot have this exchange going backwards and forwards. If Deputy Ozouf cannot answer it now as a point of clarification, then we will either have to get the Attorney or someone else will have to answer it. I wonder, as Deputy Millar has ... sorry? The Attorney General is online.

Deputy M.E. Millar:

There is a misunderstanding, which I can correct.

The Bailiff:

Are you wishing to speak now?

Deputy M.E. Millar:

Yes.

The Bailiff:

Very well. I think probably the right thing to do is ... I saw Deputy Millar's light first and then after that it is Deputy Barbara Ward, so Deputy Millar. Thank you so much. Well, there we are. Is the proposition seconded? **[Seconded]** Very well, Deputy Millar.

2.5.2 Deputy M.E. Millar:

The Council of Ministers cannot support this amendment. The decision to purchase the new office has been considered by the Council of Ministers and is clearly in the best interests of the public. I would go as far as to say it is a no brainer. This is a practical, sensible decision and shows a joined-up approach across the wider public sector. The first thing I have to clarify is that the property is not going to be bought by the Social Security Fund. It is going to be purchased by the Social Security Reserve Fund. I would also clarify that this is not a case of a withdrawal from the Social Security Reserve Fund, rather, we will exchange one asset class - which may be cash or investments in shares or bonds - for another, which is real estate. The funding solution that is being proposed with the Social Security Reserve Fund investing a small proportion, I think about 4 or 5 per cent, of its £2 billion asset portfolio has been independently reviewed by the Treasury Advisory Panel, who are a group of independent experts that monitor and review all of Government's and the fund's investments. They have judged this to be a good choice of investment for the fund. There is nothing unusual about this investment or the transaction as a whole. It not only generates a return in line with the objectives of the fund, but it also serves to enhance its portfolio as one of a number of different types of assets that balance risk and reward.

[15:45]

The Deputy mentioned a return of 4.1 per cent. We believe that that is an oversimplification because it ignores the inflation-linked element of the rent. Indeed, the purpose of the reserve fund's investment strategy balances risks and rewards for the fund in the longer term, protecting and growing its assets, allowing them to support the aims of the fund, and certainly in no way undermining them. This is not a new idea. The States has previously invested in large projects through the Currency Fund. Those of us with longer memories and careers, such as the Deputy, will recall the investments in both the sewage treatment works and the rollout of the fibre optic network were met from the Currency Fund. Neither of these investments met the primary purposes of the Currency Fund, but they made sense as investments. The Deputy is rightly concerned that the fund might be disadvantaged by this approach. This appears to assume that if Government overall is better off, then the fund must be worse off, an: "I win, you lose" situation, if you like. This is not in fact the situation. In this circumstance, the Government and the fund are in fact both on the same team. The rules of landlord and tenant are not, I believe, fiduciary, as the Deputy alluded to in his speech. Government is an AA rated-tenant. This is not any commercial deal. The fund is buying a property that it is then letting on a long-term basis to an AA-rated tenant. That is a very good bond. The concept that Government could not or would not pay rent in the future to a public fund is frankly, to my mind, inconceivable and highly, highly hypothetical. The way the arrangements will be put in place are designed to protect the fund, which stands to receive the benefits of the purchase with Government still paying the same rent as it would have previously, using similar lease arrangements that offer protections to the fund. I would just like to touch here on the question of occupation, and this is perhaps where some confusion arises. Philip Le Feuvre House is owned by the Social Security Fund and I believe that the Social Security Fund is allowed to expend money on the provision of benefits. This is different, and the fact that Customer and Local Services - or its new name, Employment, Social Security and Housing, I believe - the fact that that is occupying, as part of government, is irrelevant. Government is the tenant, the Social Security Reserve Fund is the landlord and the fact that the Social Security team are occupying that building is completely irrelevant to the fund or to

this transaction. The building, despite its huge size, does not currently accommodate every single government employee. We are reflecting the fact that people work from home, that people are often outside the office and there are not, frankly, enough chairs for all the behinds that might want to sit in them, so we will be working on a rota basis. People will have to book desks, and if we did find even then that we had unused space, Government, as tenant and with the consent of the landlord, would be able to sublet unused space and recover the value of that space. So again, I think that is a hypothetical risk that seems unlikely to me. The amendment calls for more time to scrutinise the decision. I find this surprising, given that the Budget was lodged in the summer, beginning of August, and Scrutiny have had more time than ever to review all the proposals it includes. This is a considered, well thought-through proposal and there is absolutely no justification for delaying its approval. I recommend it to the House and I urge Members to reject the amendment. Thank you.

2.5.3 Deputy B. Ward of St. Clement:

Members are already aware of my views in regard to the Social Security Fund and pensions. Under the pension scheme investment process, it is not unusual to have a property portfolio, as long as it provides the best returns for the fund, whatever fund that is, going forward. Property portfolios will be considered by the actuaries on a regular basis, which is usually on a 3-year basis, and also will be scrutinised by the internal and external auditors on a yearly basis to ensure that all the checks and the balances are in order. To do that is about protecting the fund, its returns and that you are doing the right thing by its contributors, that is the pensioners, or via the employees, the employers and via the States grant that we are getting the proper value for money. In my experience, this acquisition would be acceptable. It is not unusual to find investors, which as the Minister for Treasury and Resources has described, is that the reserve fund is looked after and invested in by separate investors, and a lot of those investors have pooled funds. Part of those pooled funds include property portfolios. Where I am a little bit concerned, whether that 4.1 per cent rental is a bit on the low side, when we have some properties in Jersey that are blue chip rentable properties, but that is only my personal concern. The actual principle of Social Security acquiring the new States building, I do not have a problem with that. I think it is an investment, as long as the contributors get a good return. That will be monitored and reported publicly to ensure that that happens.

The Bailiff:

Thank you very much, Deputy. Does any other Member wish to speak on this amendment? If no other Member wishes to speak, then I close the debate and call upon Deputy Ozouf to respond.

2.5.4 Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

The reserve fund acts as a long-term savings or a stabilisation fund. It is designed to support the sustainability of the reserve fund by providing resources during times of financial strain. The difference between the reserve fund and the Social Security Fund is that it is the payment of the benefits. In fact, it is a sort of cash holding vehicle. There has clearly been awareness raised - I am not going to take up a lot of time because clearly nobody wants to speak on this, and maybe they realise it is a done deal - but the fact is that there is a difference between the abilities of the Social Security funds, of which they all have a common purpose, as they have a common purpose of being primarily used for the purposes of good investment and investment. It does not really matter whether or not it is the reserve fund or the other funds. The principal issue is the provenance and the oversight given to the importance of an investment and it is an investment that is anything else apart from ... we can use words, and they can be saying this, that and the other, but at the end of the day, this is an investment and it does put the States, as we have learnt, in a position where they can change the rules. The previous speaker is in favour of this, but yesterday she advanced, quite rightly, and I agreed with her, that the States can change the rules. The rules are - and I want to just make this point - that the States is now going to be put in the position that they are both the landlord and the tenant, which means that this Assembly can change that rent in the future. She thought it was a low return or a high

rent. I know many people think that £3.6 million is a lot of money because we are effectively continuing ... we have entered into an agreement for 25 years for £3.6 million worth of rent. I have to say to the Minister for Treasury and Resources, I do understand about yields and I do understand about returns and it is the initial yield that I was talking about. It is 4.1 per cent. You can come up with all sorts of financial calculations about residual value and future values. I understand that too, but the initial rent for an alternative commercial building with an equally good tenant was 7.1 per cent, so I am bemused as to why the Council of Ministers is maintaining the position that a return of 4.1 per cent is a good return when alternative asset classes have got a lot more, and the facts will speak for themselves. The Council of Ministers will have to account for their decision to put through to this Assembly an investment of the people's pension fund that is lower than other equivalent commercial properties in Jersey and putting this Assembly ... let me be absolutely clear: this Assembly, in future Budget debates, can change the rent, so when there is a shortage of money in a year, they can cut the rent. We have seen this, we are trying to scrabble around for money and I did not want to put future Assemblies into the easy option of deferring. We have had the discussion about the deferring of the supplementation grant. I do not want a future Assembly to be put into a: "Oh well, we owe the rent, but we will pay it next year" because that could happen. The Assembly will be able to do that. It is exactly the same. So all of those Members who were concerned about changing the supplementation should be concerned exactly for the same reasons about changing the rate. You have to pay the supplementation; you will owe it later. Last year we said: "We owe £10 million and we will pay it back later." You can put the States ... the States is going to be in the position, as a supreme body, of making those decisions and do we really want that in the future? Nobody has given me any reason to say it is a no brainer. What is the issue? The landlord, the developer ... the developer put up their finances already. Have they not already got their financing in place? They are going to get the rent. What on earth makes it a difference - apart from, dare I say, ego - that we bought back something that we might not have just sold in the first place? It crystallises a profit for the developer and it gives the developer the money for the development in full and that is taken from the Social Security Fund. I will maintain the position that I have not heard ... apart from the investment advisory body, which I set up, that the Minister says is okay. It is not the investment advisers that I am talking about, the ones that sit there and have to argue about competing for different lumps of money. I am not talking about that. I am talking about the investment advisers. If Assembly Members believe that there has been the level of tough competitive investment analysis on our people's pension, that this Assembly has massively benefited from the returns from the Common Investment Fund, the way that that is set up, then fine, but I wonder whether or not members of Scrutiny have asked the questions that I have tried to as a Back-Bencher with very little abilities to do much, but doing what I can. It is clear that that has not happened. There has been promises given or assurances given that have not been tested and our job is to test it. I say there is no good reason for one year. The Minister has got the money in the Social Security Reserve Fund, or the 2 Ministers have got the money in the current account. At least let the building be occupied, let the dilapidations or whatever - the bits and pieces that are wrong with it - be dealt with and buy it knowing when you have zeroed out the risk. Buying it seems to me a bad investment, because there is a lot better around, and secondly, when you have not even occupied it there is something that is quite wrong, but I fully accept if the Assembly are confident that they are absolutely sure that this is the best investment of Social Security people's money, then they will vote in favour of the Government and against my proposition. If they have any doubts from what has been arrived at speed with this debate, then they should vote against because we have still got the right to buy it in 3 years' time. It does not make any difference at all. I move the amendment.

The Bailiff:

Very well. Do you call for the appel? The appel is called for. I invite Members to return to their seat. The vote is on the sixteenth amendment and I ask the Greffier to open the voting and Members

to vote. If Members have had the opportunity of casting their vote, then I ask the Greffier to close the voting.

[16:00]

The amendment has been defeated:

POUR: 7		CONTRE: 39		ABSTAIN: 0
Connétable of St. Lawrence		Connétable of St. Helier		
Connétable of St. Clement		Connétable of St. Brelade		
Deputy L.M.C. Doublet		Connétable of Trinity		
Deputy K.L. Moore		Connétable of St. Peter		
Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf		Connétable of St. Martin		
Deputy K.M. Wilson		Connétable of St. John		
Deputy M.B. Andrews		Connétable of Grouville		
		Connétable of St. Ouen		
		Connétable of St. Mary		
		Connétable of St. Saviour		
		Deputy G.P. Southern		
		Deputy C.F. Labey		
		Deputy M. Tadier		
		Deputy S.G. Luce		
		Deputy K.F. Morel		
		Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat		
		Deputy S.M. Ahier		
		Deputy R.J. Ward		
		Deputy C.S. Alves		
		Deputy I. Gardiner		
		Deputy I.J. Gorst		
		Deputy S.Y. Mézec		
		Deputy T.A. Coles		
		Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée		
		Deputy H.M. Miles		
		Deputy M.R. Scott		
		Deputy J. Renouf		
		Deputy C.D. Curtis		
		Deputy L.V. Feltham		

		Deputy R.E. Binet		
		Deputy H.L. Jeune		
		Deputy M.E. Millar		
		Deputy A. Howell		
		Deputy T.J.A. Binet		
		Deputy M.R. Ferey		
		Deputy R.S. Kovacs		
		Deputy A.F. Curtis		
		Deputy B. Ward		

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

Can we have the pour, please?

The Greffier of the States:

Those voting pour, the Connétables of St. Lawrence and St. Clement, Deputies Moore, Ozouf, Wilson, Andrews and Deputy Doublet online.

2.6 Proposed Budget (Government Plan) 2025-2028 (P.51/2024): twelfth amendment (P.51/2024 Amd. (12)) - Performance framework

The Bailiff:

Very well. We come next to the twelfth amendment, lodged by Deputy Jeune, and I ask the Greffier to read the amendment.

The Greffier of the States:

After the words “as set out in the Appendix of the accompanying Report” insert the words: “, except that on page 17, after the words ‘group by Island Outcomes’ there should be inserted a new paragraph: “Sustainable well-being will be embedded within all business as usual activities in conjunction with Ministerial plans and portfolios. Included within any issuance of financing to third parties and public bodies will be the requirement to obtain transparent reporting relating to the application of funding, detailing how the funding will actively contribute to sustainable well-being, aligned with Future Jersey vision and be monitored and measured further to the standards set by the Jersey Performance Framework.”

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

Today I write and make the case for my amendment, which calls for public funds, our taxpayers’ money, to be allocated with a clear, measurable commitment to sustainable well-being, as outlined in our law. This amendment is not radical, nor does it impose undue burdens. It simply asks that A.L.O.s (arm’s-length organisations), state-owned entities, businesses and organisations that receive public money meet minimum standards and credibility to show if they make a positive impact on Jersey. By any other name, I am asking for focus on outcome-based accountability, not a concept I am making up, but a recognised international framework used across a number of jurisdictions. Outcome-based accountability is a disciplined way of thinking and taking action that governments, local councils and communities can use to design and monitor strategies to improve the lives of children, families and communities, and as the basis for commissioning and improving the performance of projects, programmes and services. That is not internal projects, programmes and services of the Government, but used as a basis when Government are commissioning services,

programmes and projects from third parties. Let us remember the Public Finances (Jersey) Law requires Ministers to take into account the sustainable well-being of the inhabitants of Jersey over successive generations when spending public money. The Chief Minister himself affirmed that sustainable well-being was central to the Council of Ministers' decision-making when developing the Budget, yet as the Corporate Services Panel's report highlights, there is little evidence that sustainable well-being has been genuinely embedded into decision-making. While the glossy pages and colourful pie-charts at the start of this Budget document may be visually appealing, they cannot mask the absence of substantive action. Without clear accountability mechanisms when commissioning services, projects and programmes, how can we claim that sustainable well-being is at the heart of our financial decisions? Outcome-based accountability begins with organisations wanting to be commissioned for delivering services asked and answer 7 simple questions: "Who are our customers, clients, people we serve? How can we measure if our customers/clients are better off? How can we measure if we are delivering services well? How are we doing on the most important of these measures? Where have we been? Where are we heading? Who are the partners who have a potential role to play in doing better with us? What works? What could work to do better than baseline? What do we propose to do?" After interventions are proposed by the responsible organisations, performance accountability assesses the impact of the interventions by asking 3 questions: "How much did we do?" the quantity of work: "How well did we do it?" the quality of work, and: "Is anyone better off?" the impact of work. Gathering this data and reporting can then be fed back up into the overall accountability framework that has broader and more aspirational outcomes that involve a wider range of stakeholders and for now sits within the Future Jersey vision and monitored by the Jersey Performance Framework. Let us talk about numbers. In 2023, grants of £75,000 or more totalled £74 million, representing over 4 per cent of the Budget. In 2022, it was £70,000 or 4 per cent of the Budget. These are significant sums, yet there is no requirement for A.L.O.s, businesses or organisations receiving these funds to demonstrate their contribution to Jersey's sustainable well-being goals and the Future Jersey vision. This lack of accountability raises a fundamental question: how do officers and accountable officers awarding these grants know if they are supporting a positive or negative impact on sustainable well-being? Year after year, funds are allocated without these robust assessments or measurements of outcome. Are we simply flying blind, hoping that these funds achieve something meaningful without checking if they do? This lack of integration undermines Jersey's broader objectives. Without embedding sustainable well-being into funding decisions, we risk failing to meet our Public Finances (Jersey) Law obligations, wasting public money on initiatives that could counter our long-term goals, making the Future Jersey vision and the Jersey Performance Framework redundant. The Jersey Performance Framework is designed to measure our progress towards sustainable well-being, yet without data from public funding recipients, it becomes a hollow exercise. The recent report from the Comptroller and Auditor General underscores this point. Despite repeated recommendations from various reports from the C. & A.G. (Comptroller and Auditor General) over a number of years since sustainable well-being became a requirement under the Public Finances (Jersey) Law, progress has been slow and critical actions have been rejected or seen death by delay. For example, the reduction in the Stats Department budget has already led to one of the few recently agreed actions by the chief executive from the latest C. & A.G. recommendations on the Jersey Performance Framework to already be dropped. Even though that chief executive's report has only been published, already one of the 3 actions has been dropped. How can we hope to track our progress if we fail to support the very systems designed to measure it? Let me give you an example of what I am trying to get your support on today. Let us take the productivity support package that we agreed yesterday. This is a perfect opportunity to ensure that companies benefiting from public funding uphold positive practices and contribute to Jersey's sustainable well-being, not just by paying a living wage, but also to ensure there is no detrimental practices to overall areas of sustainable well-being. Why should taxpayers support companies whose overall impact detracts from Jersey's sustainable well-being goals? Will the Government be checking that companies, ahead of providing match funding, pay a living wage? Will they check the details about

how much the employer deducts from migrant workers for recruitment fees, travel to Jersey, visas, food and accommodation, highlighted in the Scrutiny Panel's migrant workers report? What is an appropriate amount to be deducted? Will these be a criteria when companies are asking for match funding? Is it appropriate for employers to put workers coming to Jersey in debt before they even get here? Should this be part of the discussion when asking for match funding? If a hotel applies for a match funding grant to upgrade their heating to make it ready to be an all-season hotel, will the discussions with the grantee be about it having to be a low-carbon heating alternative? Because under the Carbon Neutral Roadmap, that is where we are supposed to be going, but will these match funding discussions create this criteria and discussions with the grantees? This is why I am asking you to support this amendment today and I give you this example of this future productivity support package, where these critical questions could be used as criteria or used in discussions when deciding whether to give companies and businesses match funding. So this amendment is neither unprecedented nor untested. Organisations like the Jersey Community Foundation and Jersey Overseas Aid already require grantees to report on their impact, so charities already have to do this. If other donors can do this, why can the Government not? This is not about burdening officers or recipients, it is about simple, effective accountability. Deputy Gorst received a letter earlier this week from the Institute of Directors supporting my amendment, calling for the need to mandate transparency and alignment in impact reporting for third-party recipients of public funding. They call specifically for discussions to move beyond net zero and environmental outcomes to also include critical social sustainability issues that the Island needs to address. This is what I am trying to highlight with my amendment. This is about responsible stewardship of public funds. It is about ensuring that the money we allocate, not just to departments, but to third parties, contributes to the long-term well-being of our Island and its residents. The Chief Minister stated this Budget is designed to help the less well-off and address the cost of living, yet over 6 per cent of the Budget - likely more in future years - is being allocated without demanding outcome-based accountability. Why are we not building long-term responsible partnerships with our A.L.O.s, businesses and organisations to create positive impacts for Jersey's community and environment? Why are we not ensuring that every grant awarded aligns with our vision for sustainable well-being? This amendment is trying to be practical, necessary and timely, so I urge Members to support it, not for the sake of red tape, but for the sake of accountability, transparency and a genuine commitment to Jersey's sustainable future. Thank you.

The Bailiff:

Is the amendment seconded? **[Seconded]** Deputy Millar.

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

This Assembly has already taken positive steps in this area. The performance framework is in place to measure progress against long-term well-being indicators and ensure that we receive the best outcomes for Islanders. However, as we all know, it is possible to have too much of a good thing. As Government, we have committed to reducing red tape and unfortunately this amendment, however well meaning, has exactly the opposite effect. If adopted, this amendment will add further layers of bureaucracy to both Government, charities and other public bodies and private bodies who seek grant funding from us. Measures already exist to ensure that public money is spent to support the objectives and outcomes of the States of Jersey. In particular, the Public Finances Manual formalises these measures for grants, including that all grants should contribute towards the strategic aims, priorities and desired outcomes of the States of Jersey. Sustainable well-being is considered in all policy development within Government. When my department considers changes to the Public Finances Manual, it follows a careful consultation process with key stakeholders to ensure that their views are considered and any unforeseen consequences are understood and identified. I am not aware of any consultation with the charities and other bodies that would be burdened by additional reporting requirements and needless bureaucracy that this amendment would create. Many of these bodies are

small and have very limited resources. While the Public Finances Manual applies only to our officers, I have real concern that these additional measures and additional reporting may prevent small bodies and charities from seeking or receiving support because the burden of compliance is simply more than they can manage. A.L.O.s already have additional requirements in the Public Finances Manual. In particular, the first principle relating to A.L.O.s is that all arm's-length organisation activity should contribute towards the strategic priorities of the States of Jersey and optimise independence, flexibility, skills and funding capability associated with arm's-length organisation-based provision. Our A.L.O.s are committed to sustainable well-being. Indeed, Jersey Finance publish how they deliver on economic, community and environmental well-being in their annual report. One of the priorities of Jersey Business is to develop more sustainable, resilient and productive industries. Visit Jersey has a strategic objective to deliver the vision of a sustainable visitor economy and Digital Jersey's primary objective is to support sustainable economic growth to enable a connected digital society and enhanced quality of life. Moreover, the Jersey Performance Framework has been designed for Government, the whole of Government. Using this framework to monitor and measure A.L.O.s or other bodies captured by this amendment is unlikely to often be practical or achievable. While the work of the A.L.O.s absolutely supports Government in delivering outcomes for Islanders, how do you measure, for example, the impact the Opera House has contributed to those outcomes? Arguments can certainly be made that it will contribute to mental well-being and to Jersey as a cultural centre, but how do you measure the impact?

