

2024.05.21

3.4. Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North of the Minister for Treasury and Resources regarding growth expenditure in Government Plans. (OQ.89/2024)

Will the Minister state the total amount of growth expenditure that has been agreed by the Assembly through the adoption of the last 5 Government Plans?

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

I thank the Deputy for his question. Growth has been set out separately in respect of Government Plans from 2020 to the current Government Plan for 2024-2027. Adding up those amounts gives a total of £276 million in revenue growth to budgets that have been agreed by the Assembly over the last 5 years. This amount relates to growth requests for new funding and excludes other movements from budgets, such as pay awards and inflation, which are also set out separately in Government Plans.

3.4.1 Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Last week, the Minister told Scrutiny that there would be no growth bids as part of the Government Plan process. Can Members therefore assume that if this question is asked again next year, the total number will have not gone up?

Deputy E. Millar:

No, I cannot say that because there will be ... the Council of Ministers have agreed that there will be growth bids only in relation to the delivery of the C.S.P. (Common Strategic Policy), which we will be debating later today. There may be some growth bids. There will also be growth for inflation and things like pay awards and central costs, but we should not see significant growth. The C.S.P. is clear that we are going to try to constrain the growth in public spending, to reduce spend on consultants, and to reprioritise budget so far as possible. So we are very much committed to limiting growth in the future or certainly for the next 2 years.

3.4.2 Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

I appreciate the answer from the Minister, but I would also point out that she said in her first answer that inflation and pay awards were not included as part of the figure, so to say that they may be part of it I do not think adds up entirely.

[10:15]

What would the Minister define as significant growth, given that she has just said that there will not be significant growth? What is the definition of significant growth?

Deputy E. Millar:

No, I cannot give you a definition of "significant growth" because it very much depends on what we need to deliver the C.S.P. However, we will be seeking to control expenditure, to reprioritise and to stay within our means.

3.4.3 Deputy J. Renouf:

Putting together what the Minister said at Scrutiny last week and today, what I am understanding is that growth bids will be allowed in relation to the Common Strategic Policy but will not be allowed in relation to any other government department or bids from other departments. Can she confirm that this is the case and that all Ministers have signed up to this plan?

Deputy E. Millar:

Yes, I believe that Ministers have agreed to that.

3.4.4 Deputy I. Gardiner:

Would the Minister clarify whether the subsidy for the businesses to meet the commitments for the living wage would be included in the bid gross, and they will be relevant?

Deputy E. Millar:

I am not sure that that is supplementary. The question was about the last 5 years, so we are now looking at the coming year, so I am not entirely sure that is supplemental.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Yes, do you have another question to ask instead?

Deputy I. Gardiner:

No, it was a supplemental for the answer of the Minister for Treasury and Resources. It is a question because of the answer that the Minister for Treasury and Resources gave.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I will allow the question then.

Deputy E. Millar:

I believe that funding will be met from existing budgets, but we are only just starting the Government Plan process, and I cannot discuss every possible initiative that may be on the table.

3.4.5 Deputy I. Gardiner:

If I understood this correctly, the subsidy for the businesses to meet the commitment for the living wage should be met from the existing departmental budgets, and, if yes, does it mean that we will cut services within the existing department budget?

Deputy E. Millar:

We are talking about 2025 onwards. We have talked about reprioritising funding and making sure that we are using the best use of our funding and not necessarily creating new funding. As I say again, we are only just in the early stages of the Government Plan process, so I cannot give you answers because we have not had those detailed discussions.