



## **Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel**

### **Acceptance of Cash Payment Review**

### **Witness: Jersey Consumer Council**

Wednesday, 21st August 2024

**Panel:**

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade (Chair)

Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North

**Witness:**

Mr. C. Walker, Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council

[11:02]

**Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade (Chair):**

Welcome to this session with the Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel today. This is part of the acceptance of cash review that we are carrying out. It is a public hearing, so we are being live streamed and this is being recorded. There may be thousands watching at the moment, we do not know. But certainly it is there for posterity and also for those following the review panel. I will introduce ourselves and I will let you do the same in a moment. I am Deputy Montfort Tadier, I am the chair of this panel.

**Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North:**

I am Deputy Max Andrews, panel member.

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

Good morning, both. I am Carl Walker, chairman of Jersey's Consumer Council.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Thank you. Welcome and thank you for coming in. I am just going to draw your attention to this. You may have been at Scrutiny hearings before. This just says that you are covered ... what we say and what you say is covered by parliamentary privilege. As long as you know what you are saying you believe to be true, then that is a good basis for us to proceed. I hope that is all clear.

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

Yes, okay. No problem.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Thank you. Thanks for coming in today. We can keep this fairly informal, although it is a formal hearing. Could you give us a brief outline of what it is that the Consumer Council does in a few sentences?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

Sure. We are an arm's-length organisation wholly funded by the Government of Jersey. We aim to give a voice to consumers. We do not have any statutory powers or ability to force change. We simply lobby and try and stand up for consumers and make sure that decision makers are hearing the voice of consumers. That is sort of our headline ... one of our headline roles. But on a day-to-day basis, and literally I mean day-to-day, we are helping consumers who come to us directly with their own query, whether that might be trying to help disputing an insurance claim to tracking a lost bag from an airline or trying to address a shop that is refusing to accept a returned good. Whatever it might be, we are either getting involved, offering advice or signposting individuals to other agencies that might be able to help, such as Trading Standards or J.C.R.A. (Jersey Competition Regulatory Authority) whatever it might be, the Financial Ombudsman.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Thank you. In this particular case, we are looking at a fairly narrow subject, but it is one which seems to have attracted quite a lot of interest in terms of the submission. Certainly, it is more than we might normally get for your average Scrutiny review. We also accept it is self-selecting, so people who have done the survey can choose to do so and make submissions. Again, we thank you for your submission. If I maybe ask a general question about the voice of the consumer in this particular area: do you have a feel for what that voice is and what the themes are that are coming out from consumers around the ability to use cash or cards to pay for things?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

It is an interesting one because I think from a consumer perspective, you would assume that we would be very much in favour of digital forms of payment for a number of reasons. It is consumer friendly. We can all recall the time when we were younger or when you could not go shopping in

town without calling at a bank first, whether that is with your bank book or whether it is trying to find ... whether it was using a cash till to withdraw your cash to then go and spend it, and then you have run out of money you have got to go back again, so it is far more convenient. It creates a digital record of everything, so in this day and age when not everybody wants to issue a receipt, or you might have lost your receipt, you have still got proof of purchase. If you lose your bank card, you are covered to a degree from any losses, whereas if you lose ... if cash falls out of your pocket, the chances are it is gone. It also allows you to build up ... importantly as well, I think it allows you to build up a credit - if you are using a credit card - history which will help you later in life when you might be applying for a mortgage or for a loan or whatever it might be. I think from a consumer's perspective too, is the benefits of using credit cards, especially in this day and age when they are competing for business, is the ability to earn other things beyond just having a piece of plastic. So earning air miles, earning points, there are a lot of benefits to paying digitally. However, cash still helps those people who just simply cannot budget. There are Islanders, there are people who rely on being given cash, a certain amount of cash or withdrawing a certain amount of cash, and doing their best to spend that. At least they then know, because there is a danger when you are spending plastic and you tap and you tap and you tap and it quickly adds up and before you know it you have spent far more than you thought you had. Cash allows people to manage their budgets hugely. There are also members of the community who for one reason or another do not have a bank account or are not allowed to have a bank card. Now that might be because ... that can range from everything from somebody potentially who may have an addiction, like a gambling addict who wants to completely step away from the ability to keep gambling, right through to potentially the victim of domestic abuse who ... somebody is controlling and they are not allowing them to go and spend and they still need some portion of freedom or whatever it might be, and also people who have been declared bankrupt potentially will struggle to get a bank account in the future, they will rely on cash. I think there is still quite a proportion of the community who are paid in cash, particularly part-time workers, youngsters, bar workers, whatever it might be, hospitality; they might get paid in cash weekly. They still want to be able to spend that cash if they can. As we mentioned in our submission, then there is this section of community who just for one reason or another do not have access to modern digital forms of payment and life and society in a way. I think, digressing slightly, the acceleration towards online shopping that happened during COVID has isolated a proportion of our community who either do not have access to the internet or cannot afford to have access. People think the internet is cheap or relatively cheap, but you still need to buy a phone or a computer or have work done in your house or whatever it is to get Wi-Fi or buy a mobile phone. I think those people are being completely left behind and COVID has forced that because prior to COVID I think we had a small proportion of the community who would do all of their shopping online or regularly, including food. We had a bulk of the Islanders who would dip their toe in, potentially for birthday presents, Christmas, the odd item that they could not find locally, and we had a proportion who never went near online shopping. COVID then accelerated that group of people that regularly shopped