[16:15]

This might be possible, but for any measurement to be meaningful, it will involve additional work for the Opera House. Any money spent on this is money that could be spent by the A.L.O. delivering its objectives. Following the work of the Comptroller and Auditor General, we are currently consulting on enhancements to the existing requirements, including one for suitable reporting on sustainability with regard given to reports and good practice issued by the C. & A.G. This follows our preferred approach of encouraging A.L.O.s to adopt good practice, rather than mandating unworkable measures. This is a proportionate response. We already have mechanisms in place to ensure that the use of public funds given to third parties support government objectives. I will just reflect now that it dawns on me that some of the parishes may fall victim to this additional reporting as well, if you receive money from Government. I ask Members to consider whether they really think that adding more red tape will really help A.L.O.s and other bodies deliver for Islanders or whether they are content with the current proportionate approach. We are trying to contain growth in public sector expenditure and this type of additional bureaucracy sadly is exactly the type of the work that the public find difficult to understand and unnecessary. I would also just like to say, because it seems appropriate at this time, I know a few Members attended the C. & A.G.'s sustainable decision-making forum or session at the beginning of October and she had invited Derek Walker, who is the Commissioner for Future Generations in Wales, to speak at that and to talk about the work they are doing in terms of future generations and sustainability. He said one thing that really, really resonated with me. During his speech, he talked about how they were trying to introduce all these measures to ensure sustainability and well-being and regard for future generations and he said: "But we are a small jurisdiction of 5 million." We are a small jurisdiction of 105,000 people. We do need to stop creating more and more burden and work for the public service and for the public and for the bodies we engage with because that itself is not sustainable. Just as a further aside, as I have got time, I am told that at the beginning of October, the Scottish Parliament debated establishing a moratorium on the establishment of commissioners because they had 2 propositions to establish yet more commissioners with more powers to investigate and regulate. We have got to think about the work and the burden that some of these things create for us. We are working very hard to do it in a proportionate manner and I ask Members to reject this amendment. Thank you.

2.6.3 Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade:

I was not going to speak on this amendment, but the last speaker has prompted me to do so. I am not accustomed to speaking on the hoof, but when Deputy Jeune talked about outcomes-based accountability, I remembered that back in 2015 I was, in my civil service role, the leader of the taskforce for 1001 critical days. I have just rooted around in my handbag and I have found my outcomes-based accountability ready reference. At the bottom, that is prepared by the National Children's Bureau in partnership with the States of Jersey as part of the E.C.D.P. (Early Childhood Development Programme). As I was listening to Deputy Jeune talk, I thought: "Hang on a minute. What has gone wrong?" We were doing this as a matter of course. The Jersey Performance Framework was based on outcomes-based accountability. The National Children's Bureau helped us to introduce it. It is a system that is used in Belfast in Northern Ireland. Outcomes-based accountability is used as a guide, as a framework for the Northern Ireland Government Plan. Leeds use it for their children's plan; we used it for our Early Years Policy Development Board and I believe it is still something that feeds through the Children and Young People's Plan. Unfortunately, the Minister for Children and Families is not here to confirm that. I have been involved in the charitable sector for very many years and one of the things that has helped us gain funds and helped us understand what we are doing well, what we are not doing well and how we need to grow is an outcomes-based accountability framework that has been, the Minister for Treasury and Resources would say, imposed upon us, put on as a burden by the charitable funders, but it is routine. Jersey Child Care Trust, if you have a look at their website, Caring Cooks, if you have a look at their website, Brighter Futures, if you look at their website, all of these operate within an outcomes-based accountability framework. Now, some of those services are commissioned by States of Jersey and it was routine to ensure that those outcomes, using an O.B.A. (outcomes-based accountability) framework, were maintained. I think the focus has moved away from the commissioners asking for that framework and that was an internal decision from the Government of Jersey. Family Nursing and Home Care were certainly using an outcomes-based accountability framework. I am not sure this has continued because the commissioners from States of Jersey are now using something different. I just wanted to answer something that the Minister for Treasury and Resources said about bureaucracy. It will not. It creates a framework. It does not create a burden; it brings some clarity. All the charities that receive money from the Jersey Community Foundation have to make an application using an O.B.A. framework. I know, I have done it myself, not only for the charity that I am involved in, but also when we were bringing forward the *Beautiful St. Brelade* report and we were asking for money to support us to deliver some of those projects. It is a real shame I do not have more than 10 minutes because the Minister for Treasury and Resources asked and used the example, for example, the Opera House: "How would outcomes-based accountability interfere with the Opera House? It would be a burden and it would not be possible." I could go through the little steps of my ready reckoner and show in 30 seconds how it would be useful, one: "What are the quality of life conditions we want for the children, adults and families who live in Jersey?" Quite simple for the Opera House. We want them to be able to enjoy art, we want them to be able to access culture, wider than what might necessarily be available normally on the Island. Two: "What would these conditions look like if we could see them?" How can we measure these conditions? Well, we can measure these conditions by measuring how many people attend, what the ticket price is. Do we have a good range of entertainment? Will we get Johnny Vegas, will we get Aida, things that appeal to different sorts of people that have been set as the quality of life conditions? "How are we doing on these most important measures?" is number 4. "Who are the partners that have roles to play?" is number 5. The partners are the Jersey Green Room Company, the Jersey Youth Service, the primary schools, all contributing to the Island outcome indicators. Jersey Performance Framework, when it was created, was based on outcomes-based accountability. I could go through the other 14 for the next 10 minutes, but I do not want to bore everybody rigid, but what I am saying, I applaud Deputy Jeune for bringing this proposition. It is an important proposition. O.B.A. is not a burden, it is a friend, and the Government should be looking very seriously at embedding O.B.A. principles across all the organisations to whom they give money.

2.6.4 Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade:

I had wanted to wait to hear what the Government had to say before replying, because for the life of me, I cannot see why there would be opposition to this, but I am more pleased to be following Deputy Miles because all the work that I would need to do has been done. The arguments that have been advanced against this amount to nothing more than a few slogans: too much of a good thing, reduce red tape, additional bureaucracy. These are populist notions that generate cheap headlines over content, over examining the content of what Deputy Jeune has been proposing. Deputy Miles has done the work for them. If I was a Minister, I would be slightly embarrassed to have been so badly exposed by that explanation of what is meant by this amendment. I have to say, with the attitude that the Government are showing, it is going to be a very, very long road to make our supposed commitment to sustainable well-being and the Jersey Performance Framework bite. There seems to be so little desire to really engage with the things that would make it real. We did the easy bit, the initial step. It is a good step - the Comptroller and Auditor General told us so - but what we heard is that every step forward we take beyond is too much. The initial step was fine, everything else, a bit too much, a bit too much like hard work, a lot of resorting to sort of negative arguments that are not reflecting the reality of where the organisations that we are trying to engage with on this are. The Minister mentioned the example of the Welsh commissioner. Indeed, I was in the room and I did go and speak to the commissioner after he had spoken. It is correct, he said that he did not think there should be a sustainable well-being commissioner for Jersey, but he did say there was an awful lot more we could do. He did have a whole list of ideas of things we could do. I really applaud Deputy Jeune for bringing this forward. This highlights the vacuum, I think, at the heart of the Budget, in a way, which is that lack of commitment to big ideas. There is not that commitment there, there is not the vision there and anything that attempts to get beyond the very narrow compromise that has been negotiated by the various factions in the Government runs into the sand. It is a good strategy for getting through 2 years. It is not such a good strategy for building real progress for this Island and I will definitely be supporting this. I do say shame on the Government for their very poor and weak response to the arguments advanced.

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

I think this debate has gone a little off-track. Let us just remember that there already are the words: "grouped by Island outcomes" on page 17. It is totally incorrect to suggest that the performance framework has been abandoned in some way. I can personally vouch for the amount of work that I have seen being done in Statistics Jersey to develop these and that has impacted on its budgeting in other ways. I know that Deputy Miles, in her role as chair of the Scrutiny Panel, has been mindful of that as well. So what this particular amendment is saying is that on top of those things that sustainable well-being will be embedded within all business as usual activities and it continues, saying: "including an issuance of financing to third parties and public bodies" and it basically is starting to bring certain organisations in the net that were not there before, so there is a concern that that could include some small charities that perhaps States Members would want to support. Then when the Government are referring to the imposition of red tape, of more hurdles, specifically what it is saying, that it is not saying we are abandoning the outcomes that we are trying to meet, not that we are trying to abandon the performance framework, but there is enough in place to make sure that funding aligns already, and introducing new measures without consultation is not good practice, and I believe that is what is being said. Too often we find that amendments are just trying to design something rather than suggest: "Well, why do we not explore this and then come up with proposals?" There are charities, many of which States Members themselves have supported and some are even on their boards, which we do need to consider. Before we start imposing new obligations on them, careful thought needs to be given. So while I appreciate the desire and commend Deputy Jeune in terms of her desire to support sustainability in many areas, it has got to be rolled out in pace with the community in a way that helps lead it rather than start choking it, restricting it. So I would urge Members to reject this amendment, well-intentioned as it may be. Thank you.

[16:30]

2.6.6 Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North:

I will try to be very concise, in 3 points. First, I address the recent Executive response to the C. & A.G. recommendation; second is my personal story from the Greek island that is really connected to what we are talking about; and I will finish with the current procurement system. I will start with the first. To be honest, I was terrified, the C. & A.G. was terrified and P.A.C. (Public Accounts Committee) was terrified when we received the current Executive response from the Government on the Jersey Performance Framework. We did not have still time to put the full comments that we would do, but I was hoping that this was a response from the officers, which did not consult with the Ministers. Now, here I understand that the Council of Ministers is probably completely behind this response. I will read to the Members: "Recommendation 1: introduce a legislative requirement for the Council of Ministers to take into account the sustainable well-being, including the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of the inhabitants of Jersey, of our successive generations, in preparation for the Common Strategy Policy." Not agreed. "Recommendation 2: introduce a statutory duty on the principal accountable officer and accountable officers to take into account sustainable well-being." Not agreed: "We are doing it." "Require accountable officers to make a specific annual confirmation that they have considered sustainable well-being in discharging their responsibilities." Not agreed. "All key Government documents, including as minimum a Ministerial decision coversheet should set out an explicit accountability statement how the document positively impacts the 3 domains of sustainable well-being, economic, community and environment." Not agreed and so on. Basically from 11 recommendations on very clear sustainable well-being that we all agree, we have 2 accepted, a couple partially accepted, but most of them not agreed. Now I understand they have full backing from the Council of Ministers and I am not sure what we are doing for the future generations. Moving to the second part, and how does it work in practice and why A.L.O.s and others do need to consider sustainable well-being, economic and social. For me, sustainable well-being, economic and social, includes working with our local businesses, supporting our local businesses to consider: "Do we give this contract to an outside contractor or maybe to have a combination?" The C. & A.G. suggested several times to put in packages that local businesses will be able to apply. During my summer holiday, next to the swimming pool - obviously it is not written on my forehead that I am a States Member in the States of Jersey - it was a lovely conversation and I have been asked where I am from and I said: "I am from Jersey." "Oh, Jersey? Can you tell me, please, about Jersey?" It was a very nice lady, the children played, and I say: "Why?" "We received a contract to advise on commercial premises ideas. I have never been in Jersey. My partner just went to Jersey during the summer and I really would like to know what in Jersey people would like. For example, can we bring a chain farm shop?" You can imagine me listening about a person who has never been in Jersey, a company was contracted to do the business in Jersey, to advise us what we would like to do in our retail premises and bringing chain farm shop. This can be avoided if a clear message is sent and they have a requirement to check their decision-making around procurement, and procurement does include sustainable economic, social and financial well-being of the Island and future of the Island. I am coming to the procurement review, and the procurement review that P.A.C. is currently conducting re economy of small businesses. I know the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development does recognise that small businesses are extremely unhappy with our procurement and how we are conducting procurement. This is one of the systems that we can embed sustainable well-being, which we are refusing. Going back to Deputy Millar, the Minister for Treasury and Resources, and this is where I am closing - I am almost 5 minutes, 6 minutes - she mentioned the commissioner for future generations. I do believe we are too small to have a commissioner for future generations, but Jersey does have an opportunity to think how and where we spend our money in the interests of current and future generations. Imagine if all our money from Government and A.L.O.s would be spent buying things and improving economic, social, environment and cultural well-being of the people and the communities in Jersey. Our purchases

through the year, it is around £600 million. Think about how much purchase power we have through our A.L.O.s. It is a huge amount not to consider the well-being of our community.

2.6.7 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

I am not sure if the mover of this proposition is related to the eponymous Bishop of Peterborough, Francis Jeune, who lived I think in the St. Aubin High Street, but when I think of this, I am reminded of the tale of the curate's egg, where the curate is sitting with the bishop, and the young curate, not wanting to offend the bishop ... the bishop says to him: "I think you have got a bad egg there" and he says: "Oh no, I can assure you, Lord, that parts of it are excellent" and I feel a bit like that with Deputy Jeune today because I think, on the face of it, when I read the headline about sustainable well-being, that is something we all want to sign up to. Who is against sustainable well-being? When I read the amendment here: "Sustainable well-being will be embedded within all business as usual activities in conjunction with Ministerial plans and portfolios" that is brilliant. If it stopped there, then I think we could accept the amendment and I think the Government should have accepted that part of the amendment perhaps. They say they are already doing that. Maybe there was a place for an amendment from Government, maybe there was not, but that is not where we are today. But I think there is something not just which is potentially onerous for third-party organisations, but that it could be a little bit more sinister, in my reading of it. I must admit, I had not given this a great deal of thought. I thought the headline of sustainable well-being would be something I could support, but when I read further on, it is this part, really: "Included within any issuance of financing to third parties and public bodies will be the requirement to obtain transparent reporting relating to the application of funding, detailing how the funding will actively contribute to sustainable well-being, align with the Future Jersey vision and be monitored and measured further to the standards set by the Jersey Performance Framework." Wow, so that is quite a lot going on there. When I heard the Minister for Treasury and Resources saying this is, potentially, quite onerous for some smaller A.L.O.s, she mentioned the Opera House, I do wonder how it might affect different A.L.O.s, if that is what we are talking about, in different ways. I have not asked them. I do not know if the Deputy has asked them and perhaps she can confirm that one way or the other in summing up. Because I think this, potentially, does add an onerous demand to some of those agencies who, arguably, are already doing it but it is the level of proof and bureaucracy that it might add. If I were to think of the Arts Centre, for example, a small organisation and I know from the evidence that we have heard as a Scrutiny Panel that already it is quite onerous that several times a year, at least twice a year, these small organisations which had been in existence for a long time often have to provide lots of governance feedback just to get their business-as-usual grants to tell the Government what it is doing, which does not really vary from year to year. Of course the good stuff and the innovation might vary but the bread and butter of it does not change. We often find that already their grants are being delivered late, for example. Without wanting to deviate too far it does seem to me that this would provide, potentially, a more onerous task for those organisations. You might say, well, if they are already doing it it should not be too difficult. But there is a part of this which I find, potentially, sinister and it is the part which says that these organisations must prove that what they are doing aligns with the Future Jersey vision. I might think, as a small organisation, what has the Future Jersey vision got to do with me? I did not set the Future Jersey vision and we have also got to think about the future. It is entirely possible that the Future Jersey vision might vary from one administration to another. God forbid, say, that in 4 years' time that we had a very extremist Government and you could have a Stalinist approach which is produced. You get a Stalinist Government which has a Stalinist vision for Jersey and you get the likes of Art House Jersey or the Arts Centre, now their output now has to be aligned with centralised-Government thinking and we are, potentially, getting into the realms of censorship. Of course it could be an extreme right-wing Government that we get. Just to reassure Members, I do not think we are going to get a Stalinist Government in the next 4 years because we have not quite got the numbers yet. [Laughter] But ...

The Bailiff:

Are you sure you want that in Hansard, Deputy? **[Laughter]** Yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Sir, I am sure that the laughter will be recorded after that to know that I am obviously speaking tongue in cheek. But I think this point remains that it is really important that the organisations out there that if they are arm's length they are arm's length for a reason. They are not there to do the bidding of centralised Government, okay. While it is one thing to say that we should all have some regard to sustainable well-being and certainly the Government should and I think organisations should, this extra step is just too far for me. Just for clarity, because I know that irony does not always translate across the airwaves, of course my party is a centre-left organisation but the message has to be very clear there, it is not the job of Government to impose their centralised vision on any A.L.O.s. There needs to be an element of independence there. There needs to be good governance that is checked and balanced but I would leave it at that. I cannot support this amendment for those reasons that I have outlined.

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

I am pleased to follow the previous speaker, although I do not think I can be quite as entertaining, it will be quick though. I was not intending to speak but I did want to make it really clear that within the Common Strategic Policy the Island outcome indicators, sustainable well-being and the Future Jersey vision, are very much front and centre. I remember having that conversation around the Council of Ministers' table when we were putting the Common Strategic Policy together and that is where I think the right place for all of those references is. When I look at the amendment, which I think is very well meaning coming from a really good place, I, as the Minister for Social Security, look at what that would mean for my business-as-usual activities. Very often I have to make quite critical quite quick payments for people in very critical need and that can be to third-sector organisations, to people that the parishes are helping, for example. I am concerned about what the wording of this amendment would mean in those instances. I think it would be an overburden of bureaucracy. It would, potentially, not enable me to act as Minister as quickly as I would need to act in some of those very critical situations. I also think it would place undue burden on some of those smaller organisations that do receive funding. I will leave it there. I wanted to make that point but I also just wanted to let the Assembly know that I am a fan of outcomes-based indicators. I do want to ensure that we are reporting on those. They are reported on the Government website and they are firmly front and centre in the Common Strategic Policy but this is overly burdensome and bureaucratic.

2.6.9 Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement:

I just want to make a few quick points around burden really of bureaucracy; we change the words to evidence. There is lots of key advantages to collecting information about being able to tell people how we are doing and whether we are doing it well or not. There has been a suggestion that it would be difficult for organisations, particularly small organisations, to collect the data and just looking at some of the things that are available already. Really what Deputy Jeune is trying to do is to establish the principle and there are all sorts of ways to collect this.

[16:45]

There is 3 tools on Google, we can start with capturing some of the already existing sociable frameworks that are already in place, that are available to small businesses already. We can tailor frameworks. We can partner with universities to do some of the work with us. We can collaborate with other organisations to share costs. We can embed some of this data into the day-to-day activities that all of these organisations are involved in anyway. We talked about the use of 5G yesterday and how we can optimise it and use it more effectively. What we can do is we can leverage the technology we have got available to develop some sustainability software. One of the things that I think that is

really good that is being developed at the moment is the work around data trusts which will inform this but this seems to be missed in the whole debate around this. One of the most interesting ways that we can do this is not just using quantitative data but also using qualitative data and that comes with things like testimonials, case studies, anecdotal evidence and that is about how we engage with stakeholders and how we engage with Islanders to capture this, both as users of our services but also as people who deliver business and services. I agree with the principle and that is the reason why I will be supporting this amendment.

The Bailiff:

Thank you very much, Deputy. Does any other Member wish to speak on this amendment? The Connétable of St. Saviour.

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

I will be brief. I have a particular interest in (j): “To approve the estimated income and expenditure proposals for the Climate Emergency Fund for 2025.” I am very much on the fence with climate emergency, do we have to improve air quality for our children and grandchildren? Absolutely, absolutely. There are several Members here that have electric cars and I say well done to them. It is great if you have your own driveway, you can charge your own vehicle, not so good if you do not because charging is a problem. I think we have got a bit ahead of ourselves, as has the U.K. and Europe. The U.K. have the range anxieties which we do not have, likewise Europe range anxiety. Freezing cold weather can reduce electric car batteries by 40 per cent and the range anxiety really kicks in from that. Sadly, many car manufacturers are rolling back on their production of electric vehicles, so I am not sure where that is going to lead us. Is electric cars the answer? It is part of the answer I think but there are other things. I am on the wrong one.

The Bailiff:

This is the twelfth amendment, Connétable. Is that what you are talking to?

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

I am talking to (j), Sir.

The Bailiff:

There is not a (j) in the twelfth amendment.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Yes. It is the Climate Emergency Fund.

The Bailiff:

No, there is nothing about the Climate Emergency Fund.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

No, Connétable, I have a wider repertoire than just climate emergency.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Yes, okay.

The Bailiff:

Okay. Well, there we are. Deputy Doublet.

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

Can I just check that we are talking about the twelfth amendment?

The Bailiff:

We are talking about the twelfth amendment. If I can just correct, I think, Connétable, where there is a (j) is simply a setting out of the entire proposition with the amendment in, which is at (o). But the only thing we are debating is that amendment, the amendment that is currently at (o). Very well. Yes, we are talking about the twelfth amendment and only the twelfth amendment, Deputy Doublet, so thank you. Please, do continue.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Thank you. I am delighted that I am in the right place. I am going to speak very briefly in favour of this and I want to talk about values. Because this is something that came up on the recent training that was offered by the States Greffe, which has been excellent and I really enjoyed taking part in that. One of the modules, we were prompted to discuss how we make decisions as States Members and asked to explain our processes. Many of us, myself included, stated that what we do is establish what our values are and then we test our decisions against those values, each of our decisions; that is certainly how I operate as a States Member. Sometimes we need to put processes in place to make sure that the decisions that we are making and the actions we are taking are in alignment with our values. Because it is not always something that is automatically easy and if it was we would have a perfect utopian society and we would not need any of these processes. The things like C.R.I.A.s (Children's Rights Impact Assessments), which, again, was a result of a proposition that I lodged myself several years ago and is in process now, that way of thinking about children was not embedded in our thinking several years ago. I do not think that thinking about sustainable well-being is embedded in our thinking yet. I think we are all in agreement that, as a principle, it is something that we agree with and we share that as a value but it is not embedded. Therefore, we need a system, we need a step in our decision-making processes that embeds it. Similarly, the proposer of this amendment and myself, when we were in Government, embedded a step within the policy-making process, whereby policy officers were obliged to think about the impact on equity, diversity and inclusion of the policies they were authoring and presenting to Government. Again, that is not something that we think about automatically because of things like our unconscious bias. The reason why we need this particular measure about sustainable well-being is that we live in a capitalist society and the systems in our society prioritise profit over social good. Across this Assembly I think we all understand that the social good and the social justice side of things is of course more important, therefore, we need systems to make sure that we are thinking of those things. We live in quite an individualistic society, we do not always think about the impacts beyond ourselves, our families, our communities, our immediate priorities and immediate issues to hand. But we must start thinking more long term if we want to have this sustainable well-being that Deputy Jeune sets out in her proposition. I will be supporting this proposition. I am quite surprised that we are having a debate about this. I would have thought it would be something that Government could accept. It does not have to be onerous. It aligns with the values of the Assembly. I do believe it aligns with the values of Government and I think that Members should support this proposition.

The Bailiff:

Thank you very much, Deputy. Does any other Member wish to speak on the amendment? If no other Member wishes to speak, then I close the debate and call upon Deputy Jeune to respond.

2.6.12 Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you for all those who have contributed. I do not believe this is red tape or choking it. Deputy Miles articulated this well, small charities, charities already do this for their donors and I think the Minister for Treasury and Resources is whipping up more scare concerns than what I am asking. No Council of Ministers' Member came and talked to and engaged with me on this amendment, so I am not surprised it is being misunderstood. Even the I.o.D. (Institute of Directors) Jersey agreed with me and I circulated their letter to Members earlier. This is asking that when public funds are handed to third parties there are minimum standards requiring outcome-based accountability. The Opera

House that Deputy Millar and Deputy Tadier brought up is a good example to show what is happening now does not work and there is a vacuum in their accountability. During the beginning of the refurbishments of the Opera House the first proposal included putting in an oil-based heating system. Only because I intervened and wrote a letter to the board, as Assistant Minister with responsibility for energy and climate change, to request that they take into account the Carbon Neutral Roadmap endorsed by States Members and our desire to move away from fossil fuel heating systems, did this get accepted. If I had not spotted this and put my foot down and made a fuss we would now have an expensive Opera House with a totally inappropriate heating system that is not future-proofed and eventually would have to be ripped out when the ban on replacement of fossil fuel heating systems came into law. This is what I am talking about and this is what I am trying to ask, that we put in more outcome accountability for third parties to have this overview so this kind of example would not be used in the future, that not having to have a Minister or an Assistant Minister noticing this concern and raising it and having to raise it at different levels for this to be changed. It should be done automatically and monies should not have been forwarded to the Opera House to support putting in a fossil fuel heating system when we, as States Members, had supported the Carbon Neutral Roadmap. When the Jersey Performance Framework was launched it was said it was for Jersey as a whole. It was based on outcome-based accountability, as Deputy Miles said, and it asked for organisations to input to it. But Deputy Millar now is stating that is primarily for Government. What happened? This debate exactly highlights what I mentioned before, there is something ... we have moved a dial, a dial has been moved and we do not know how far it has gone and we would like to get it back to where it was before. This is not a new thing. I am just asking for it to be moved back to where it was before. I am requesting Members to support my amendment. However, looking at the trend today, if this is not passed now I will look to be bringing an amendment to the Public Finance Manual to make sure outcome-based accountability will again be genuinely embedded in decision-making, and it is decision-making, and especially for public funds going to third parties. I will reach out to Ministers to discuss how this can be done and I hope I get a good reception.

The Bailiff:

Do you call for the appel? The appel is called for. I invite Members to return to their seats. The vote is on Amendment 12. I ask the Greffier to open the voting and Members to cast their votes. If Members have had the opportunity of casting their votes, I ask the Greffier to close the voting. The amendment has been defeated:

POUR: 14		CONTRE: 31		ABSTAIN: 1
Connétable of St. Lawrence		Connétable of St. Helier		Deputy R.S. Kovacs
Connétable of St. Martin		Connétable of St. Brelade		
Connétable of St. Clement		Connétable of Trinity		
Deputy L.M.C. Doublet		Connétable of St. Peter		
Deputy I. Gardiner		Connétable of St. John		
Deputy K.L. Moore		Connétable of Grouville		
Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf		Connétable of St. Ouen		
Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée		Connétable of St. Mary		
Deputy H.M. Miles		Connétable of St. Saviour		
Deputy J. Renouf		Deputy G.P. Southern		
Deputy H.L. Jeune		Deputy M. Tadier		

Deputy A.F. Curtis		Deputy S.G. Luce		
Deputy K.M. Wilson		Deputy K.F. Morel		
Deputy M.B. Andrews		Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat		
		Deputy S.M. Ahier		
		Deputy R.J. Ward		
		Deputy C.S. Alves		
		Deputy I.J. Gorst		
		Deputy L.J. Farnham		
		Deputy S.Y. Mézec		
		Deputy Sir P.M. Bailhache		
		Deputy T.A. Coles		
		Deputy M.R. Scott		
		Deputy C.D. Curtis		
		Deputy L.V. Feltham		
		Deputy R.E. Binet		
		Deputy M.E. Millar		
		Deputy A. Howell		
		Deputy T.J.A. Binet		
		Deputy M.R. Ferey		
		Deputy B. Ward		

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

Could we have the pous, the contre and the abstention, please?

The Greffier of the States:

Those voting contre; the Connétables of St. Helier, St. Brelade, Trinity, St. Peter, St. John, Grouville, St. Mary and St. Saviour. Deputies Southern, Tadier, Luce, Morel, Le Hegarat, Ahier, Ward, Alves, Gorst, Farnham, Mézec, Bailhache, Coles, Scott, Feltham, Millar, Howell, Binet, Ferey and Ward and online the Connétable of St. Ouen, Deputy Binet and Deputy Catherine Curtis. Those voting pour; the Connétables of St. Lawrence, St. Martin and St. Clement and Deputies Gardiner, Moore, Ozouf, Porée, Miles, Renouf, Jeune, Curtis, Wilson, Andrews and online Deputy Doublet and Deputy Kovacs abstained.

2.7 Proposed Budget (Government Plan) 2025-2028 (P.51/2024): eighth amendment (P.51/2024 Amd. (8)) - Indexation of alcohol duty

The Bailiff:

Very well. We then come on to the Eighth Amendment that Deputy Miles will propose and I ask the Greffier to read that amendment.

The Greffier of the States:

Paragraph (o) - after the words “as set out in the Appendix of the Accompanying Report” insert the words “, except that on page 32 under the section “Alcohol”, after the words “living pressures of Islanders.” there should be inserted the words “However, the Government commits to the reinstatement of the indexation of alcohol duty in line with R.P.I. from 2026.”

2.7.1 Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade:

I am sure we will all be feeling that we need a drink after the end of this session. I gave a similar speech last year when I was Minister and my view has not changed. As I stated in the report, the rationale for this amendment to the Budget is to ensure the Government confirm their commitment to improving the public health of our Island. I could talk all day about the local, national and global research that reinforces the need to reduce alcohol consumption at a population level to improve health outcomes. We have a commitment to improving the health and well-being of Islanders. Over this and previous political terms much of the focus and commitment has been towards improving healthcare.

[17:00]

We have seen that through increased investments in our health service, in budget after budget. I, of course, take no issue with that investment and indeed I support it. But, regrettably, we are not equally and fully recognising the importance of prevention and the impact that health behaviours have on the burden of disease. Misuse of alcohol in Jersey remains one of the most significant behavioural factors with preventable disease and death. Alcohol is now considered as having no safe level of consumption and carries increased risk for the future development of disease. Taxing alcohol at the right level supports a reduction in use, as well as reducing the uptake among the Island’s younger population. It is not always a happy truth and I do not want to sound like the fun police but the reality is that this Island is awash with alcohol. We are second only to Lithuania in the most recent league table of per capita alcohol assumption, although I believe very recently Romania has now overtaken Lithuania for that distinction. Alcohol consumption in Jersey is 12 litres of pure alcohol per adult per capita per year, well above the European average of 9 and that is not a statistic that Jersey should be proud of. Alcohol causes wider social and economic costs of millions of pounds every year. Alcohol was the contributory factor in nearly 20 per cent of all crimes recorded in Jersey in 2022 and that does not include the process offences such as drunk and incapable, which are dealt with at Parish Hall Enquiry and that do not make it into formal statistics. The true level of alcohol-related offending is likely much higher. Alcohol was a factor in nearly a third of recorded assaults and nearly a quarter of night time economy offences committed in St. Helier were alcohol related. The negative effects of alcohol cost the emergency services, which Islanders pay for through their taxes, thousands of pounds every year, police time wasted with drunken behaviour, ambulance call-outs to alcohol-related accidents. There is a cost to the courts, the probation service and the prison who pick up the pieces of lives broken by alcohol-related offending, either as a victim or an offender. The impact of alcohol on domestic abuse is also well documented. Women and girls are disproportionately negatively affected. I think I still see some of the white ribbons that were distributed in the Assembly on Wednesday, reflecting our support for domestic violence and abuse. There is an impact on children in families where disposable income is directed towards wine and beer, rather than food and school necessities. I can hear sighing around the Assembly and many Members will be sitting here today thinking that Government should just butt out and allow people to make their own decisions. That might be fine for us for our relationship with alcohol is one which we are in control of but not everyone is so fortunate. Government does have a responsibility to support the most vulnerable members in our society, in their actions and in their lifestyle choices. There are members of our community who struggle with managing their relationship and it is detrimental to them, it is detrimental to their families and it is detrimental to all of us. We are only different to other communities in that we are nearly at the top of the leader board. As I said previously, that is not something to be proud of. Knocking Lithuania and Romania off the top spot should not be our aim.

I understand that it is quite often the easier and simple decision to limit duty increases but the economic burden of alcohol consumption is underestimated. The financial burden that alcohol-related harm causes to our health and criminal justice system is not reflected in the market price and, therefore, taxpayers are responsible for a large amount of the overall cost compared to individual drinkers. We regularly hear from the hospitality industry that duty rates are affecting their productivity and how a freeze is necessary to support that sector. I am always slightly confused by this; I am not that well-travelled. But other jurisdictions are markedly more expensive but they have adapted to deliver a vibrant hospitality offer which does not revolve around alcohol. If anybody has been to Iceland - and I am talking about the country, not the supermarket - alcohol is fiendishly expensive but their hospitality sector is thriving. I am not suggesting that we make alcohol fiendishly expensive but I am suggesting that with the weight of evidence showing the scale of the alcohol-related health and social problems that we have on this Island, we should not allow our problems to regress further but we should instead be trying to address these challenges. We should bear in mind that other amendments in this Budget will inject considerable funds into the hospitality industry to improve productivity. The international evidence is robust and convincing. The link between increased price and lower consumption has been proven time and time again. When faced with such strong evidence about other subjects that relate to health, people believe it; how to reduce your risk of cancer, how to reduce your risk of diabetes, how to improve educational standards. But when it comes to alcohol reduction people simply do not believe it and consider the evidence in relation to their own personal experience of drinking. It is natural that to some extent at least we all put our experiences and interests first. None of want to see our pints, our glass of wine or our drink of choice to be subject to more duty and to go up in price. But it is not about us as individuals, it is about our responsibilities to each other and the realities facing our community, which be it directly or indirectly impact us all. The policies we had in place in Jersey to reduce consumption seems to be working. The percentage of crimes involving alcohol has trended downward from 23 per cent in 2016 to 15 per cent in 2022, which tends to suggest that pricing above R.P.I. has had some positive effect. Increasing the price of alcohol does work, it works to reduce consumption and, therefore, reduces alcohol-related crime and disorder and improves health outcomes. I want to see a firm commitment to the reversion to the policy on R.P.I. increase on alcohol duty so we can continue a downward trend in consumption from our current very high level and use the funds that we gain to fund better health outcomes and that is why I have brought this amendment. That is all I am going to say today about the evidence base and I hope it makes the case to Members and I hope that they can see the reasons and the importance of supporting this policy and this amendment. I do, however, want to end by expressing some concern at the comments that were presented by the Council of Ministers. The comments state that: "The amendment is unnecessary and would not and should not bind future decisions of the Assembly and this is setting a precedent for future unnecessary amendments." I would go so far as to say that the penultimate paragraph is discourteous to my role as a Back-Bencher. It reads: "Accepting amendments that reiterate existing policy could encourage further unnecessary proposals for the sake of public attention and political signalling, complicating the Budget and planning process unnecessarily. The Assembly's officers' time and resources are better spent addressing substantive changes or additions." To be so dismissive of this amendment is quite insulting to me and I believe shows a lack of regard for the seriousness of the subject and the evidence. **[Approbation]** There is a tone of disrespect from Ministers towards me bringing this proposition that I do not display to others. I am not known for bringing random amendments or propositions. My contributions to debates are measured and evidence-based. I am not known for courting public attention or political signalling. It is my prerogative and indeed that of every Member in this Assembly to bring the amendments and propositions that they choose. The Bailiff makes the decision as to what is and what is not in order. The Government seem very defensive about something which they admit is assumed in the policy baseline of the Budget's medium term planning framework and has already been factored into budget planning. If this is a policy that is a matter of record, then what is the Government so worried about? In my view, the approach of the Council of Ministers to

this leaves more questions for the Government than it provides answers. Ministers say that the Assembly and its officers' time would be better spent on more substantive changes. I tend to agree, which is why I find it puzzling that Ministers are spending time in the Assembly trying to reject their own intended policy. The argument about the decision not being binding is curious to me. If we follow that approach through to its logical conclusion then of course no decision of the States on any subject is, ultimately, binding on the Assembly or its successors. It can always be undone by a future decision; that is the nature of parliamentary democracy. But it does not mean the States should not take policy decisions. If the Assembly chooses to vote for my amendment today then that will be the established policy position until such time as another decision is actively taken to reverse the policy that would have been agreed by the States. Of course the States can take different decisions in a future budget. All fiscal decisions can be changed in future budgets. But this amendment is not signalling a policy intention, it is setting a policy. Given that Ministers do not seem keen to support their own policy on the floor of the Assembly, maybe it is important that the Assembly does it for them. It is a shame that the Government finds that establishing a policy position is unnecessary. It is a shame that they feel I am wasting time. I would encourage them to find the courage of their convictions, agree with their own policy and support this amendment. **[Approbation]**

The Bailiff:

Thank you very much, Deputy. Is the amendment seconded? **[Seconded]** Deputy Tadier.

Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

Sir, could I raise a declaration of interest before the debate starts or is it procedural to do it just as and when?

The Bailiff:

I think now is fine if you wish to do so, Deputy.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Thank you, Sir. I would like to obviously declare that I own an alcohol-producing business that declares duty on everything it makes. If Members allow me the time now to declare, I will also make the same declaration for amendment 29. If I am not in the Chamber during the beginning of that, I would like to be physically recused from the entire Chamber for both the proposing of that and the debate of amendment 29. If I am here I will reiterate before the reading of amendment 29. If not, I hope Members take that as my declaration.

The Bailiff:

I am sure Members will take that as your declaration. Having a number of lights come on, is that people who are anxious to make declarations or simply indicating a desire to speak?

Connétable M.O'D Troy of St. Clement:

Yes, declarations, Sir.

The Bailiff:

Sorry?

The Connétable of St. Clement:

Declarations.

The Bailiff:

Yes, Connétable.

The Connétable of St. Clement:

It is well known in the Chamber that I am a vendor of alcohol at La Frégate and a hotel but I have vast experience in alcohol, so I would like to take part in the debate and I will be voting for the proposition. If anybody would think I am biased against raising the rate of tax, I am not.

Deputy R.S. Kovacs of St. Saviour:

Similarly, the family business we have in hospitality sells alcohol but I took part in last year's debate similarly.

The Bailiff:

Very well. Deputy Tadier.

2.7.2 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

I will start by saying I will not be supporting this proposition but I have sympathy for those who suffer from alcoholism; I think we all do. I do not necessarily correlate though the amount that is charged in duty with the other societal problems that we have. I think it is a much more complex relationship than that. I also think that, as I said, there are various factors and I think as a former Member, the late Constable Sadie Rennard said: "It does not matter how much you put the price up of a bottle of wine, if somebody has got a problem they are still going to find a way to drink, whether it is through buying it or through procuring it in another way." I think there are a couple of points that I will make which might not otherwise be made by the Members. The first thing is that if we are to get to the bottom of what the drivers are in behaviour, in any scientific experiment you need to have some constant. You need to gradually remove certain factors that you are testing, a bit like troubleshooting if you have got a problem, for example, with an electronic device; you try and eliminate one problem at a time to find out what is causing it. I think by keeping the duty constant for a period of time, and we could say it would be an interesting experiment to do it for 10 years but I do not know if any Government could resist the duty that they might get for that long a period. You could then start to analyse what the trends are with taking the duty out of the equation. If indeed that behaviour is going in one direction, it does not seem to have anything to do with the duty that we are applying, it is more to do with education. I think that education is probably the biggest tool we have got. What we are seeing is a lot of young people are moving away from alcohol because it is not the neatest thing anymore, that they realise that the message has got through that there are massive health implications. They have probably seen what alcohol does to maybe some older members of their community, their friends, family, whatever. They realise that looking after yourself, keeping fit, stimulating the brain and exercising makes you happier in the short term but it also makes you more likely to live longer, et cetera, all things that we know in our heads and probably should apply in our own lives.

[17:15]

I think the younger generation are already accommodating that knowledge and acting it out. This is just anecdotal but when I go to the supermarkets and we are confronted by the alcohol at the checkout, 2 things there; the first one is that you notice that the prices are really low. Even I think possibly in the run up to Christmas now you can still pick up bottles of medium-quality wine for probably between £5 and £7 and that is the same price as you might have been paying 10, 15 years ago. You do not necessarily need to go over to France nowadays to get a relatively medium-quality wine, shall we say, or medium-quality alcohol because the supermarkets cannot shift it in the quantities that they want to because people are turning away from alcohol. I think that is the shift that we are seeing is reflected in the market. But the other point is then if we want to look at methods that we could control alcohol and send out strong messages, why do we let alcohol be sold where children can see it? Why is it that when I go to the Co-op to pick up a packet of milk or buy some biscuits to watch with my episode of "Victoria" in the evening, that I am confronted on the left-hand side in the queue by all these bottles of wine, which I look at every time and thinking 2 bottles of Cava for only a tenner.

Yes. No, I think I will leave that for tonight but if I do need that I know where to come or a bottle of red wine for only £6.50, which is reduced from £10. I am seeing that. I think the 5 year-old, the 10 year-old in the queue with their mother or father is also looking at that. If we are going to go down the Iceland model of saying we must tax this out of existence, why not simply do what we have already been doing with tobacco? Saying that if you want to buy alcohol there is nothing wrong with it, you are an adult, you can make your own choices but you have to go into that section over there and you have to prove that you are of a certain age and you can go and peruse the alcohol section, like you have at an airport, for example, for tobacco. I think we need to extend that across the board to say that if you want to buy tobacco you go over there, if you want to buy alcohol you go to the alcohol shop, which is a very Swedish model, I think it is a Scandinavian model and possibly some parts of America; you go to the liquor store. Let us take out the prevalence of alcohol everywhere. The advertising for tobacco is not everywhere anymore. You do not get snooker players now necessarily being sponsored by tobacco and alcohol, I do not think. They get sponsored by online gaming, which is another problem. It is a complex area. We do not like alcoholism and I would say that start enforcing the law. There is a basic law which is on the news which is that you should not serve alcohol to somebody who is already intoxicated. If we are going to use the Scandinavian method, I have said it in this Assembly before, I do not think it went down too well, many years ago but it is honoured in the breach, I think. It is a bit like saying you should not sweat in a sauna, saying you should not be drunk in a nightclub. It is expected that when you go into a nightclub that you will have already had a skinful; it used to be the case, I hope it is not the case anymore. What are we supposed to do, breath people who are going up to the bar and saying: "Sorry, I cannot serve you any alcohol because you have already had one; now it is time to go home."? There is that complicated relationship, I think, that many people in our communities have with alcohol. But taxing it out of existence is not the way to do it I am afraid. Whether or not it is a nail in the coffin for tourism, I am not going to wave that shroud. I do not think that is necessarily true. But we definitely have a different marketing model when it comes to Visit Jersey than Iceland. I think if I were to go on a plane to Iceland and I hope to maybe one day and sit in the Blue Lagoon or whatever and watch the geysers erupting, geysers, is that how you pronounce it? **[Laughter]** I do not know why the laughter is there.

The Bailiff:

I think it is just the lateness of the hour.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I think it is, Sir.

The Bailiff:

Yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

If I do that I will not be going to Iceland because of the price of their alcohol, one way or the other. In fact if I was I would probably make sure I brought a bottle of duty-free on the plane with me and I could drink it in my room if I were that way inclined, but I would not be. But I think there is still an assumption that people come to Jersey and there is an all-round package which does include the cost of living and people have to make tough choices. I respect my colleague from St. Brelade. I hope to be supporting one of her amendments later on but this is not one of them.

2.7.3 Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade:

I think I can sneak in in the time. I wanted to start with a quote from the 2017 Budget speech by the then Treasurer, Mr Alan Maclean. He said: "If we use Jersey figures and U.K. modelling the annual cost of alcohol-related harm to Jersey is estimated to be £30 million. The duty in 2015 for alcohol was £18.2 million; that leaves an £11.8 million shortfall which has to be found from general tax

revenue. Furthermore, as the price of alcohol has increased consumption has fallen, a fact borne out elsewhere by numerous studies, including the O.E.C.D. (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) and the World Health Organisation. These reports and local data demonstrate a clear link between higher prices and falling consumption.” I wanted to start with that because that represents what was until very recently the consensus. The Chief Minister would have been the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development, I think, at that time, so that would have been something that he would have endorsed. The Minister for External Relations, I think, was also in the Government at that time. This was recognised as a standard policy. It was not seen as controversial. The whole consensus was because it was widely recognised with plenty of evidence that in aggregate Jersey has too high an alcohol consumption, that this imposes costs on our health service and the criminal justice system and that we do not recover as much money through alcohol duties as we have to spend clearing up the mess. We often hear about some kind of rebalancing between off-licencing and licensed premises is a bit of a fallacy. The argument is not that we need to shift some of the drinking that occurs at home to licensed premises. What we should be aiming to do is to reduce alcohol consumption without increasing alcohol consumption in licensed premises. In other words, reducing total alcohol consumption. Unless we do aim to do this we are living a lie. Our supposed aim to reduce alcohol consumption is a figment of imagination. Of course price rises are not the only solution. Deputy Tadier engaged in a lovely bit of whataboutery, why not make it harder to buy and so on? What we cannot do about this? What about the fact that we do not do this? What about the fact we do not hide alcohol at the till and all the rest of it? The fact that we are not doing everything we should to cut alcohol consumption does not mean we should not do anything. Rising prices are the essential underpinning of any strategy to cut alcohol consumption. You cannot cut alcohol consumption without increasing the duty. Without operating duty the price of alcohol will gradually fall and certainly fall relative to incomes. It is a simple concept. If you cut the price of something you will generally sell more of it; the opposite is also clearly true. The Government complains on the one hand that this amendment will not have an impact, on the other hand it does not want to support it. It will have a consequence. It will set out a policy making it harder to freeze duty rates next year. It raises the barrier. I would also endorse Deputy Miles’ comments in respect of the comments paper, they are disrespectful comments. Anyone who knows Deputy Miles knows that she holds a strong and principled position on alcohol duty and the need to reduce alcohol consumption on this Island. She is not attention-seeking or engaged in political signalling. I would like to hear from the Minister whether she personally endorsed those comments. Seeking to hold Ministers to a position on this important aspect of public policy is not attention-seeking or political signalling. It is a serious attempt to reassert Government policy, which we should all get behind. I will finish there but I will also say that I mentioned yesterday I have a parental commitment tonight. My son is doing his options this evening at Les Quennevais and I promised that I will be there and I will.

[Approval]

The Bailiff:

Very well. Does any other Member wish to speak on this amendment? Deputy Millar. The Assembly has resolved to rise in 5 minutes. How long do you think you would you are likely to be?

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

I do not think I will be long, Sir.

The Bailiff:

I will call on you now then.

2.7.4 Deputy M.E. Millar:

Firstly, I apologise unreservedly if Deputy Miles was offended by the paper. I did sign the paper, I signed ... I read every single comments paper and I have signed them off and I am sorry from the

bottom of my heart if Deputy Miles was offended. There was certainly no offence intended, I can assure you of that. However, the proposed amendment to the Budget seeks to formalise a commitment by the Government to uprate alcohol duties annually by R.P.I. inflation from 2026. The intent of the amendment is clear and I am, like other Members, sympathetic to the principles and reasoning behind it. But this is not the place really for a debate on how we control alcohol in the Island. That is a huge subject, we have already talked about it and that is something that needs to be done under, I would expect, the public health banner with various other things coming forward. We also have to remember - I would urge all Members - that had we not suggested freezing duties or if a Member, as last year, had brought an amendment to increase it from this year, we know who would be outside in front of the cameras in Royal Square and all of the media saying that the hospitality industry is going to fall on its face. That is the other problem that we have to balance. We will come to talk about hospitality and the drinks industry when we come to talk about amendment 29. There are very, very many difficult things to balance and most Members are well aware of that. To the amendment, just to explain further, the amendment is not necessary. The reinstatement of alcohol duty indexation in line with R.P.I. is already embedded in the Government's baseline budget planning. That would be the starting point for 2026. This longstanding policy is a matter of record and is consistently reflected in our financial framework. As such, the amendment merely restates an existing assumption. Secondly, the amendment would not buy in to future Assemblies. We could agree to it today and then next year the Assembly is required to approve each budget, including tax for duty adjustments. Future Assemblies or Councils of Ministers cannot be committed in advance to specific fiscal policies and this time next year we could say, well, R.P.I. is not enough or we are going to freeze again because we have to consider the situation in place at the time and the Assembly is free to do so. While outlining policy intentions is useful for planning, it is essential that these remain adaptable, flexible and able to respond to evolving economic, fiscal and social conditions. Finally, the amendment will be setting an unhelpful precedent. Accepting this amendment will create a precedent for similar proposals that just reiterate existing policies without changing them. These amendments do, as a matter of fact, take up time and resource that would be better allocated to measures that do change things. We have had 29 amendments. My officers have been headless chickens for 2 weeks. If everybody is going to agree to move the deadline so we have more time to deal with that and, yes, I see, Deputy Moore; that is the way of things. But we have finite resource and my officers have been working very, very hard, which is possibly for the poor use of language. Members can shake their heads but that is a reality of the work of the Treasury team in particular and it is time that could be better used. In conclusion, this amendment does not alter current policy and it does not provide assurances for future decisions. It does, however, risk creating a misleading impression of a firm commitment that remains subject to annual review and approval. People will think that things will change next year. They may not and they will be disappointed, and that is the precedent that we are trying to avoid. That is why we reject the amendment.

The Bailiff:

Very well. As of yesterday, the Assembly resolved that we would now break for 15 minutes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Sir, I have a point of order before we do that, if I may. I was going to say you could consider it overnight but I forgot we were breaking; that is not a joke. The first point is I do not think it is a proper apology to say I apologise if I have offended somebody. I think it should be an unconditional apology.

Deputy M.E. Millar:

I apologise, I said unreservedly I apologise.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Okay. Standing Order 104 says that: “The contents of a speech should not impute improper motives directly or by innuendo.” I know that the proposition and the report attached to a proposition is not a speech but I think it is worth giving consideration at some point to what extent the contents of a report, which is covered obviously by parliamentary privileges and lodged as an official document ... if it has a paragraph in it that talks about imputing improper motives for why a proposition is being lodged, to what extent that should be covered or can be covered by Standing Orders, Sir. If I could ask you to consider that at some point, just need to ...

[17:30]

The Bailiff:

I do not need to consider it, it has already been considered and ruled upon on an earlier occasion. Although Standing Order 104 refers to speeches, it must follow that what Members have determined should not be spoken on the floor of the Assembly should equally not be contained in a report. It would otherwise be the absurd consequence that Members have material in front of them in an official published report to which they could not refer in their speeches. There has already been a ruling. It was ruled in 2007, I cannot remember who was in the chair in 2007 but that is the ruling and, therefore, it was not parliamentary and should not have been contained in the ...

Deputy M.E. Millar:

I am willing to take complete responsibility for the paper if it was unsatisfactory. That is on my head, I reviewed them all and it was incautious wording, which in fact I had amended to make it less so.

The Bailiff:

Yes. There is nothing to consider, that has already been considered, Deputy. Very well. We stand then adjourned for 15 minutes.

[17:31]

ADJOURNMENT

[17:48]

The Greffier of the States (in the Chair):

We are quorate. We have 4 Members on line. Does any other Member wish to speak? Deputy Binet.

Deputy T.J.A Binet of St. Saviour:

Ma'am, before we recommence, I wonder if you allow me 2 moments to inform Members that we have reached a very amicable conclusion with Jersey Cheshire Homes. I would like to thank Deputy Gardiner for helping to bring things to an early conclusion. Thank you.

The Greffier of the States (in the Chair):

Thank you, Deputy. Deputy Gardiner.

Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North:

First of all, I do confirm that the solution for 2025 has been found. Based on the Minister's commitment to the Assembly, I would withdraw my amendment, but I reserve my right to bring it back to the Assembly if it will not materialise in payments to Cheshire Homes.

The Greffier of the States (in the Chair):

Thank you, Deputy. Does any other Member wish to speak on the amendment that we are currently considering? Constable of St. Clement.

2.7.5 The Connétable of St. Clement:

I will be brief. I wanted to allay a rumour that alcoholics have a problem as far as drinking is concerned. They are a part of the problem. Having been a licensee for the best part of my career at the tough end of town, so to speak, functions and all-year round trading, and Christmas parties, I can tell you that it is the weekend millionaires that are responsible for a lot more of the aggravation and probably problems with ambulance drivers, et cetera. They are price sensitive, because what they do is they predominate at the end of the month when their salaries are paid. We can see that in our takings. They go mad. I have a friend who is in the same position as me, he has been assaulted 6 times in his career, hospitalised twice. Those were all weekend millionaires. They are guys and ladies who go absolutely loopy. It is not pretty. It is not nice. I wanted to say that. They are price sensitive, you can tell, they throw it away over the weekend and there are less and less of them at the moment. That is because of the cost of living crisis, which means that the price of alcohol and going out is a factor in the amount of time they spend out in the evening economy. That is all I wanted to say to help the proposition.

2.7.6 Deputy R.S. Kovacs:

I want to express my opposition to the proposed amendment to the Government Plan, which seeks to reinstate indexation of alcohol duty in line with the retail price index. While I understand the concerns raised regarding the public health impacts of alcohol consumption, I urge us to approach this issue with a more comprehensive perspective. In my previous speech last year, I highlighted that the key issue here is addiction, not merely the price of alcohol. Raising alcohol taxes as proposed in this amendment will not solve the root cause of alcohol dependency. Alcohol addiction is a complex health condition and treating it with higher taxes is both misleading and ineffective. As rightly was pointed out by others, excessive alcohol consumption is a symptom of a deeper illness. No matter how high the taxes go, addicts will find ways to feed their addiction. They may resort to more dangerous methods to secure funds, such as selling household goods or they may choose to drink in an uncontrolled unregulated environment, further compounding the risk to their health and well-being. I had the same view on the related amendment, as I said, last year and I continue to believe that putting the price up will not solve any problems such addicts have, because they will find the money that they need for the drink regardless and their families and finances would suffer. As Deputy Miles mentioned, Romania has a high use of alcohol per capita and I want to give a bit of clarity on the why. Besides the very many cultural celebrations taking place during the years, increasing use, a large consumption is happening in villages where there is more poverty, at-home-production and consumption of alcohol. Many people drinking their problems out. These are poor people, drinking no matter for the price of the drinks and many in uncontrolled environment. Romania, Jersey or other places, alcohol is a reality for many families. Increasing taxes on alcohol may harm the most vulnerable in our society, those struggling with addiction, while failing to address the underlying issue. I gave this example before and the parallel with it is important, so I will repeat it. Should we tax knives to stop knife crime or focus on treating the root cause of violence? We cannot effectively treat an illness, an addiction like alcoholism, with a financial penalty. In addition to this, we must consider the broader implication of such a tax hike on our economy and businesses. The hospitality industry, already on edge due to rising costs and changes consumer behaviour, cannot afford to bear the additional burden of higher alcohol duties. We have all heard the reports of local pubs and restaurants closing their doors, businesses that have been staples of our community for generations. If we continue to increase the financial strain on these businesses, we risk seeing more closures, putting local jobs at risk and weakening the economy further. Just last week we heard unfortunate news of another pub closing in Jersey, which adds to the previous ones, which is a growing list of those struggling to survive in the face of rising costs. It is clear that the hospitality sector is already facing enormous challenges with people not affording to go out or eat out as often any more. Adding further cost to alcohol tax increases could drive even more businesses to the brink, resulting in fewer places for our citizens to gather and fewer jobs for our workers. Furthermore, this proposed tax-hike fails to solve the fundamental problem of alcohol addiction. The issue that the Deputy raises is real

and to be acknowledged, but it is not simply about the price of alcohol. It is about accessibility of treatment and support for those struggling with addiction. We need more robust measures that focus on prevention, intervention and rehabilitation, not just punitive financial penalties. Rather than penalising individuals and businesses, we should be investing in addiction treatment services, public health campaigns and social support structures that is the root cause of alcohol misuse. This would be a more sustainable and effective solution, benefitting not only individuals struggling with addiction, but also the wider community. In conclusion, I urge my colleagues to reconsider the proposed amendment. We must seek holistic solutions that address both the health impacts of alcohol consumption and the challenges faced by our hospitality sector. Raising taxes on alcohol will not solve addiction. It will only add further strain to an industry that is already facing difficult times. Instead, let us focus on real solutions that provide support to those who need it and help our local businesses thrive. Please reject this amendment.

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

I rise and speak to encourage Members to reject this proposition. I do so principally from 2 perspectives. One is my concern, as Deputy Kovacs has just referred to, for the hospitality sector in Jersey. Obviously Jersey has become a very high-priced jurisdiction. We are forcing higher prices into that, obviously from the perspective of wage rises, et cetera. It is becoming harder and harder to run a hospitality business successfully in Jersey. I say that also while understanding that there is a difference between the on-trade and the off-trade. When it comes to the hospitality sector, they are themselves known as the on-trade and the on-licence trade. It is there where I see the greatest problem in continuing to increase duties in line with inflation or any other measure for that matter. In the off-licence trade, there is still an argument to potentially increase duties in that area, because I have heard many Members of this Assembly talk about those ... I really do not like the term pres, where you drink before you go out, and how that is the trend. Obviously that in itself, takes away business from the hospitality sector, because people are going to the supermarkets, they are drinking at home first, then at the end of that when already having imbibed probably far too much they then go out for the last hour or so into the hospitality sector and drink there, spending less in the hospitality sector. Why is that important? One of the reasons is that the hospitality sector is the place where drinking is regulated. They have security. They have licenced bar staff who are under legal obligations to make sure that people do not get further intoxicated in their establishments. We have all seen and, may I dare to suggest, that many of us have been intoxicated in hospitality establishments in the Island. It is important that the highly regulated sector where you can buy alcohol is struggling and duty rises are paying a huge part in that. The off-licence sector of the alcohol market, which is much less regulated and is able to sell alcohol at much lower prices, is probably the area we should be focusing on. Which brings me to a point which is important, as a Government and as an Assembly we need to find a way to put differential duties on the on-trade and the off-trade. That is part of the key here. If we were able to do so, it would be easier to work with Deputy Miles' proposition. That is, in a sense, my view of a solution. How would I be able to accept Deputy Miles' proposition, if it was focused on the off-trade and not carte blanche across the off and on-trade. Of course, at the moment, that is not possible to do, as I understand it, for technical reasons it is difficult for us to tax one differently to the other or put duties on one rather than the other. It would be good for us to find a solution to that. Separately, another reason why I rise to speak against this amendment is the efficacy of this idea that by constantly increasing prices we get better health outcomes or ... no, let me restate that, by constantly increasing prices we reduce the amount of alcohol consumed. I have heard Iceland mentioned in the debate today. Sweden, Norway and Iceland, which we all know are highly taxed jurisdictions when it comes to alcohol, between 2010 and 2020 their alcohol consumption per capita increased for all 3 of those countries. Whereas, I believe in Ireland, also known as a place where a drink is enjoyed, their alcohol consumption per capita decreased in that same 10-year period. That in itself makes me question the effectiveness of using price as a mechanism for reducing alcohol consumption.

[18:00]

Another reason that I say this as well is because when you look at our own Island, which I know does not have a record that we should be proud of in terms of the per capita consumption of alcohol. However, it has effectively been policy since 2008 to increase duty on alcohol. Between 2008 and 2015, the amount of alcohol consumed did decline per capita. For 7 years that policy, effectively, was working. Since 2015, the amount of alcohol consumed per capita has stagnated and then more recently perhaps begun to rise a little. Each year, except for the last 2 years, of course, but I am talking up to 2022, the price of alcohol and alcohol duty rose. Every year the price of alcohol was rising, but the success in reducing the cost of alcohol stopped around 2015. I take these statistics from Jersey's alcohol profile. Even now, while we have had a couple of years where alcohol duty has been minimised, the price of alcohol compared to R.P.I. is still higher than R.P.I. The constant rise of that price has been in excess of R.P.I. since 2008. That is the case today. I do question the effectiveness of using price as a way to reduce alcohol consumption on the per capita basis. Jersey statistics bear out that it is not a simple equation where you put the price up and the amount consumed goes down. That is important. There is a third element as to why it is not appropriate for us, at this stage, to say what should be in next year's budget. That is because we do need to see how the hospitality sector gets on through the year ahead, through 2025. I revert back to that would be less of a problem if we were able to have different alcohol duties for the on-trade and the off-trade. Then perhaps it would be easier to do so. We could say: we are happy for the off-trade, we will make a decision now for 2026, but we will wait on the on-trade and see how their year pans out. It is important that we leave the options open for this Assembly come this time next year when we are looking at the Budget, that the options are open for the Government to take a litmus test of how the hospitality sector is performing and whether increased alcohol duties are likely to harm them further or not. That is the wise thing to do at this stage, rather than trying to tell ourselves now what we should do in a year's time. That is not an appropriate way to do this. There are 3 things. One is the effectiveness of alcohol duties, I am definitely not convinced and the statistics bear out, increased alcohol duty is no longer reducing per capita consumption. The lack of distinction between the on-trade and the off-trade is a real problem. As a result of that, to bind our hands now for next year would be inappropriate and an unwise thing to do. As a result of those 3 points, I ask Members to join me in rejecting this amendment. Thank you.

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

Very briefly, the Minister has referred to arguments which were raised by the Economic and International Affairs Panel in the last budget. There may be a bit of déjà vu here regarding the use of statistics and what we have seen in Jersey, in terms of alcohol consumption and a lack of evidence of that being linked to alcohol duty. One of the matters that was raised by the panel was in relation to the desirability of a distinction, in terms of the duty that is charged in respect of retail, as opposed to hospitality establishments. In terms of communications with the Treasurer, I am in favour of the Treasury beginning to focus in that particular area about the possibility of adjusting duty there. It is important that we support hospitality. I want to point out that in our own parish, we have recently seen 4 restaurants just close, I believe. That is before they have had to deal with some of the extra cost factors that we are beginning to see come in. We know that the minimum wage ... yes, I know that we are hoping to produce some mitigation against that, but that has been one factor. We cannot escape the fact that this is something that keeps varying. Freight costs, the cost of employing hospitality staff, all these come into play. If we were to say: let us fix this duty down the line to this and that is going to make the difference, we need to take into account there are variables all the time which need to be taken account of. I personally do not consider it is wise to ignore them and say we are going to do this in this area in any event. Iceland, I have been lucky enough to visit there. The way in which I will conclude is that one of their alcoholic delicacies is made with putrefied shark. If that is not enough to put anyone off drinking, I do not know what is. Thank you.

2.7.9 Deputy K.L. Moore of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

I would like to start by congratulating Deputy Morel in maintaining his work on introducing licencing legislation. It has been a difficult task for Ministers before to bring such legislation forward successfully. I remember vividly the issues that we incurred in 2017 when trying to do the same. I wish him the very best with his consultation process. It is an important thing and it is well overdue. Deputy Morel talked about the impact or not of duty. Of course, duty is an annual feature in most budgets. In fact, it is quite unusual that in this Budget there is no change to alcohol duty. I am grateful to Deputy Miles for bringing this amendment for us to consider, because I consider that preventative health is one of the most important things that we can do in health prevention. Some speakers have suggested that alcohol duty is simply to discourage people who are perhaps alcoholics. Of course, we know that alcohol affects people in many, many other ways. I am sure, Sir, that you see many cases come before you in the other part of this building that relate to alcohol, as Deputy Miles outlined in her speech. Of course, last year one of the fantastic things that we managed to do was publish Jersey's Population Health Strategy with the help of our Public Health team. That focuses on the need for prevention in our community. We only need to look at the high incidences of various health issues that we have in our society to know and understand that we need to take a preventative approach to health and the health of Islanders in order to improve outcomes for every Islander and to ensure that we do not see the ... I am struggling to re-find the Disease Projection Survey that was also published recently that shows already we see people in Jersey suffering in a huge number with hypertension, high blood pressure and other diseases such as cancer, liver disease, heart issues. All of those have alcohol as a contributing factor. I myself, being a breast cancer survivor, am acutely aware that in order to maintain my health going forward, I have to address my lifestyle and ensure that I look after myself, avoid becoming obese and avoid alcohol consumption in excess, because I know that those are factors that could potentially be a cause of cancer. I certainly do not wish to go through that again. We are here to talk about duty. I much admire Deputy Montford Tadier's speeches. He has brought a lot of levity already to the sitting this week, which is greatly appreciated. His speech was measured. He was speaking against the amendment, but I also felt he did a great deal of good for the amendment, because he talked about the effectiveness of duty on tobacco and how we have seen a reduction in smoking over the years, as duties have increased. Also other measures, yes, have been introduced, such as the packaging and the ability to purchase cigarettes in separate parts of shops. Of course, those are things that we should discuss as an Assembly in relation to alcohol as well. If we are going to tackle the issues that we can see so clearly in front of us, if we find ourselves at the top of a league table for the wrong reasons, we know that that is an issue we need to address. We know we have high cancer rates, we know we have high levels of hypertension and other things, so we need to give those messages to our community to encourage people to take responsibility for their own health. One of those levers that we have is the level of duty. I will be supporting Deputy Miles in her amendment today. I would encourage Members to think very carefully about this and about the people that we know all around us, who need also to be reminded to protect their own health and take preventative measures rather than alternatives. Thank you.

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

I am pleased to have listened to Deputy Morel. I have sympathy for the amendment. The points that Deputy Morel brought up about the fundamental difference between on and off-licence is fundamental and is the reason why I cannot support the amendment as it is. I feel that we need to listen to that difference. I do not believe we need to touch the hospitality trade, the on-licence trade at all. The off-licence trade, yes, we need to deal with. One only has to go to an off-licence, you will find the best part of 50 per cent of the shelf space is taken up with alcohol these days. I do not think I am far wrong, I have not noted it, but certainly my observations tell me that. That in turn leads to uncontrolled drinking at home and that in turn leads to alcoholism, which we see being prevalent, as was alluded to, in the papers presented. We need to be a little bit more acute in our approach to this.

We can look at alcohol strength and taxation, which is something that, I must say, I have been banging on about for years. The difference between a high alcohol beer or wine is significant with different people. We could do a lot better than we have to date. I look forward to the Minister bringing in a revised licencing framework in due course. I am sure the parishes will be happy to work with him to do that. Thank you.

The Bailiff:

Does any other Member wish to speak on this amendment? If no other Member wishes to speak then I close the debate and call upon Deputy Miles to respond.

2.7.11 Deputy H.M. Miles:

I would like to thank all the Members that have contributed to this debate. I will be brief, because maybe then we do stand a chance of finishing on time this evening. Deputy Tadier, yes, we do need to think about campaigns and visibility. You are quite right about tobacco, you cannot buy tobacco easily. You have to go to a special part of the shop. Other countries only allow plain packaging or you can only buy it from a very small amount of retailers. Deputy Millar says that this is not the place for a debate about reducing alcohol. I am afraid I am going to have to disagree with her for the second time today. It is the budget debate, it is absolutely the right place to be talking about reducing alcohol, given that price is the single most influential factor in reducing alcohol consumption at a population level. Deputy Kovacs and Deputy Morel, evidently defended the hospitality industry in the way that I would have expected them to do so. I am also grateful for Deputy Morel taking forward the licencing strategy. As a civil servant, I still bear some of the scars of the previous work that we did around licencing. It is a tricky job and it needs to be gripped. What I would say in response to Deputy Kovacs is this amendment is not about tackling addiction. Addiction is completely something else than over consumption of alcohol. It is about a broader population level and getting the consumption of ordinary people down. I liked Connétable Troy's allusion of the weekend millionaires.

[18:15]

It is about the home drinkers and the binge drinkers. That ties into what Connétable Jackson said, you know, you go into any supermarket, probably over 50 per cent is alcohol. It is very easy to get your hands on it. Deputy Scott, again defended hospitality and raised the fact that hospitality businesses are closing. Yes, we see that, but sometimes a closure can result in innovation and creativity and open up something else. Finally, Deputy Moore spoke about what goes to the heart of this amendment, which is preventative health. We have some really good public health research in Jersey that shows that alcohol is a very damaging factor. We have high rates of heart disease, high rates of liver disease. You only have to look at the death statistics. It is not the young people that are consuming the alcohol. It is people my age, slightly younger, slightly older, that are drinking far too much and that is a contributing factor to many, many illnesses. On that note, I will not speak for any longer. I thank everybody for listening and I call for the appel. Thank you.

The Bailiff:

The appel is called for and I invite Members to return to their seats. The vote is on amendment 8. If Members have returned to their seats, I then ask the Greffier to open the voting. Members have had the opportunity of casting their vote. I ask the Greffier to close the voting. The amendment has been defeated:

POUR: 14		CONTRE: 31		ABSTAIN: 1
Connétable of St. Lawrence		Connétable of St. Brelade		Deputy A.F. Curtis
Connétable of St. Martin		Connétable of Trinity		

Connétable of St. Clement		Connétable of St. Peter		
Connétable of Grouville		Connétable of St. John		
Deputy L.M.C. Doublet		Connétable of St. Ouen		
Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat		Connétable of St. Mary		
Deputy I. Gardiner		Connétable of St. Saviour		
Deputy K.L. Moore		Deputy G.P. Southern		
Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf		Deputy C.F. Labey		
Deputy D.J. Warr		Deputy M. Tadier		
Deputy H.M. Miles		Deputy S.G. Luce		
Deputy H.L. Jeune		Deputy K.F. Morel		
Deputy K.M. Wilson		Deputy S.M. Ahier		
Deputy M.B. Andrews		Deputy R.J. Ward		
		Deputy C.S. Alves		
		Deputy I.J. Gorst		
		Deputy L.J. Farnham		
		Deputy S.Y. Mézec		
		Deputy Sir P.M. Bailhache		
		Deputy T.A. Coles		
		Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée		
		Deputy M.R. Scott		
		Deputy C.D. Curtis		
		Deputy L.V. Feltham		
		Deputy R.E. Binet		
		Deputy M.E. Millar		
		Deputy A. Howell		
		Deputy T.J.A. Binet		
		Deputy M.R. Ferey		
		Deputy R.S. Kovacs		
		Deputy B. Ward		

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

May we have the 14 and 31, please?

The Greffier of the States:

Those voting pour: the Connétables of St. Lawrence, St. Martin, St. Clement and Grouville; and Deputies Le Hegarat, Gardiner, Moore, Ozouf, Warr, Miles, Jeune, Wilson, Andrews; and online, Deputy Doublet. Those voting contre: the Connétables of St. Brelade, Trinity, St. Peter, St. John, St. Mary and St. Saviour; and Deputies Southern, Labey, Tadier, Luce, Morel, Ahier, Ward, Alves, Gorst, Farnham, Mézec, Bailhache, Coles, Porée, Scott, Feltham, Millar, Howell, Binet, Ferey, Kovacs, Ward; and online, the Constable of St. Ouen, Deputy Binet and Deputy Catherine Curtis.

2.8 Proposed Budget (Government Plan) 2025-2028 (P.51/2024): twenty-ninth amendment (P.51/2024 Amd. (29)) - Small distillers relief

The Bailiff:

Very well. That brings us on to the twenty-ninth amendment, which is brought by the Council of Ministers.

Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

At this point, before it is read out, I have checked with the Greffier, if I may re-declare an interest as a particularly small distillery owner and, for Hansard and the public record, the distillery submitted a consultation response to the original Budget and all States Members should have received a letter from the distillery on the matter of amendment 29. As such, to reiterate, hopefully that is in the public record now. That is clear, but I will be recusing physically from the Chamber yet again.

The Bailiff:

Very well. Thank you very much, Deputy. I ask the Greffier to read the amendment.

The Greffier of the States:

Paragraph (o) - after the words “as set out in the Appendix to the accompanying Report” insert the words “, except that on page 33 for the figure “40,000” should be substituted “20,000”.”

The Bailiff:

Who is speaking? Deputy Millar.

2.8.1 Deputy M.E. Millar of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity (The Minister for Treasury and Resources) - rapporteur:

I rise to address the amendment proposed by the Council of Ministers that underscores our commitment to the growth and success of our Island’s craft distillery industry. As you may know, our small distilleries are an important part of Jersey’s cultural and economic fabric. These enterprises split roughly into 2 groups. Those distilling from raw agricultural products, such as apples and wheat and those that import neutral base spirit often then transforming it into gins or other spirits with botanical flavourings. Up until now, Jersey has provided a reduced rate equivalent to 50 per cent of the standard rate for small distillers whose production did not exceed, on average, 2,000 litres of pure alcohol yearly and which was distilled from scratch using either apples, grain or various other kinds of agricultural product. That rate is available both to domestic producers and importers who meet the volume criteria to avoid unlawful discrimination between domestic and imported goods. The Budget for 2025 to 2028 had originally proposed increasing the production limit to qualify as a small distillery from the current threshold of 2,000 to 40,000 litres of pure alcohol. It is also proposed a new rate of relief for distillers who purchased base spirits which may have been distilled on-Island or which are imported. The new rate for those importers of spirit was proposed to be 75 per cent of the full standard rate. They had a 25 per cent discount. However, following further representations from the industry, we are now putting forward an amendment. We now propose a single 50 per cent duty relief rate for all small distillers regardless of how their base spirit is sourced. While we recognise the extra effort involved in distilling direction from raw agricultural products, this decision reflects a broader consideration of factors including the growth potential of the prevailing industry

practices. To offset the financial impact of this broader relief, we are also proposing to reduce the production threshold to qualify for the relief to 20,000 litres of pure alcohol, which is equivalent to over 70,000 standard bottles of production. This adjustment will ensure that all local distillers can benefit while maintaining fairness and fiscal responsibility. The relief will, of course, also be available to spirits imported from small distilleries overseas, to avoid unlawful discrimination under our various international trade agreements. This amendment demonstrates our commitment to fostering a supportive environment where our craft distilleries can continue to thrive and contribute to our economy and cultural identity. Just before I finish, can I just add one thing from the previous debate? I think my predecessor said last year that we would look at some form of on-sale and off-sale difference. That is on our policy framework, but I am told by the tax team that that is a monumental piece of work. It is much more complicated than it sounds. It is on the list. It may not be something we can do this year and we think it may not be something that the industry likes when it is rolled out, because it may involve such a huge amount of administration. It is on the list, but it is not coming soon. Thank you. I ask Members to support the amendment.

The Bailiff:

Is the amendment seconded? **[Seconded]** Does any Member wish to speak on the amendment? Deputy Moore.

2.8.2 Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

I would like a little direction, please. The Minister there described that they have amended their amendment. I would simply like to understand whether they are now being taken as one, as amended, or whether there will be an option to vote on the different parts. Other Members may have received a representation from a local distiller, creator of very fine cider, in my constituency, in St. Ouen, and they have described their support, with which I agree to the reduction of the production levels. However, and I would entirely agree with them, they express some concern at the ability for people to import alcohol to their raw production. That is a definition that I would like the opportunity, and I am sure other Members might also, to vote on separately.

The Bailiff:

There is only one amendment. This amendment does not have an amendment to it.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Perhaps I was thrown by the description the Minister gave. She did describe an amendment to their amendment.

The Bailiff:

There is only one paragraph to be voted on. There cannot be a separate vote. I am sure the Minister will clarify. Does any other Member wish to speak on the amendment? Deputy Bailhache.

2.8.3 Deputy Sir P.M. Bailhache of St. Clement:

May I follow up on the speech made by the Deputy for St. Ouen? It may not be possible to respond to the request which all Members have received from the particular distiller in question in the context of this amendment. What I would like to do is to ask the Minister to give an undertaking to give some consideration to the points made by the distillers. If it is agreed that it is a valid point, and I must say it seems to me to be a valid point on the face of it, that some action will be taken to differentiate between different kinds of distillers, as requested by the particular small operator?

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

I fear we are in the world of talking about matters which are not to do with the amendment at hand. Both Deputy Moore and Deputy Bailhache's interventions are interventions that I would happily respond to in the auspices of an appropriate debate on that matter. But this is not a debate on that

matter. This is a debate on the 40,000 and 20,000. My concern is that we have had 2 speeches which are about a completely different matter altogether. As such, I am not able to respond in a way that I would be able to explain to their concerns. In terms of this amendment, I do hope that Members will support this amendment, which has been brought in conjunction with industry and their concerns, as have any changes that have been made elsewhere with regard to the concerns raised by Deputy Bailhache and Deputy Moore, any changes have been as a result, if they are there, I am not sure they are, but the ones that I have seen to be referred to, would only be as a result of engagement with industry. Thank you.

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

I would be very grateful if the Minister could explain in her summing up what she is referring to, or the previous Minister, because I have heard the arguments and I do not understand what we are voting on and why this cannot be changed. If she is able to change it, could she give consideration to bringing a revision in the law to take advantage ... or if the representations are correct, can she correct it by making an amendment, which she is able to do, in the Finance Bill?

The Bailiff:

Does any other Member wish to speak on this amendment? If no other Member wishes to speak then I close the debate and call upon Deputy Millar to respond.

2.8.6 Deputy M.E. Millar:

I do understand the confusion, because I was slightly confused myself looking the amendment. There are 2 elements. As I discussed, the amendment we are debating relates to the Government Plan. The Budget said that we would move the production limit up to 40,000 litres of alcohol. Following lots of debate and discussion, including with the distillers, we have reduced that down to 20,000 litres. That is reducing the volume that you can produce to be considered a small distiller and to have the benefit of the reduced rate of relief. I have to confess, I will have to check as to where the relief sits. The rate of relief does not sit in the Budget, it may sit in the Finance Act itself. We originally did propose 2 rates of relief for distillers. One for those with the higher rate of discount, those who distil from raw produce, the ones who are distilling from apples and wheat, to reflect the extra work they do. Then we had a slightly lower relief rate for those who are bringing in the spirit. That was our original proposal. There has been a huge amount of consultation with industry.

[18:30]

We have, on the basis of that, accepted the single rate of relief of 50 per cent. Everybody who is making craft gin, whether you distil from scratch or whether you buy in the spirit and flavour it, if you like, is my basic understanding, you will have the same rate of relief when you sell the product. There has been a huge amount of consultation and discussion over this and that was the outcome we arrived at. If the relief rate is in the Finance Act, I will check that overnight and will be able to confirm that tomorrow when I present the Finance Law, but for the sake of the Budget the only change we are discussing is the reduction in production limit to 20,000 from 40,000 litres. I will have to check on where the relief rate sits. That is not a matter for the Budget. That may be a policy element and that is why it is not on the Budget. I agree, I was giving the full history of where we have got to over the last few months on this debate and explaining why we now have the single rate of relief. I hope that helps. Thank you. I maintain the amendment and call for the appel, please, Sir.

The Bailiff:

The appel is called for. I invite Members to return to their seats. I ask the Greffier to open the voting. The vote is on amendment 29. Members have had the opportunity of casting their vote. I ask the Greffier to close the voting. The amendment has been adopted: 34 votes pour, 8 votes contre, 2 abstentions.

POUR: 34		CONTRE: 8		ABSTAIN: 2
Connétable of St. Brelade		Connétable of St. Lawrence		Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf
Connétable of Trinity		Deputy M. Tadier		Deputy R.S. Kovacs
Connétable of St. Peter		Deputy I. Gardiner		
Connétable of St. Martin		Deputy T.A. Coles		
Connétable of St. John		Deputy H.M. Miles		
Connétable of St. Clement		Deputy H.L. Jeune		
Connétable of Grouville		Deputy K.M. Wilson		
Connétable of St. Ouen		Deputy M.B. Andrews		
Connétable of St. Mary				
Connétable of St. Saviour				
Deputy G.P. Southern				
Deputy S.G. Luce				
Deputy L.M.C. Doublet				
Deputy K.F. Morel				
Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat				
Deputy S.M. Ahier				
Deputy R.J. Ward				
Deputy C.S. Alves				
Deputy I.J. Gorst				
Deputy L.J. Farnham				
Deputy K.L. Moore				
Deputy S.Y. Mézec				
Deputy Sir P.M. Bailhache				
Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée				
Deputy D.J. Warr				
Deputy M.R. Scott				
Deputy C.D. Curtis				
Deputy L.V. Feltham				
Deputy R.E. Binet				
Deputy M.E. Millar				
Deputy A. Howell				
Deputy T.J.A. Binet				

Deputy M.R. Ferey				
Deputy B. Ward				

The Greffier of the States:

Those voting contre: the Connétable of St. Lawrence; Deputies Tadier, Gardiner, Coles, Miles, Jeune, Wilson and Andrews. The abstentions were Deputy Ozouf and Deputy Kovacs.

2.9 Proposed Budget (Government Plan) 2025-2028 (P.51/2024): ninth amendment (P.51/2024 Amd. (9)) - Pillar 2 Allocations

The Bailiff:

Very well. We now come to the ninth amendment brought by Deputy Jeune. There is an amendment to the amendment and there is also an amendment to the amendment to the amendment. The first thing is to ask: do you accept both of those?

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

Yes, I do.

The Bailiff:

Very well. We can take the proposition read, if Members agree, as amended by the amendment and the amendment to the amendment. Jolly good, excellent. It is paragraphs (b) and (c) that we take at this point. Very well. I ask the Greffier to read the amendment.

The Greffier of the States:

After the words “ease of doing business here” there should be inserted the words “Ensuring that funding is made available to support the transition to a net zero economy through the promotion of Sustainable Finance. This will support these goals and provide a clear action plan and delivery framework, embedding sustainability into financial practices.”; and (c) after the words “seeking to reduce operating costs” there should be inserted the words “Specifically making funding available for drivers to a net zero economy identified and delivered through the Sustainable Finance Action Plan which will embed sustainability into financial practices and business practices and support the decarbonisation of the finance industry.”

2.9.1 Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I put this amendment forward as I believe a significant proportion of the forecast Pillar 2 tax receipts specifically from the package to improve the competitiveness of the Island, should be directed towards developing and strengthening our sustainable and responsible financing offering and encouraging businesses to adopt more sustainable practices to advance the net zero economy. I said I would bring this amendment. The reasons for doing it during the Pillar 2 debate a few States Assemblies ago, if States Members can cast their minds back. I could say a lot on sustainable finance, but I will leave it at that. I would like to thank the Minister and his officers for working with me through this amendment and coming to a mutual agreement on the wording. This has been a good example of how Back-Benchers and Ministers can work together to get an agreed compromise.

The Bailiff:

Do you propose the amendment? Is the amendment seconded? **[Seconded]** Does any Member wish to speak on the amendment? Deputy Tadier.

2.9.2 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

There has been a tendency where we either have extremely long debates, yesterday we got through 2 amendments in the afternoon, and now when things have been agreed we almost forget to move

the proposition. We did not hear what the proposition was about and what it does and what the amendments do. Maybe in the summing up, at least for the public record, if we can clarify exactly what we are voting on. We as so euphoric when we reach an agreement; it is not a criticism, it is understandable. But we do need to know what we are proposing and voting on here.

The Bailiff:

Having provided an opportunity for further speech from the proposer, does any other Member wish to speak? Deputy Gorst.

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

I appreciate the Deputy wishing an intervention. It would seem to me that reading the proposition it is quite clear what is included and the amendment, in my view, enhances that clarity. Financial services firms have 2 elements of their responsibility. One is moving themselves to be in line with the carbon neutral policy of the Island. The other is supporting and developing sustainability in the underlying work that they do. That is what this amendment, in effect, does. It points to the Sustainable Finance Action Plan, which is Government working with industry and a regulator over a period of time to allow that transformation, in largely the latter area, but at the same time encouraging them from their own funding sources to comply with their own net zero obligations, in line with the Carbon Neutral Roadmap.

The Bailiff:

Very well. Does any other person wish to speak on the amendment? If no other Member wishes to speak then I close the debate and call upon Deputy Jeune to respond.

2.9.4 Deputy H.L. Jeune:

To respond to Deputy Tadier, I believe I did say what this amendment was. We heard it being read out by the Greffier, but then I also said in my beginning that I put this amendment forward because I believe a significant portion of the forecast Pillar 2 tax receipt that is being put aside, £15 million, to the package to improve the competitiveness of the Island, should be directed towards developing and strengthening our sustainable and responsible financing offering and encouraging businesses to adopt more sustainable practices to advance a net zero economy. I said that in my opening speech. I believe that gave a good summing up of the wording that was agreed. Therefore, I look forward to engaging with the Minister and his officers as they develop the package during 2025. I hope that I can support them in making sure that this is what this amendment is trying to reach. Thank you. I call for the appel.

The Bailiff:

Thank you very much. The appel is called for. I invite Members to return to their seats. I ask the Greffier to open the voting. The vote is on the ninth amendment, as amended and amended again. If Members have had the opportunity of casting their votes. I ask the Greffier to close the voting. The amendment has been adopted:

POUR: 44		CONTRE: 0		ABSTAIN: 0
Connétable of St. Lawrence				
Connétable of St. Brelade				
Connétable of Trinity				
Connétable of St. Peter				
Connétable of St. Martin				
Connétable of St. John				

Connétable of St. Clement				
Connétable of Grouville				
Connétable of St. Ouen				
Connétable of St. Mary				
Connétable of St. Saviour				
Deputy G.P. Southern				
Deputy M. Tadier				
Deputy S.G. Luce				
Deputy L.M.C. Doublet				
Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat				
Deputy S.M. Ahier				
Deputy R.J. Ward				
Deputy C.S. Alves				
Deputy I. Gardiner				
Deputy I.J. Gorst				
Deputy L.J. Farnham				
Deputy K.L. Moore				
Deputy S.Y. Mézec				
Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf				
Deputy Sir P.M. Bailhache				
Deputy T.A. Coles				
Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée				
Deputy D.J. Warr				
Deputy H.M. Miles				
Deputy M.R. Scott				
Deputy C.D. Curtis				
Deputy L.V. Feltham				
Deputy R.E. Binet				
Deputy H.L. Jeune				
Deputy M.E. Millar				
Deputy A. Howell				
Deputy T.J.A. Binet				
Deputy M.R. Ferey				
Deputy R.S. Kovacs				

Deputy A.F. Curtis				
Deputy B. Ward				
Deputy K.M. Wilson				
Deputy M.B. Andrews				

Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North:

Sir, before we continue, can I ask if you can indicate how many amendments are left to be debated?

The Bailiff:

Yes. There are 4 amendments left. Then when the amendments have been concluded we return to debate on the Budget Government Plan, as amended. After that, on the assumption, as I suspect it will be, it will be passed then there will be dealing with the various statutory instruments that naturally flow, the Finance Law and the Appointed Day Act.

2.10 Proposed Budget (Government Plan) 2025-2028 (P.51/2024): third amendment (P.51/2024 Amd. (3)) - Statistics Jersey Funding

The Bailiff:

Very well. The next amendment is the 3rd amendment, brought by the Chair of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel. Again, there is an amendment. Do you accept that amendment?

Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade:

No, Sir.

The Bailiff:

Very well. I will ask the Greffier to read your amendment and then we will take the amendment as we come to it.

The Greffier of the States:

Paragraph (o) - after the words “as set out in the Appendix to the accompanying Report” insert the words “, except that, on page 41, after Table 10, there should be inserted the words “Within the Revenue Head of Expenditure for the Cabinet Office, funding for Statistics Jersey will be increased by £157,000 to include £78,000 budget allocation and £79,000 growth allocation, through the reallocation to other departmental expenditure within the Cabinet Office”.”

2.10.1 Deputy H.M. Miles (Chair, Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel):

I seem to get all the fun jobs today, alcohol and now statistics. For this amendment, I am the rapporteur for the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel. The panel’s proposed amendment aims to reinstate the funding position for 2025 by reflecting an increase in budget allocation and growth allocation, so that Statistics Jersey can continue to provide key statistical outputs, including the Business Tendency Survey and the Jersey Opinions of Lifestyle Survey on an annual basis and to undertake work in relation to work in relation to G.V.A. (Growth Value Added) for quarterly reporting. Members will remember that earlier this year, in September, the Assembly adopted the Statistics and Census (Jersey) Amendment Law to amend the 2018 law, in line with international best practice standards to maintain the public’s trust and confidence in Jersey’s statistical system. This law requires the provision of a process to secure adequate funding for Statistics Jersey, which is commensurate with its responsibilities under that law. Under Article 4(3) of that law, the Chief Minister must provide the Chief Statistician with the resources he requires to discharge the functions economically, effectively and efficiently. In addition, the new Article 4(5) places a duty on the States

Assembly to hold the Chief Minister to account for the funding of key tier one statistics. While that law has not yet been implemented, the panel takes the view that through the adoption of the new law a commitment has been signalled by the States Assembly and should be acted on accordingly. Statistics, however boring, are the backbone of informed decision-making, fostering developments and ensuring the policies and programmes are effective and efficient. It was the famous economist, W Edwards Deming who said: “In God we trust, all others must bring data.” Governments should maintain Statistics’ functions because we need the framework for many things. We need informed decision-making. Reliable statistics provide a solid foundation for creating effective policies in making strategic decisions. They help governments understand trends, identify issues and allocate resources more efficiently. We need them for economic planning and monitoring. Economic data, such as G.V.A., employment rates and inflation are crucial to planning and monitoring the economic health of our Island. This data helps us setting fiscal policies, managing economic growth, and responding to economic crises. The statistics help us with our transparency and accountability. Publicly available statistics promote transparency and accountability. They allow Islanders to see their Government is performing and ensure that public funds are being used effectively. A robust statistical system enhances public trust and confidence in governments. When people see that decisions are based on reliable data, they are much more likely to support Government actions and policies. We need statistics for compliance with international standards. Many international organisations, such as the U.N. (United Nations) and the International Monetary Fund, require member countries to produce and share statistical data. I am sure the Minister for External Relations could expand on why exactly we need very good statistics for our international relations. Also crucial for business and investment decisions, it is not only the Government that rely on our statistics, it our business community and our finance industry. They need the statistics to make informed decisions about their investments, expansions and their market strategies.

[18:45]

This data needs to be accurate and timely, so that it can attract investments and promote economic growth. Finally, Social Services and welfare programs, statistics are essential for designing and implementing social services and welfare programs. They help us identify vulnerable populations, assess the effectiveness of programs and ensure that scarce resources are reaching those who need them most. Given the need for a robust system to produce statistics, the Panel’s main concern is that the reduced budget allocations for Statistics Jersey will result in the discontinuation and reduction of statistical outputs in administrative data production, impacting economic statistics like the quarterly G.V.A. reporting. Both the Statistics User Group and the Fiscal Policy Panel emphasise the necessity for frequent and detailed economic statistics for assessing Jersey’s fiscal and economic position. The Statistics User Group in Jersey is an independent body, established to oversee the quality, relevance and integrity of statistics compiled by or on behalf of public authorities in Jersey. That group, in evidence to the panel, has emphasised the importance of maintaining expanding statistical reporting by Statistics Jersey to support Government policymaking, business decisions and public benefit. Their annual user survey highlighted the importance of public authority statistics and recommends quarterly G.V.A. reporting. They express concerns about the budget cuts to Statistics Jersey, fearing it would hinder strategic decision-making and policy development. They were particularly concerned about Business Tendency Survey, the Actively Seeking Work Report, the Energy Trends Report, and also the Jersey Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, which has shifted to a biannual survey with a modular approach for questions. The Statistics User Group stresses the need for robust statistical outputs for Jersey’s competitiveness and sustainable economy. Likewise, the Fiscal Policy Panel also relies on high-quality, timely economic data for assessing Jersey’s fiscal position. While they value the Business Tendency Survey for up-to-date, easy to understand economic information, which is crucial for assessing the economic cycle and guiding stabilisation fund decisions, the F.P.P. (Fiscal Policy Panel) recommend increasing G.V.A. reporting frequency, and they have expressed concern that budget cuts will reduce the availability of economic statistics, affecting their ability to assess fiscal

and economic health. I think that is an important consequence. This amendment would maintain the capability of the Stats Unit to develop quarterly G.V.A. from administrative data and also targeted surveys. It would also provide some capacity to develop other statistics that would be of great interest to policy makers and which do not exist already, as we have been told frequently in our hearings by the Chief Minister, data around gender pay, diversity, equity, inclusion, even the most basic of aggregated criminal justice statistics. The Chief Minister tells us that the Government is prioritising frontline services and delivering value for money for Islanders. Without adequate data and robust statistics, how will the Government know that they are delivering value for value, that they are not only doing things right, but they are doing the right things? As I have said many times to hearings in the last few months, the frontline can only perform at optimum level if the back office and service functions are efficient. If you are going on an important journey, you do not throw away your map and your compass. Statistics Jersey is not a frontline service, but it provides those important navigational tools to the frontline, tools which improve decision making capacity and capability across many sectors of our community and economy. The proposed budget cuts will adversely affect Statistics Jersey. They will reduce the capacity, the capability, and the resilience, impacting their ability to provide vital social and economic data, which is essential for strategic decision-making and policy development, across not only the Government, but the private and third sector, and business, and our finance industry. In our hearings, the Chief Statistician has been transparent about the impacts and the need for reprioritisation due to shared budget cuts with the Cabinet Office. The panel is not at all convinced that the risk of this reduction to the Statistics Jersey budget has been fully understood. The reprioritisation of its work and reductions are required simply because Statistics Jersey shares in the budget cuts for the Cabinet Office, not because the material they produce is unnecessary or extraneous. Quite the opposite in fact. A reduction in budget equals a reduction in staff. That means needs cannot be met. The recognition of the previous Government of the critical function of Statistics Jersey has been ignored and reversed. This *volte-face*, another one, was explained away in a scrutiny hearing by saying that, as there had been previous growth, there was over capacity and the budget should therefore be reduced. The evidence we heard showed that this was not the case, and that the previous growth funding was awarded to reflect the fact that Statistics Jersey was starting from a very low base and that they lacked the resources to perform its function. That was before it became a statutory service. The panel is aware that tough decisions need to be made, but the rationale for this one is flawed. As a panel, we are not convinced by the argument. It is a priority. Data and robust statistics across the piece are vital to the efficient functioning of our Island. Key priorities in the C.S.P. can only be delivered effectively and efficiently when the elements of those priorities are clear and well understood. Everybody in this Assembly is using quotes today and I am afraid that I cannot call upon J.R.R. Tolkien for inspiration, but I can give another nautical analogy. We must not jeopardise the engine room of the ship. It will not sail in the right direction if the rudder is not well maintained and covered in barnacles. What should be full steam ahead will end up with us floating in the doldrums, directionless until the wind picks up again. Statistics Jersey is not a nice to have; it is a necessity. I would urge Members to consider that when deciding upon whether to adopt this amendment. The panel emphasises that the Chief Minister's statutory obligation is to provide the Chief Statistician with the resources they require to discharge his functions economically, effectively, and efficiently. The panel therefore urges the Chief Minister and the States Assembly to support this amendment to reinstate the funding. I propose the amendment.

The Bailiff:

Is the amendment seconded? **[Seconded]** Very well, there is an amendment from the Council of Ministers and I asked the Greffier to read that amendment.

2.11 Proposed Budget (Government Plan) 2025-2028 (P.51/2024): third amendment (P.51/2024 Amd. (3)) - amendment (P.51/2024 Amd. (3) Amd)) - Statistics Jersey Funding

The Greffier of the States:

After the words “will be increased by” for the remainder of the paragraph substitute, “£78,000 through the reallocation of other departmental expenditure within the Cabinet Office.”

2.11.1 Deputy L.J. Farnham of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter (The Chief Minister) - rapporteur:

The panel’s amendment seeks to provide Statistics Jersey with an additional £157,000 by reallocating spending from the Cabinet Office. The Council of Ministers has accepted that Statistics Jersey should receive a further funding allocation, but considers that £78,000 is necessary as this will enable it to continue to undertake the Business Tendency Survey. In fact, this funding has already been found from within the Cabinet Office budget, so this amendment would support the status quo. There are 3 key reasons why the Council of Ministers has brought this amendment. Firstly, we believe this will fund the most effective economic data. C.O.M. (Council of Ministers) has been provided with the professional advice of the Chief Statistician, the Fiscal Policy Panel, and the Chief Economic Adviser, on which statistical products provide the most effective data to inform Jersey’s economic and fiscal policy. With this advice in mind, C.O.M. is clear that the Business Tendency Survey is the most desirable statistical output. £78,000 is necessary to fund the survey, so this will be provided to Statistics Jersey. Secondly, this is proportionate, this amendment would ensure that Statistics Jersey’s capacity has increased by more than 25 per cent over 4 years, from 15 statisticians and analysts posts in 2021, to 19 if this amendment is accepted. The Council of Ministers consider that 25 per cent growth rate over 4 years is sufficient to enable Statistics Jersey to produce the data that the Island needs. Finally, as the panel has recognised, we need to take a sensible approach to prioritisation. I agree with the Chair of the Corporate Services Panel when she states that Statistics Jersey’s outputs provide the map and compass to enable Ministers to make effective policy for Jersey’s future. That has been a question at scrutiny hearings concerned potentially, or encouragement that we keep the necessary policy resource. The policy work is incredibly important. But we do have a good map and compass. We do have a well-resourced, robust statistical output. However, that map and compass, as she referred to it, is useless if we do not have the resources to interpret the data and provide the effective policy advice which follows. The panel’s amendments would take a further £79,000, largely from our policy resources team, which, as Members know, we require to be able to develop policy and legislation to make the improvements to the Island that we all need on an ongoing basis. If the panel’s amendment succeeds, we will need to take difficult decisions to stop other policy projects. The Government is committed to delivering value for money and prioritising frontline services. This has led to a proposed reduction in the Cabinet Office budget from £26 million this year to £24.18 million from 2027 onwards. We can do this because the Council of Ministers has made sensible decisions, prioritising projects that are most important and deliverable, while stopping what we deem to be unnecessary work. The panel’s amendment would provide Statistics Jersey with resources at the expense of us delivering some of these important projects. So, in conclusion, I ask Members to accept this amendment as it will ensure we have the economic data that Jersey needs. I would add at this stage, keeping the Business Tendency Survey going is a stepping stone to starting with quarterly G.V.A. reports to replace that as recommended by the Fiscal Policy Panel, probably in 2026. This amendment will provide Statistics Jersey with a significant increase in its capacity over 4 years that is more proportionate than that proposed by the panel, in our opinion, and it ensures that the Cabinet Office can continue to deliver its proposed policy programme and that no key projects will be affected. I make the amendment. Thank you.

The Bailiff:

Is the amendment by the Council of Ministers seconded? **[Seconded]** Does anyone wish to speak on the Council of Ministers amendment? Deputy Southern.

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

I seem to recall that some time back the Stats Department came under severe pressure and it was proposed to cut back on statistics. I think at the time either myself or others persuaded this House that stats was the most single important thing that needed to be gathered if you are going to make any statement about your economy or about the state of, say, poverty on the Island. I spoke earlier, yesterday, the day before, it seems like a long time ago, about my specialist area, about the requirement, the need to reduce income inequality in our society. Absolutely vital if we are going to go forward. That can only be done by statisticians working in the department operatively in order to do that.

[19:00]

Yet, today, we have heard, or the day before, or the day before, we have heard how we are to move to the living wage. How are we going to monitor the effect of moving to the living wage and who it affects and who it does not affect, and to what extent. That requires the stats being done. Who, for example, is going to enable the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, one of his little pet projects, to compare our economy with that situation, society, with that of the O.E.C.D. countries, which is one of the essential comparators that you need in order to say how well are we doing, how well or badly are we doing, and the comparison point is always with the O.E.C.D. figures. Until last year, we were not taking those, we were not taking on board those O.E.C.D. figures. We did not know. We could not say. That has finally, in the last year, been accepted as the way to make the comparison. Here we are about to scrap it possibly. We are certainly scrapping something. Again, more, we are taking on more and more factors that we need to know and understand. For example, we just today set a set of targets for arm's-length companies, for example, about sustainable well-being, do they add or cater for sustainable well-being? It does not arrive on somebody's desk automatically, a statistician has to look at the figures and say: "This is how successful we are being." We set up some targets today, which we can only measure and judge if we have the proper stats in place in order to do that. So I would urge Members not to accept the paltry £78,000 and the continuation of the Business Tendency Survey, that is one factor among many. I would say reject this amendment, it is not good enough, and do vote for the Scrutiny Panel's version, which covers more and will enable us to know more and understand our economy and poverty levels on the Island, to see if we are making progress or not. That is vital. I think stats and their full collation of statistics is an essential step in understanding our society full stop, must be continued. I urge Members to reject the Government amendment and vote for the Scrutiny Panel. Thank you.

2.11.3 Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade:

The C.O.M. amendment seeks to reduce the growth funding and therefore restrict the capacity of the funding to the presentation of the Business Tendency Survey. I think Deputy Southern has articulated quite clearly why this particular amendment to the amendment is not a good idea. It does not maintain the growth that was previously given and it will not allow for other statistics, particularly the social survey. It does not provide the opportunity to continue with the experimental statistics or the administrative data that has been so useful to many of the groups, not only political groups, but also social groups. Deputy Tadier talked yesterday about a sticking plaster in one of the debates. I agree, and in this case of this amendment to the amendment it is a bit of a sticking plaster to cover a gaping wound that will fester if it is not treated appropriately and quickly. Reducing important statistical output at this point is really short sighted. Yes, you could argue that half a loaf of bread is better than no bread at all. But the panel do not believe that to be the case in this particular scenario. It is a simple choice. This C.O.M. amendment to the C.S.S.P. (Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel) amendment considers that only the Business Tendency Survey should be reinstated. The panel do not feel that this is an adequate sum to adequately discharge the functions of Statistics Jersey and I would urge Members to reject this amendment.

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

I welcome at least the acceptance of the Business Tendency Survey. I was horrified to hear the Business Tendency Survey was being withdrawn and I cannot believe that a Chief Minister who has discharged the functions of the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development would countenance the most important statistic. But at least we have got that. The Chief Minister referred to a map and compass, the Corporate Services Chair. I completely agree with that. But a partial map is dangerous and is as dangerous as no map at all. Without comprehensive and timely data, it is impossible as a Minister to be able to make decisions and make the policies and relying on outdated and incomplete information. The Chief Minister implies that quarterly G.V.A. reports are not an immediate priority. I am sorry, but the Fiscal Policy Panel has consistently recommended better and more frequent reporting of economic performance. G.V.A., or its equivalent, is a fundamental measure of the health of our economy. The public, this Assembly, the people, investors, want to know whether we are growing and to avoid that statistic being published is not going to do anything to do with confidence or otherwise. I want those G.V.A. numbers to be rising, but I am not sure whether they are. Jersey remains behind other jurisdictions in producing internationally recognised data. Other nations report quarterly G.V.A. routinely. We remain reliant on infrequent and less relevant statistics in some ways, and this undermines Jersey's credibility, especially as attracting issues like green finance and the other things that we have been talking about. I am afraid that the business survey is fine, but it is not good enough. We need a whole suite of data by our Statistics Unit and I am glad to be, if I may, receiving some nods of support from Deputy Southern, who I have occasionally sparred with. But what he said was absolutely right, we need a suite of data including G.V.A. and, dare I say it, not for the first time, we need a proper measure of inflation. We are still measuring, despite representations to the contrary that we have got, we are still measuring R.P.I., which was retired as an official statistic by the U.K. under the Thatcher administration. I still have not got a proper explanation as to whether or not we are getting the right inflation measure, which is the cost of living. That might explain why people are so worried about the cost of living, but they do not believe the data because the data we produce in Jersey is different from everywhere else in the world. Statistics Jersey need the money to sort that statistic out. They need it. Cost of living is vital. It is rising, but I suspect it is rising higher because it is not the statistic that we can compare other places with, and going to comparison is also inadequate. I am afraid the Chief Minister highlighting a 25 per cent increase in Statistics Jersey's capacity over 4 years as a justification to limit further investment is just not good enough. The context has been, as has been said, a very, very low base. I was one of the only Ministers that turned up the statistics for a long time. I am not sure whether Ministers turn up for statistics briefing because what they do is valued, important, and fundamental to the decision making by statistics. This is being penny foolish and pound foolish, where basically it is ridiculous. When you are talking about this amount of important statistics for our credibility internationally, I would want the Minister for External Relations to be up on his feet and explaining why, when you go out and represent Jersey, you need data which is reliable, robust, and properly done. I would expect to be jumping the Assistant Minister to his feet and I cannot believe much of this budget debate is being held like this. I am almost in tears about the fact we are actually having a debate like this. This is important. Statistics matter and the Corporate Services Scrutiny Chair is absolutely right and she will get my full support, but I know, as most amendments in this Budget, where basically it does not matter whether I say pink elephants, it is just going to get a Government majority through. But this amendment matters and the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel deserves to be listened to and I will not be supporting the Government amendment and I will be supporting them, what they are doing, because frankly, unless the Minister can explain why they are doing this in a convincing way, and I look forward to hearing what they have got to say, I will remain as sad as I was this morning when I leave this evening, because the arguments I am afraid are fallacious and not satisfactory and not good enough for this Assembly.

2.11.5 Connétable R.D. Johnson of St. Mary:

Unlike perhaps some of his previous contributions to this debate, I am happy to endorse the comments of Deputy Ozouf. In her opening address, the Chairman of Corporate Services, on which I serve, provided a whole range of services which the Statistics Unit contribute to and there is little point in my going through them again. The simple point is that the panel consider that they are conscious of the restraints under which we operate at the moment, the panel has said that we were relatively modest in our requirement for the amount made in the proposition. It is simply the case that if it is reduced then the standard of service given by the Government, or the Government is able to provide, will diminish. That alone should be sufficient to hopefully gain the support of all Members. The Chair acknowledged that half a loaf is better than nothing, but half a loaf is not enough to feed what we need to feed.

2.11.6 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

We have heard a lot about measurables up until now. We have had a debate about whether or not to put things like sustainable well-being in there. We know that sustainable well-being is already a part of the Government's processes. How on Earth is Government going to measure what it is doing, benchmark what it is doing, ascertain what the key performance indicators are in there, if they do not properly resource the centralised but crucially independent arm that we all rely on. It is absolutely correct that I do need to pay tribute, along with other Members, because we rely on those statistics, whether we are in Government or as Back-Benchers, members of the public, and the statistics that are produced are remarkably thorough, but they are also really easy to use and to read. For somebody like me, who is not always au fait at reading through, very capable of reading through balance sheets, the way they present them is very accessible and the comparisons that you can make, whether it is parish to parish or indeed Island to Island or to other bigger jurisdictions' communities, is really useful to getting our head around complex issues. So I would say to Government that this is not something that we can haggle over. It is not simply saying we will meet you halfway. I would say do the job properly or do not do it at all because we are dealing with an independent body of Government here, which is giving us all statistics that we need. Is Scrutiny going to serve any meaningful function in this process? I mean, what have we all been doing for the last few months? Have we just been getting up in the morning, going to bed late, reading documents, bringing in Ministers and officers and even members of the public to speak to them in front of our panels in the Blampied Room, in the Le Capelain Room, engaging with the public just to simply have all of our meaningful recommendations ignored by Government? I do not think that is what we signed up to. When we hear very sensible recommendations being made, very modest and moderate recommendations being made by what I would call very centre middle of the road politicians whom I respect greatly, I respect all Members in here of course, but these are modest proposals that are coming forward from the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel. We appointed these individuals to do the job. My good colleague in St. Brelade who won that position for Corporate Services, I am so glad she is in that role and I am so glad that I am in my role and that she has got a very good team with her. I would say to Members of Government, do not let this be one that we are going to be whipped on, I strongly suspect this may be the last thing we will debate tonight. I think Members are feeling we are coming towards the end of the evening. Let us give the Statistics Department the vote of confidence they need, not in half measures, but in full measures to say thank you, we want you to be able to do your job independent from Government and to give us the information we need so that we can continue to make the decisions that we need to make in the future and measure, also, what we have done up until now in a meaningful way. **[Approbation]**

[19:15]

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

I would like to thank the Corporate Scrutiny Panel and all Scrutiny Panels for the work that they do. I believe that a number of Members know from my background, having been a voluntary member of the Statistics Users Group, with the role of overseeing statistics, and I have great respect for Statistics

Jersey and the Chief Statistician. At the time that I basically learned about the proposed discontinuation of certain statistical series from a member of the press who contacted me and said: "What do you think about this given your background?" and I said: "You what?" and I immediately flew to the Cabinet Office and said: "What is happening?" I grilled them. In an ideal world, we would be putting so much more into the production of data, but it is very important to, as we have already done in the case of focus on things like funding to A.L.O.s and things, it is important to evaluate outputs, and indeed the Corporate Scrutiny Panel in its work did interview the Statistics Users Group, who indicated certain priorities. These have been taken on board by Government, the Business Tendency Survey, restored the quarterly G.V.A. to be produced. This point about Deputy Ozouf about R.P.I., I believe that some Members who have inquired into this may be aware that the U.K. has not been able to adjust the methods of their R.P.I. because it was used for gilts and any change to methods has to be approved by the U.K., but Stats Jersey were able to make changes for Jersey, so I believe what we have is better than what we have got in the U.K. So a lot of the work was done in order to just look at what might have been overlooked, how evaluations have been made. But I think it is really important to point out, and particularly in the context of the stats law, what it is doing and how it is going to impact on the way that budgeting is done for policy in the future. Because this will affect all Ministers and this will affect all Scrutiny Panels. Just as I would wish them to be much more aware of the Comptroller and Auditor General's reports in terms of getting value for money, I really hope that they will become much more aware of the role of statistics in supporting policies. The law says that, in future, when Common Strategic Policies are produced, the Chief Statistician is to produce a plan to set out the statistics that should be produced to support that Common Strategic Policy. That will give ample time for Scrutiny to be looking at the Government Plan to say, really, if you want to deliver your Common Strategic Policy, you really need to be supporting the stats. Now, I think that this law, somewhat like the Cyber Security Law, is part of a culture change. We have not got to where we want to be in terms of, not just the production of statistics, but prioritising them. At the time that I had my conversations with the department, I think it might have been, let us just say, the budgetary leeway was somewhat constrained after a vote by the States Assembly that was more or less giving a certain amount to culture, arts and heritage. What is more important? However, decisions are made and everybody has to cut their coats according to their cloth. I do not want to keep using the same metaphor again but I do think that Statistics Jersey is an outstanding outfit. So we have this increase of funding that has been happening. So the real term change in business as usual funding from 2021 to 2026 was 45 per cent, an increase before the amendment. In terms of what really has been impacted by the cuts, we have had one restoration of the Business Tendency Survey. There is discussion of experimental statistics. I think it would be useful to really start focusing these around the Common Strategic Policy in accordance with the law once it is enacted. The law brings in a whole new regime, as it were, for having statistics prioritised and emphasised in terms of their delivery of the Common Strategic Policy. The other thing that was mentioned by the Statistics Users Group was the Jersey Opinion Lifestyle Survey, which we have got another 2 years, a lot of that, if you look at that, is not actually telling us too much in terms of the way of trends. So there was an evaluation of that. The Income and Expenditure Survey funding for that, that is not produced until about 2027. So there has been a lot of consideration of this in terms of what is available in terms of budget, in terms of the changes that are about to be made. Much as I would love much more to be going into the Statistics Department, I think that this is a sensible way forward that I can support, given that we do need to deliver a balanced budget, I would urge Members to support this amendment too. Thank you.

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

May I have ask a point of clarification?

The Bailiff:

Yes, of course. Will you give way for a point of clarification, Deputy?

Deputy M.R. Scott:

Yes, indeed.

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

I just wanted to ask, I was rather unclear as the Assistant Minister was saying about our statistics being better. What I was trying to ask, was she trying to say that our R.P.I. is better? I was saying about that it is important that it is comparable and, if it is not the same, you cannot compare it. I do not want to make a second speech, but I just did not understand what the Assistant Minister was saying. Does she say that it is fine to have a different figure?

The Bailiff:

Are you able to assist, Deputy?

Deputy M.R. Scott:

Yes, I think what I was saying was ... sorry, I need to have clarification on this myself. I think what the Deputy is saying is that he would prefer us to adjust our R.P.I. to make it consistent with the U.K. that references ...

The Bailiff:

I think all the Deputy can ask you is what you meant by a particular phrase you used. Deputy Ozouf, if you would repeat the phrase and if you would say ...

Deputy M.R. Scott:

Well, he ...

The Bailiff:

I am speaking, thank you.

Deputy M.R. Scott:

Sorry.

The Bailiff:

If you repeat the phrase you would like clarification about.

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

Certainly, I just did not understand what the Assistant Minister was saying when she said “better” when the argument is “comparable” and you can count bananas or apples, but the 2 things are completely different. If you want to compare apples and apples you have to have an apples and apples comparison and if it is pears it is different.

The Bailiff:

I hope that clarified for you. [Laughter]

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

Between apples and pears.

The Bailiff:

Yes.

Deputy M.R. Scott:

Very briefly, the U.K. R.P.I. cannot be compared to certain other indices because of certain difficulties with that, whereas I believe that we cannot be compared to the U.K. because of that, but

I suggest that he have a direct discussion of the Chief Statistician in that respect. That is my understanding and that the Chief Statistician has shown leadership in this matter. Thank you.

2.11.8 Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North:

I like apples and pears. I am not sure how many times Members, when they ask questions on statistics or numbers, not on statistics, Council of Ministers and Ministers receive the answer: "We do not have the data." Recently simple questions: "How much does it cost per day per night, hospital bed, standard?" "We do not know. We do not have those data." Or they do not want to give the data. "How many outside green space per each school?" "We do not know. We do not have the data." Now, cutting the Statistics Jersey, it was several service were mentioned. I think one of the service that were requested I use because we do not have much data and we needed to make policy decisions and it is really difficult to make policy decisions when you do not have data. The Jersey Opinion Lifestyle Survey that now will be reduced for every 2 years. It is very difficult when you cannot have a trajectory, what is happening year in, year out, to make a decision on your budget. If you are thinking what Jersey Opinion Lifestyle Survey covered, personal finance, living in Jersey, getting involved, heritage and conservation, health, well-being, crime, policing, digital connectivity, and employment. How we can make decisions without these statistics on annual basis. On top of it, each Minister and each department can request to add extra questions that can support policy decision making as we are approaching our budget decision. At the end of the day, this Assembly adopted P.29 Draft Statistics and Census Law, which puts duty on Chief Statistician, so it is Government who must ensure that they have all necessary funding. It is a statutory duty, what we are adopting here, what we are voting for here, if we are not doing it? It has started to be beyond my understanding. Now, about the cut in the budget, I think again getting to the point, Members, we have budget that increased. It might be reprofile, it might be reprioritised, it might be reallocated, but the matter of truth, all growth that was put in the budget during the previous years still remains in the budget. We are talking about the budget that has not been reduced. The budget did grow, not by much. It means the growth still remained in the budget, whatever reprioritisation is happening, and the Statistics Jersey did receive this growth, it is still in the budget. The question where did it go? We are talking really about £70,000, £80,000 difference on a £1.3 million budget. I have done my case.

2.11.9 Deputy S.G. Luce of Grouville and St. Martin:

I cannot resist having a quick word about policy decisions and data, and it is a good argument to have because on one hand we could create as much data as we like, at the expense of resource, make policy decisions and develop policy, and on the other hand, develop as much policy as you like, have no money left to put into data creation. The reality of course is that we need both. Here we have an amendment from the Council of Ministers which says £157,000 may be a bit much, let us go for half of that. Before Members say just go for the £157,000 straight off, I am looking at this number and thinking I know where that £157,000 will come from and some of it will come out of my Ministerial policy development work on water strategy, work on carbon reduction, climate change, gas, and developing the new Island Plan. I say to myself I do not want to give up a penny of that, but I know I will have to. Here is a compromise from the Council of Ministers that says let us take half of the money proposed by Scrutiny. I think it is a good compromise. I urge Members to support it.

2.11.10 Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement:

I have a copy of the Government Budget in front of me, loaded with statistics. One of the things that I wanted to just highlight, which is why I cannot support the Government amendment, is because those statistics are really important to deliver an evidence-based approach to the way that we plan policy and we decide on priorities and we also put policies together that make an impact, which we can also measure as we have heard from Deputy Jeune's proposals this afternoon.

[19:30]

So the thing that I just want to suggest to the Government is that we have made a lot of progress in the quality of these statistics, in the purpose of them, in the meaning of them. Please do not stop. Keep the quality there. Make sure that you have the capability and the capacity to be able to deliver meaningful information. We have been struggling all along in this debate to get information and data and some of it has not been available for one reason or another. But if you build the capability and the capacity in the Statistical Unit, we can start to help, through the Scrutiny Panels and through our opinions, as to how we can inform the development of those statistical profiles going forward. What Government would not want to be in a position where it was able to demonstrate that it understood its business, it knew what was going on in the Island, to be able to position itself against others when it comes to securing business, when it comes to securing investment? We should have this information at our fingertips all of the time. Cutting back on being able to produce that I think will be detrimental. Thank you.

The Bailiff:

Does any other Member wish to speak on the Government's amendment. If no other Member wishes to speak, then I close the debate and call upon the Chief Minister to respond.

2.11.11 Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Can I thank all Members who have spoken. Let me start by saying that we have a first class Statistics Department. They are well resourced, they produce very robust and comprehensive statistical information and output. I am not aware in my time in Government in the States, and recently in this role, of not being able to refer to any data that has not been available from Statistics Jersey to provide the information we need. On top of that, we get advice and data from our economic advisers and others. So this sort of theme that has been developed a little bit by those in opposition to this amendment to the amendment suggests that we have a Statistics Unit that is far from what we need. That is simply not the case. We have a good Statistics Unit. It has been well invested. We have grown the investment in it. We are going to continue to do that. It is led by a first class statistician and a first class team of 19 statisticians and analysts. I meet regularly with the head of the Statistics Unit and we discuss resources. I completely have confidence in the way he leads and his prioritisation of his resources and what they produce, and they produce tremendous output of statistics. Yes, of course we can always have more. We can always have more of everything. We could have £100,000 for the West of Island Planning that you want to do. We could do that as well. Let us put that on and we can just keep going. But we have had to reprioritise and we have had to reprioritise some very large items and we have had to reprioritise quite a lot of smaller quite difficult decisions, such as this. I do not blame the Statistics Unit, this is difficult because we would like to have more statistics, but we only want to have what we really need. We act upon the advice of the Chief Statistician and our economic advisers, who we have confidence in, and we have confidence that they are producing the right statistics. In relation to G.V.A., I did not say that moving to a G.V.A. based method of reporting on our economy was not a priority; it is a priority. It is scheduled for 2026. The Business Tendency Survey was going to finish now, so that would have meant there would have been a year's gap before that started. So we are going to keep the Business Tendency Survey going. Deputy Tadier talked about his frustration that perhaps we do not listen to Scrutiny. We do listen to Scrutiny, we engage with Scrutiny. We do not always agree with Scrutiny when they scrutinise us and they come up with recommendations. We do not always agree and we do not have to agree. As a Government, by consensus we make decisions and sometimes Scrutiny are a great help. They do spot things we have missed and make suggestions that we accept. But it is okay to disagree and I think we disagree on this one. But, at the end of the day, it is a relatively small amount of money, but we have to manage our resources right across the whole Government, every department. As they say, sometimes you have to look after the pennies to make the pounds look after themselves, and we have to apply that right across the board. What we often look to do is compromise, find compromise, find middle ground, find balance with Scrutiny, and that is what we are trying to do here. But it is

not just that, we feel economic advice, talking to the Chief Statistician, the Business Tendency Survey is the right one to prioritise on this occasion. I undertake to continue the work with the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development to liaise and make sure the Chief Statistician, under their new legislative position, are properly resourced into the future. We will continue to do that. So, while we might be talking about a relatively small amount of money in the scheme of things, the principle of the way we are reprioritising our spending is important if we are to deliver the best value. We are not compromising the statistics we are producing, we continue to support first class statistics which we get regularly. To date, I have not found us wanting when it comes to statistics to make good policy decisions. We do not want to dip into our policy resources because it is only an extra £79,000, but that potentially is one member of staff out of policy, into statistics, and that is what you have to remember. However, we are always at the will of the Assembly, but I urge Members to support the Government, support the amendment to the amendment. It will not compromise our statistical output. We have seen considerable growth, 25 per cent growth, we continue to invest in our Stats Unit moving forward. I ask the Assembly for their support. Thank you very much.

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

I particularly raised a point in my remarks and the Chief Minister has not answered why the quarterly G.V.A. reporting, which is the international standard, which is not going to be possible upon the advice of the Chief Statistician ... why he thinks that quarterly reporting of G.V.A. is not going to be necessary? I am entitled to ask that question, am I?

The Bailiff:

You are entitled to ask it and the Chief Minister is entitled to answer it or not, as the case may be.

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

But he did not and I asked him to.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I am sorry, I did answer that. The Deputy suggested that quarterly G.V.A. reporting was not a priority. I said it is a priority. It is highlighted by F.P.P. as a preferable way to reporting on the performance of the economy, scheduled to start in 2026. I also went on to say that the Business Tendency Survey, which was due to finish the last quarter of this year, we are going to continue for next year, so there is not a gap. I am not sure why the Deputy is shaking its head. I am not sure what is difficult to understand about that. It is a priority; it is scheduled to start in 2026.

The Bailiff:

You have answered the point, Chief Minister. Is the appel is called for? The appel is called for. I invite Members to return to their seat, the vote is on the Council of Ministers amendment to the P.51, amendment 3. I ask the Greffier to open the voting and Members to vote. If Members have had the opportunity of casting their vote, then I ask the Greffier to close the voting. The amendment has been adopted:

POUR: 22		CONTRE: 21		ABSTAIN: 1
Connétable of St. Helier		Connétable of St. Lawrence		Deputy T.A. Coles
Connétable of St. Brelade		Connétable of St. Martin		
Connétable of St. Peter		Connétable of St. Clement		
Connétable of St. John		Connétable of St. Mary		
Connétable of Grouville		Connétable of St. Saviour		

Connétable of St. Ouen		Deputy G.P. Southern		
Deputy S.G. Luce		Deputy M. Tadier		
Deputy K.F. Morel		Deputy L.M.C. Doublet		
Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat		Deputy S.M. Ahier		
Deputy R.J. Ward		Deputy I. Gardiner		
Deputy C.S. Alves		Deputy K.L. Moore		
Deputy I.J. Gorst		Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf		
Deputy L.J. Farnham		Deputy Sir P.M. Bailhache		
Deputy S.Y. Mézec		Deputy D.J. Warr		
Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée		Deputy H.M. Miles		
Deputy M.R. Scott		Deputy C.D. Curtis		
Deputy L.V. Feltham		Deputy H.L. Jeune		
Deputy R.E. Binet		Deputy R.S. Kovacs		
Deputy M.E. Millar		Deputy A.F. Curtis		
Deputy T.J.A. Binet		Deputy K.M. Wilson		
Deputy M.R. Ferey		Deputy M.B. Andrews		
Deputy B. Ward				

The Greffier of the States:

Those voting pour, the Connétables of St. Helier, St. Brelade, St. Peter, St. John, Grouville, and the Deputies Luce, Morel, Le Hegarat, Ward, Alves, Gorst, Farnham, Mézec, Porée, Scott, Feltham, Millar, Binet, Ferey, and Ward, and online the Connétable of St. Ouen and Deputy Binet. Those voting contre, the Connétables of St. Lawrence, St. Martin, St. Clement, St. Mary, and St. Saviour, and Deputies Southern, Tadier, Ahier, Gardiner, Moore, Ozouf, Bailhache, Warr, Miles, Jeune, Curtis, Wilson, and Andrews, and voting online, Deputies Doublet, Curtis, and Kovac. Deputy Coles abstained.

2.12 Proposed Budget (Government Plan) 2025-2028 (P.51/2024): third amendment (P.51/2024 Amd. (3)) - Statistics Jersey Funding - as amended

The Bailiff:

We now come to continuing the debate on the 3rd amendment, now as amended by the Council of Ministers. Does any Member wish to speak on that amendment? Deputy Ozouf.

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

Yes. I am sorry. I am going to rise and use my right to speak and say that I believe that it is a shocking situation that we do not have quarterly G.V.A. as soon as possible. I think it is shocking that we have made a decision to cut Statistics Jersey because, if you do not produce information, you cannot basically send out messages of positivity of how well we should be doing. I am disappointed beyond belief that the Council of Ministers did not fully undertake and respect the views of Scrutiny, as evidenced by the Chief Statistician, and I have to vote for at least something, but I think it is absolutely a very, very sad and serious day that the Members of this Assembly are put in this position

where basically ... in my day the Treasury would have found a solution to find a way that is not a threatening issue which we have been faced with the Minister for Planning telling us he is having budgets taken away. There is more money about than just taking away money from a policy thing to do with the Planning Department and I do not know what to do, but it is just outrageous.

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

Just briefly, I know it is getting late now, but at a time when we are adopting, with some difficulty, the living wage, and we will want to know what is happening to incomes on the Island, I think people can expect the Income Distribution Survey, which would tell us what is happening to incomes on the Island, will be later than it would have been, and we may well be in a position where we do not know what the impact has been or will be on income distributions at all.

2.12.3 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

I rise also to voice my disappointment. I know we have had the vote, the previous vote, it seems very unsatisfactory, late after hours on the third day of debate, the fourth day of sitting, that we are in a halfway house now where we are voting a sum of money, which we cannot fully be convinced is going to be sufficient for Stats Jersey to be able to do their job properly. It is entirely likely that in fact this paltry sum, which we do not know if it is enough to cover the job, I know there is another budget of course, but this small increase will not necessarily be enough to do the job. It would not necessarily have been put back if it had not been for the original amendment. I look across to my colleague, Deputy Southern, it is possibly his penultimate budget, I do not know, I hope it is in the sense that ... **[Laughter]**. I mean that in a good way.

The Bailiff:

Deputy Tadier, I cannot immediately see that it can be a good way.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I hope he is here next year for the Budget; that is what I am implying. I hope this is not his last budget.

The Bailiff:

That means next year will be his last one.

[19:45]

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes.

The Bailiff:

Never mind, it is late.

Deputy M. Tadier:

My point is it is late.

The Bailiff:

It is late.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Let us rephrase that. I hope that he is still here next year for the Budget. The reason I hope that is because I hope that when there is ...

The Bailiff:

There we are, does anyone else ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

You can tell that we really love each other in our party, because I hope by next year it is better news that we can ...

The Bailiff:

We do have to move on.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes, but can I conclude my speech?

The Bailiff:

Yes, by all means, on the assumption it is on point.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I am hoping that next year we do get to a point where, whether it is an amendment coming from Scrutiny, a Scrutiny recommendation, or Government finally recognising that we need to give the full budget to the department that is going to do its job, a unit that is going to do its job, for all of those reasons that we can be in that position. I will just reiterate the fact that I think it is perhaps a byproduct of sitting late that that last vote was all over the shop. I think people will think about this in the morning, wondering whether they should have voted in a different way. We are where we are. I leave it to the mover of the proposition to say whether or not she thinks that this is a worthy proposition to support, I think it is, but it is probably not the full complement that she and her panel would have liked for the unit. So I leave the comments on that and excuse me anybody if there has been unintentional offence, that was not my intention.

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

I wanted to thank Members. It was a close vote. But I do hear the mood of the Assembly and I undertake, the Government undertakes to listen to that. I will speak to the Chief Statistician to make sure that he is comfortably resourced for what we have prioritised. In relation to G.V.A., I just want to respond to Deputy Ozouf, because I do agree it is an important statistic, but there is a one to 2-year development period before we can start getting those G.V.A. stats. So I will undertake to speak to the Chief Statistician to see that he is resourced to start the development work for the G.V.A. reporting. But I thank Members and I thank the Scrutiny Panel for bringing that. We undertake to listen and take on board the views on our Stats Unit and we will undertake to make sure they are resourced in line with our prioritisations.

The Bailiff:

Does any other Member wish to speak on the amendment? If no other Member wishes to speak then I close the debate and call upon Deputy Miles to respond.

2.12.5 Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade:

I would like to thank all the Members that have taken part in this debate. I am obviously disappointed that we arrive at the stage where we only have half a loaf. I also hear what the Chief Minister is saying and all I would say to him is that I hope that Council of Ministers can somehow find the necessary funds down the back of a sofa somewhere to reinstate that growth funding into the Statistics Unit as soon as possible so that they can undertake the very necessary functions that are required. In view of the lateness of the hour I am not going to say anything else other than - just not to confuse anybody - I would encourage people to support this proposition by voting pour. I call for the appel.

The Bailiff:

The appel is called for. I invite Members to return to their seats and I ask the Greffier to open the voting. The vote is on amendment 3 as amended. If Members have had the opportunity of casting their vote then I ask the Greffier to close the voting. The amendment has been adopted:

POUR: 42		CONTRE: 0		ABSTAIN: 1
Connétable of St. Helier				Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf
Connétable of St. Lawrence				
Connétable of St. Brelade				
Connétable of St. Peter				
Connétable of St. Martin				
Connétable of St. John				
Connétable of St. Clement				
Connétable of Grouville				
Connétable of St. Ouen				
Connétable of St. Mary				
Connétable of St. Saviour				
Deputy G.P. Southern				
Deputy M. Tadier				
Deputy S.G. Luce				
Deputy L.M.C. Doublet				
Deputy K.F. Morel				
Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat				
Deputy S.M. Ahier				
Deputy R.J. Ward				
Deputy C.S. Alves				
Deputy I. Gardiner				
Deputy I.J. Gorst				
Deputy L.J. Farnham				
Deputy K.L. Moore				
Deputy S.Y. Mézec				
Deputy Sir P.M. Bailhache				
Deputy T.A. Coles				
Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée				
Deputy D.J. Warr				

Deputy H.M. Miles				
Deputy M.R. Scott				
Deputy C.D. Curtis				
Deputy L.V. Feltham				
Deputy R.E. Binet				
Deputy H.L. Jeune				
Deputy M.E. Millar				
Deputy M.R. Ferey				
Deputy R.S. Kovacs				
Deputy A.F. Curtis				
Deputy B. Ward				
Deputy K.M. Wilson				
Deputy M.B. Andrews				

Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North:

Sir, we have 3 amendments left and I would like to propose the adjournment and to reconvene because I believe it would be a better way to make a decision tomorrow morning. So I am proposing the adjournment now and come back at 9.30 a.m. because only 3 amendments left.

The Bailiff:

It is always open to the Assembly to revise a procedural decision such as this and, therefore, that is a proper proposal. It is seconded Deputy? **[Seconded]** Does any Member wish to speak on the matter of the adjournment?

Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

I voted for us to finish at 5.30 p.m., the Assembly chose otherwise. I am up next; I am ready to go if Members want to and we may all be tired but we will have a long day tomorrow. We will have a complex Finance Law no doubt, we will have the substantive proposition, and that is my view.

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

I did say yesterday that staying until 8.30 p.m. makes bad decisions. People are thinking there is a bad decision being made, regardless of the way they voted and, therefore, I think it is time that we took a rest because I think people's brains are a bit addled. Many people are not here because they have other commitments and so on. I did mention that is always the risk when we stay this late. We have got the full day tomorrow, I know we have got a few things but we have 2 amendments to go through which we could get through quite rapidly if we really work at it, and then the rest of it. It is up to the Assembly.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Just a quick word of warning to the Deputy who is proposing that we stay is that that way he can almost guarantee he is going to lose his proposition. **[Laughter]**

The Bailiff:

I do not think that is imputing improper motives to other Members.

Deputy S.G. Luce:

Yesterday we agreed we would stay until 8.30 p.m. this evening. I do not want to be here at 5.00 p.m. tomorrow afternoon realising we have still got 2 or 3 hours to do. I have arrangements for tomorrow evening. I suggest we stay until 8.30 p.m.

Deputy M.R. Scott of St. Brelade:

Yes, I echo Deputy Luce insofar as I have made arrangements for tonight because we all were expecting to continue to debate until 8.30 p.m., I have as much energy as Deputy Curtis and I very much hope that the suggestion that his vote will not go through will not be regarded as undue pressure.

The Bailiff:

Does any other Member wish to speak on the matter of the adjournment? If no other Member wishes to speak then I close the debate and I am going to give Deputy Gardiner the chance to respond.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

No. To appel please.

The Bailiff:

The appel is called for. The vote is on whether we adjourn now and resume at the usual time tomorrow morning. A vote against and we will continue presumably until 8.30 p.m., a vote pour and we will adjourn now. I ask the Greffier to open the voting and Members to vote. If Members have had the opportunity of voting I ask the Greffier to close the voting. The proposition has been defeated:

POUR: 19		CONTRE: 22		ABSTAIN: 3
Connétable of St. Lawrence		Connétable of St. Helier		Connétable of St. Martin
Connétable of St. Clement		Connétable of St. Brelade		Deputy S.Y. Mézec
Deputy G.P. Southern		Connétable of St. Peter		Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée
Deputy M. Tadier		Connétable of St. John		
Deputy L.M.C. Doublet		Connétable of Grouville		
Deputy K.F. Morel		Connétable of St. Ouen		
Deputy S.M. Ahier		Connétable of St. Mary		
Deputy R.J. Ward		Connétable of St. Saviour		
Deputy C.S. Alves		Deputy S.G. Luce		
Deputy I. Gardiner		Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat		
Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf		Deputy I.J. Gorst		
Deputy T.A. Coles		Deputy L.J. Farnham		
Deputy H.M. Miles		Deputy K.L. Moore		
Deputy C.D. Curtis		Deputy Sir P.M. Bailhache		
Deputy L.V. Feltham		Deputy D.J. Warr		
Deputy H.L. Jeune		Deputy M.R. Scott		
Deputy R.S. Kovacs		Deputy R.E. Binet		

Deputy K.M. Wilson		Deputy M.E. Millar		
Deputy M.B. Andrews		Deputy T.J.A. Binet		
		Deputy M.R. Ferey		
		Deputy A.F. Curtis		
		Deputy B. Ward		

We carry on.

Connétable M.A. Labey of Grouville:

I just wanted to propose a vote of thank you to the Greffe and her staff for providing us with wonderful refreshments at 5.30 p.m., thank you. **[Approbation]**

The Bailiff:

Jolly good. But you did hear we are carrying on? **[Laughter]**

The Connétable of Grouville:

Yes, Sir.

The Bailiff:

It just seemed like someone who was about to leave and thought the whole thing was over.

2.13 Proposed Budget (Government Plan) 2025-2028 (P.51/2024): twenty-first amendment (P.51/2024 Amd. (21)) - Transform Project

The Bailiff:

Very well, the next item is the twenty-first amendment, proposed by Deputy Curtis. I ask the Greffier to read the amendment.

The Greffier of the States:

Paragraph (o) - after the words, “as set out in the Appendix to the accompanying Report” insert the words, “, except that - (i) on page 53, for Table 19 there should be substituted the following table, and all references to the value of the Social Security Fund should be adjusted accordingly; and (ii) on page 53, after Table 19, there should be inserted the words “The Project Total for the Benefits and Payments (Transform) project has been reduced by £10,000,000, reflected in a decrease of £4,500,000 in each of 2026 and 2027, and a £1,000,000 decrease in 2028. This reduction is implemented to restore the approximate historic budget for the project and to ensure value for money. It will also result in an increased balance of the Social Security fund”.”

2.13.1 Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

I thank the Assembly for remaining to their commitment from the previous vote. I see this amendment slightly differently to many of the ones we have debated in that the hard work to win or lose this I do not feel is mine, I think it is the Minister for Social Security’s, for this is not an amendment to take money and reallocate it, it is not an amendment to increase a budget; it is an amendment that seeks justification and a mandate for an increase in spend. Those who have read my report will see the summary, quite brief as I hope my speeches are, that the Customer and Local Services programme, Transform, has a budget proposed to increase in this Budget by circa £10 million, 50 per cent of the current approved budget. At the time no information within the Budget justifies this, in fact I will read the only paragraph in the Budget on this: “A major new I.T. project is ongoing to specify and implement a new transformational benefit system and it is planned that this project will complete in 2027. This represents a significant capital investment by the fund, which

will provide a new digital platform to improve customer service and efficient management of social security benefit for many years to come.” I am sure for many Members they would not have looked to the table to see a project total of £31 million and think: “Well, what was it last year?” Whereas any other capital project that saw a change in its capital allocation featured in a deliberate table, but this is a project funded from the Social Security Fund so it was not in that table. I do not blame Members or Scrutiny for not picking up on the fact. So we are talking about £10 million year on year. Thanks to the wonderful work of Statistics Jersey we can put that into comparison. Compared to the last debate we had, the funding that the Corporate Services Panel wanted would have funded 63 years of additional funding. Or, if we go to the last average earnings report from June, the amount we are talking about is 226 years of the median paid worker in Jersey. No, that is not the amount to run the project, that is the increase year on year. I do not have a huge amount to say on this. It is not for me to defend that increase; it is for the Minister for Social Security. The Minister has provided a comments paper to justify that but I am still unconvinced and I hope Members receive sufficient justification and assurance during her speech here to be able to put their button contre on this amendment. If they are not assured that a £10 million increase in this Budget is a prudent spend of money, has been well evaluated, then I am sure they will vote pour and the Minister will seek additional funding. A few points I would make before I open this for debate. Firstly, around the value of asking for more. Now, we have debated commercial sensitivity today and we have debated keeping budgets low and constrained to help with procurement, so in some ways I feel I help the Minister. A constrained budget focuses the mind and focuses procurement, something many Ministers have argued for today, so I may get some support from them. Secondly, the Minister may provide a case that doing nothing will cost us more. Well, brilliant, I want to hear that case. The budget is not a place to make large changes to what we spend without justification. I accept that the budget has many lines to justify to allocate funding but we must be informed when we make those decisions. So, I did not need to prepare a speech for this, Members have a report and Members have a Minister who I am sure will justify £10 million increase year on year. With that I make the proposition and I look forward to those arguments.

The Bailiff:

Is the amendment seconded? **[Seconded]**

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

Firstly I just want to correct what we have just heard from the proposer of the amendment because this is a one-off programme, this is not an annual year on year £10 million ongoing increase. The systems being replaced are some of the most critical of our I.T. infrastructure. They administer almost £450 million of benefits payments every year. These are lifeline benefits that people rely on week on week, and we simply cannot afford the risk of the systems failing. I can understand the Deputy’s concern about the increase in budget. I had similar concerns myself when officers came and made the request of me, and I want to give the Assembly confidence that I and the Council of Ministers has taken a diligent approach ahead of my own approval of the Budget.

[20:00]

When the budget request first came to me my initial reaction was to challenge my officers. I also convened a meeting of the political oversight group and we had the helpful addition of Constable Jehan on to that group at that time as well, and that group consists of myself, the Minister for Treasury and Resources, Constable Jehan and Deputy Alves as Assistant Chief Minister. I think you will all agree that we are a challenging group of people and we did not hold back on our questions to the officers. But the fact of the matter is that previous delays have led to costs going up and our current systems have reached their end of life. I will remind you again that these are lifeline systems. This reminds me of being an officer in the department. I know that Deputy Kovacs will be listening in but her and I have very practical experience of the system and how aged it is, and a lot of the risks

associated with the system. But also I recall that these systems were due to be replaced and this programme was due to start in around 2018 in the Charlie Parker era. In fact the replacement programme was delayed at that point in time because Charlie Parker had other priorities, including the target operating model, so officers were moved off this programme and on to that. Since that time the global costs of I.T. have gone up and that has resulted in this required increase in budget. Our current system is over 20 years old. It has significant technological risks and it will soon be incompatible with future versions of Windows. If we do not make these changes now we risk severe disruption to benefit payments for some of our most vulnerable Islanders. Our current processes are also outdated. The system currently requires paper forms to be filled in, officers to waste time copying and pasting from one system to another. There are real efficiencies to be made and I have no doubt that the new systems will be saving us money in the longer term. Quite simply, we can do much better, and this programme gives us the opportunity to deliver a modern, efficient and reliable benefit system. I do want to talk about some of the other steps that I took before approving this increase in budget. One of the most important people to speak to I felt was the Comptroller and Auditor General, and get her advice about lessons learned from previous I.T. projects. One of the bits of advice that she gave me is to take care about underbudgeting for I.T. projects such as this. To take care that we had the necessary budget in place so that all of the benefits that we hope to realise can indeed be realised. She cautioned about some of the other problems that have happened with other similar I.T. projects such as projects being cut due to the budgets not being available. So I took that advice very, very seriously and that was key in part of my decision to approve the budget. Another thing - and this was on the advice of Constable Jehan, who has been through many procurement processes - was to seek the advice of other jurisdictions. So we met with both the Isle of Man and Guernsey to see whether there was any way in which we could work together, or even if we may be able to utilise any systems that they currently use. So we went down that avenue to see whether there are any savings that could be made, but it turned out that where we were in the procurement process and where they were in theirs, it was not a time where we could work together and make joint savings across jurisdictions. We are now ending the pointy end of our procurement process and cutting the budget at this point in time would put that at risk. But what I do want to give Members assurance of is I have been very firm with senior officers, I have made it very clear that this is a budget; it is not a blank cheque and carte blanche to spend it all. I will be holding senior officers accountable for them being as efficient and effective as possible, and I give them the challenge to come in under budget. But cutting the budget at this point in time would place this significant programme for our I.T. infrastructure at risk. I ask Members to trust me as a Minister, trust the political oversight group, but also trust the scrutiny processes that we have in place. I am pleased that this programme is on the work programme of the Comptroller and Auditor General for next year. I look forward to reading her report and taking her recommendations seriously. I also know that through that process it means that the Public Accounts Committee will receive that report, and I expect them to fully scrutinise the work of my department in this respect. So I am confident that we have relevant, good and strong political oversight. I am confident that we have got strong scrutiny and I am confident that I will not hold back in holding my senior officers to account for every pound that is spent. Thank you. **[Approval]**

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

I will be brief. I would just like to assure Deputy Curtis that there has been robust challenge of the process, and I have been encouraged and reassured by our Chief Information Officer. The difference between this programme and the programme that I worked with Deputy Curtis on is the politicians are being listened to, and I cannot say that was the case when Deputy Curtis and I worked together, although we tried very hard. We did look at joint working, as the Minister has said, whether we could sell the service in the future, whether we could share costs, but that did not prove to be possible. But I do think just by starting up those conversations with the other 2 islands there will be benefits going forward, and that was great that we could put those introductions in place. Where we are we

cannot accept the risk of having a key system unsupported when a system failure would have a catastrophic impact. The current system is used to pay pensioners and other people who receive benefits such as income support. I urge Members to reject this amendment.

2.13.4 Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

I am fully aware that the Minister is of course a former chair of the Public Accounts Committee so it is heartening to know that she has sought advice from the Comptroller and Auditor General, because we are all too aware of the recommendations the Auditor General has given on previous I.T. projects, which have not filled us as Members with huge amounts of confidence because there are certainly lessons to have learned. So I am grateful to the Minister for sharing some of that experience with us. However, I just remind Members that this is not a question of whether or not to continue with this project. I think there is no doubt that the project needs to be done. It is simply about making sure that the money attributed to it in this increase, which was unexpected, is accounted for and explained adequately to us as Members so that we have assurance that it is being well spent and that we have truly learned our lessons from the issues that have occurred in previous projects. I remain listening, I think, to the Ministers. This is a huge amount of money. We have just spent a previous debate arguing over a much, much smaller amount of money and here we are, £10 million, and also breaking the rule set by another Minister on another major capital project - because this is a major capital project - and sharing our full budget for all to know it before we agree the tender process. It is a difficult one and I think Members should be extremely careful if they are considering voting against Deputy Curtis here.

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

I understand the desire to save money but this amendment does not properly consider the serious consequences of cutting a large amount from a project that is so vital to our public services and to the Islanders who depend on them. I do not know how many of the States Members did work with the current Customer and Local Services computer system to see its limitation, so I did, and having ...

The Bailiff:

Deputy, I am afraid I am getting indication from Members that they cannot understand what you are saying and cannot hear you properly. I am not sure if that is just one or 2 Members or if that is the general view. Perhaps people could indicate. If I could ask Members to put their light on if they are having any difficulty following what the Deputy is saying. Yes, I am afraid that is almost everyone that cannot make out what you are saying, Deputy, and I should alert you to that. Deputy Kovacs?

Deputy R.S. Kovacs:

Can you hear me now?

The Bailiff:

Yes. So far that seems to be better so if you would like to continue.

Deputy R.S. Kovacs:

As I was saying, I do not know how many of the States Members did work with the current Customer and Local Services system, because I did, and having worked directly with the NESSI system for almost 3 years in income support I have seen how frustrating and difficult it is to manage an outdated system. Not only does it limit the ability of employees to do their work efficiently, but it also causes delays and errors that directly impact Islanders financially. Many times while helping Islanders with their claims the system crashed and on several occasions we lost hours of important work that could not be recovered. This is not just an inconvenience, it severely affects the quality and the efficiency of the services we provide. The Transform project is not just another I.T. upgrade; it is a much needed overhaul of our Social Security system. The system handles far more than just technical

tasks, it holds the personal tax and contributions information of every person on the Island, it supports pensions, income support, long-term care, and other benefits that total almost half a billion pounds each year. But this project is not just about upgrading benefits. The Transform project also includes work to bring together the recording of contributions and our tax information within the same system. Right now these crucial pieces of information are kept separate and this lack of integration means the Treasury does not have a complete up to date picture of each individual's contributions and tax payments. This lack of visibility results in duplicating work for both employees and Islanders. Individuals are often required to update their information multiple times and the public services staff must process the same data repeatedly. If we get this wrong it could stop Islanders from receiving payments on time or correctly, whether it is pensioners waiting for their old age pension or families needing income support. More importantly, this lack of integration makes it harder for us to verify if employers are making the correct contributions for their employees, and the information ... currently service is very late, just a manual check. This is the kind of inefficiency that we cannot afford to maintain in our public services. In my view this system is more important than any other I.T. system in the public sector. We have a responsibility to make sure we get it right because a mistake could have disastrous effects for those who depend on it. Yes, a large project like this can be expensive and we cannot always predict all the costs up front, but we are not buying an off the shelf product; we need a system that fits our Island's specific needs and that comes with its own set of challenges. But let us be clear, cutting the budget for this project will not save money in the long run, it will only delay the work and - as we have seen with past projects - cutting corners will lead to higher costs down the road. We have already seen delays in this project, partly due to insufficient funding and resources. Every additional delay just adds to the problems caused by the old NESSI system; a failing system we still rely upon. Right now we are at a critical point. NESSI is so outdated that it is becoming a serious risk. The system is running on old technology that no longer works properly and is no longer supported.

[20:15]

We cannot afford to keep using it until it crashes completely, leaving thousands of Islanders without the benefit they need. If we support this amendment we risk undoing the progress we have made. It could push back the Transform project even further and the costs will only rise. Instead let us stay focused on providing the best public services we can with a modern system that works faster, smarter, and more efficiently. A system that will improve how benefits are processed, give us better data, and most importantly ensure that Islanders who rely on these services can count on them. I ask you to look beyond the immediate savings this amendment suggests. Let us stay committed to the long-term goal of providing a system that works for all Islanders and supports the important work for Customer and Local Service. Please reject this amendment. Let us keep the Transform project moving forward with the right funding so we can deliver a system that will benefit Islanders, increase productivity in the department, and improve the level of service for the public. Thank you.

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

"Trust me; I am the Minister." Words which I believe we should invariably give a lot of consideration to, and I will certainly pause for thought before I vote on this one.

2.13.7 Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade:

I have a very quick question. I know the Minister for Social Security has already spoken but perhaps one of the Ministers could address the question. We have been told what the money is for but we have not been told why there is such an increase, and that is what I am failing to pick up from the speeches. What has caused the increase from £21 million to £31 million after the feasibility study? If somebody could just please explain the ingredients of this increase.

2.13.8 Deputy Sir P.M. Bailhache of St. Clement:

I am not sure that the explanation that the Minister has given us is very comforting, but one thing that I would like to say is that an increase in the budget from £20 million to £30 million is a very significant increase, and it rather worries one and makes one think perhaps that next year it will be £30 million to £40 million. It would be helpful if those who put this Budget together could anticipate that somebody awkward like Deputy Curtis might see that there was a rat to be smelled here, and might give a little bit more information in the body of the Budget so that the kind of information that the Minister has in fact given us could have been put in the Budget beforehand. Then we might have been able to go home at 8.00 p.m.

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

I can help with that. In the comments paper it does give reasons for that and it also gives a link to a letter to the Social Security Scrutiny Panel which details the increase in cost. I read that myself because I was asking the same question. So there is some detail there if Members want to look at it. There are a couple of things I will mention. We are in a good position of having 2 Members of the Assembly who worked in C.L.S. (Customer Local Services) and used this system; one of them being the Minister herself who has had hands on experience of how this does not work and the problems that has caused. I think all of us in this Assembly would have had hands on experience with our constituents and trying to help them to deal with their claims, and so often it is because information has been lost or it has been given in good faith and then we have got overpayments - let us not talk about overpayments again, I have done that enough in this Assembly. There is a desperate need to improve the system. There are 2 things that we do also need to remember, as was mentioned; this is an allocation of money but if it is not spent it will not be spent. I think that is a really important thing in everything that we do in our budgeting. This is a one-off payment for this year. We have to make a decision in this Assembly today as to whether we are going to put a project at risk - and certainly there is a genuine danger that the system that pays our pensions and all these benefits which are so essential to the Island simply stops working, we have seen errors with it and we have seen the impact, as Deputies I know we do that all of the time - or we have trust in the processes that are going on with the political oversight group. It is interesting to see that Constable Jehan is saying they are being listened to for once and that there is an influence there. I know the people involved in this and I know they are very direct in their approaches at times, and I certainly know if there are questions they are going to take them on, I am pleased to see that happening. I do know that there has been an issue with trust for a while in the Assembly but I think this is too important for so many people on the Island to take that risk now, and I would urge people to reject the amendment, let the Minister get on with it. P.A.C. will oversee, Scrutiny will oversee, the C. and A.G. in the background is working on this. Those are the areas where they will feed back to this Assembly, particularly the C. & A.G., and I know she is about to do quite a lot of work in these and other areas as well. So I think at this time we can reject this amendment and we can be certain that there is a process going on and there is a specific need for this money to get this Transform programme up and running for our social security, our pensions, for that area of our Island. That is what it is for. So I urge Members to reject the amendment for now please, thank you.

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

I wanted to quickly reinforce a point that the Transform programme will replace the Government's legacy benefit administration systems and enable significant essential administrative efficiencies. If £10 million is cut from the Transform budget the programme will not be able to continue as planned. There would be significant risk to the ongoing delivery of essential payments in benefits and pensions to thousands of Islanders. The benefits administered through the system total approximately £439 million; I think Members should really pay heed to that. The team have done an awful lot of work on the details. I understand the contract is a local provider, I am led to believe, and if we stop this there are very, very serious ramifications for the delivery of those essential payments. I just wanted to make that point, thank you.

The Bailiff:

Does any other Member wish to speak on this amendment? If no other Member wishes to speak then I close the debate. Deputy Curtis, are you able to finish in the minutes we have available to us before we have resolved to adjourn? Very well, then I call on you to respond.

2.13.11 Deputy A.F. Curtis:

I make the time 8.23 p.m. so that gives me 7 minutes. I thank Members who spoke on this and I thank those who ask are they assured and do they have trust. Firstly, I will turn to the comments brought up by Deputy Rob Ward. Yes, there is a comments paper. Yes, it has some details. Are the details sufficient? I turn to the letter he refers to, to the Health and Social Security Scrutiny Panel, in their letter of 28th October. Question 8 by the panel: "The proposed allocation of £9.899 million for 2025 is considerable more than last year's projection of £4.046 million for the same year, and similarly high increases in 2026. What is the reason for the increase?" This is where we hope we find the detail. The 3 lines of words in here say: "The key factors are primarily driven by increases in both market costs and internal staff costs. The forecast for 2025 will be reevaluated following completion of commercial negotiations and a full business case." So we do not even know the 2025 cost, which is fair, we have not finished the procurement. But is that detail as to changing market conditions? I would note that the comments paper itself talks about the inflation and that the project has been going for quite some time. Indeed, those who read the 2021 Government Plan will see the line: "A new benefits and payments system to enable Customer and Local Services to provide a better way to support Islanders." Remarkably similar to the line from the Budget 2025. I want to point out on the inflation that the Budget in the Government Plan 2024-2027 was not just a carryover from the 2023 budget, was not just a carryover from the 2022 budget, and was not a carryover from the 2021. It was a deliberate recalculation during 2023 by the team who fundamentally changed the scope and profiling of how to deliver the project. That is in my amendment report. These are not figures 5 years out of date; this is a one year change in budget forecast of £10 million, 50 per cent. First of all, to address then the Minister for Social Security, I am not talking about a year on year spend, £10 million, £10 million; I am saying that in one year's difference between one budget and the next, the project requires £10 million more in its estimations. I hear the comments by Ministers, the Chief Minister, Deputy Kovacs, about the importance of the system. I never question in my amendment whether the system is important, merely that this Assembly must retain good governance over spending. I would have perhaps hoped to hear how the I.T. market has increased its hourly rate by 50 per cent to reflect this, or that the scope identified by the project - which is incredibly advanced since we have already gone to tender - has changed since the year before. These were not provided as reasons, just that inflated costs in the market have caused this. This comes at a time when frankly those who look forward ... and we had a debate about A.I., well the A.I. for writing software has advanced more in the last 2 years than perhaps in the last 20. You can ask it to write a function, design a user interface, and it achieves a huge amount and the productivity gains seen can be huge. Where is the waiting for new methods of I.T. delivery? I cannot provide any more information than Members have heard today from Ministers and from those who have used the system. I am not questioning the value of the system but we have to be prudent with our spending. We have seen many projects which start with one budget and we recognise, with evidence before us, that more money is needed. Indeed, when we approved the last Government Plan we did not approve the total amount for the hospital, we approved enough to deliver this year, knowing we would come back and ask for more. I think what we would be approving if we approved this amendment would be sufficient to get started and would give the Minister sufficient time to evaluate all the options. It would not put the project at jeopardy; it would focus the mind and ensure that the Assembly, when it makes its decisions, has all the evidence in front of it. It is hard for some of us. We all have a different experience, and I will have no shame in saying that my expertise and experience is in the delivery of modern I.T. systems, particularly those that are what we call greenfield, starting afresh, like a rip out and replacement of the Transform system. So I have to scrutinise this from the outside and I have to

be assured that the money goes on the right things, on the developers, on the architect, and on those who manage change as well, but to the right proportions in the right way. Unfortunately from what I have heard I am not yet assured. I may need more evidence - given this is my background - than other Members. They may be happy to trust the Minister but I ask them, in trusting the Minister did they have the facts or are they happy to wait another year or even a few months for the information to come in and for this Assembly to make the decision on a £10 million increase in one project's budget, 50 per cent of last year's forecast, without it justified. Thank you, and I call for the appel.

The Bailiff:

The appel is called for. I invite Members to return to their seats and the vote is on amendment 21. I ask the Greffier to open the voting and Members to vote. If Members have had the opportunity of casting their vote then I ask the Greffier to close the voting. The amendment has been defeated:

POUR: 12		CONTRE: 29		ABSTAIN: 1
Connétable of St. Mary		Connétable of St. Helier		Connétable of St. Lawrence
Deputy S.M. Ahier		Connétable of St. Brelade		
Deputy I. Gardiner		Connétable of St. Peter		
Deputy K.L. Moore		Connétable of St. Martin		
Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf		Connétable of St. John		
Deputy D.J. Warr		Connétable of St. Clement		
Deputy H.M. Miles		Connétable of Grouville		
Deputy H.L. Jeune		Connétable of St. Ouen		
Deputy A.F. Curtis		Connétable of St. Saviour		
Deputy B. Ward		Deputy G.P. Southern		
Deputy K.M. Wilson		Deputy L.M.C. Doublet		
Deputy M.B. Andrews		Deputy K.F. Morel		
		Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat		
		Deputy R.J. Ward		
		Deputy C.S. Alves		
		Deputy I.J. Gorst		
		Deputy L.J. Farnham		
		Deputy S.Y. Mézec		
		Deputy Sir P.M. Bailhache		
		Deputy T.A. Coles		
		Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée		
		Deputy M.R. Scott		
		Deputy C.D. Curtis		

		Deputy L.V. Feltham		
		Deputy R.E. Binet		
		Deputy M.E. Millar		
		Deputy T.J.A. Binet		
		Deputy M.R. Ferey		
		Deputy R.S. Kovacs		

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Can I propose the adjournment, please?

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

Can we have names please?

The Greffier of the States:

Those voting pour: the Connétable of St. Mary; Deputies Ahier, Gardiner, Moore, Ozouf, Warr, Miles, Jeune, Curtis, Ward, Wilson and Andrews. The abstention was the Connétable of St. Lawrence. Those voting contre: the Connétables of St. Helier, St. Brelade, St. Peter, St. Martin, St. John, St. Clement, Grouville and St. Saviour; and Deputies Southern, Morel, Le Hegarat, Ward, Alves, Gorst, Farnham, Mézec, Bailhache, Coles, Porée, Scott, Feltham, Millar, Binet, Ferey, and online the Connétable of St. Ouen, Deputy Kovacs, Deputy Curtis, Deputy Binet and Deputy Doublet.

The Bailiff:

Very well, the Assembly stands adjourned until 9.30 a.m. tomorrow morning.

ADJOURNMENT

[20:30]