online to suddenly the majority of people now will regularly shop online or look online first or do their research first and buy it out of convenience. These people have been completely left behind and you cannot call even potentially a Government department or a retailer or a call centre or whatever it might be, without being met by a voicemail telling you: "We are experiencing a high volume of calls, go online, it is a lot easier", and they do not have the internet. Everybody is pushing everybody online, which ultimately will be the way everybody goes; we are just ahead of our time. We often get consumers coming to us who are struggling with certain aspects of life but because they just cannot fix it, when a younger person or somebody who has access to the internet could do it quite easily. So I think to go back to your original question, from a Consumer Council perspective I think we are probably on the fence. We are shouting for both sides. There are arguments for cards, and certainly from a business perspective the cost of ... but there are costs for them accepting cards, but there are costs for them to go into the bank and paying in their money, to Islanders wanting cash as well. We think consumer behaviour will ultimately decide the route it goes.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

There are 2 schools of thought, really. There is a common thought which is understandable, which is cash is going to be phased out organically even if Government decides it does not have a policy on that and that is a question of time. It may be a number of years, it could be sooner or later. Another school of thought is that cash is quite resilient and it is going to be around for quite a long time and that cash is still issued by Governments ultimately and they have got an interest in keeping it around. I am not sure which of those is true, if either. I suppose it has got to be one. I also understand the Consumer Council's point that really you have got to be aware of both sides because card is convenient, and I think if we talk about losing cash when in fact if we were to lose contactless, I know that that would inconvenience so many people of course. I do not think that is going to happen. When it comes down to this, I suppose there is a line in your submission which is worth going to: "The majority view of the Council is that the Government should avoid trying to force consumer behaviour on this matter and should instead allow market forces and unrestricted consumer habits to dictate the future of transactions." Do I understand from that that you would be reluctant to suggest that Government should mandate businesses to accept cash, for example?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

Yes, I think it would be very difficult to do that. Obviously it is possible but you have got to think about the number of retailers that there are. We need to remember that consumers either directly or indirectly can influence how our retail sector looks, feels, smells. Think about how many small supermarkets there are now in the town centre compared to how many there were 20 years ago. The days of the big Saturday shop have gone. Consumers want to do smaller top-up shops. Now, that is either because they cannot afford a huge one-off shop once a week or just out of convenience. It is just the way life has changed. Town has evolved and changed organically because of that. In

the same way we feel, or the majority view of the Council is, that trying to force one route or the other would not work, and it would be better to allow consumer behaviour to dictate that. If a consumer walked into a shop and wanted to buy a cup of coffee, and that place did not accept cash, and my phone was dead and I did not have cash in my ... sorry, and it did not accept cash, and I only had cash in my pocket, I would walk out and I would go and buy coffee somewhere else. I am sure that ...

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

We get that argument, and we have heard that before. We put it to one witness yesterday who said that is fine up until the point that all coffee shops do not take cash. Of course, if there is no Government intervention, we get to the point where actually it is not just coffee shops, there are lots of places where you just cannot pay cash, and then if nothing has been done about the exclusion of certain sections in the community, they just find that there are certain shops where they cannot go and therefore there is almost an apartheid system. If you are poor, if you are marginalised or if neither of those but you just do not have a bank account and cash is your only option, we have then got a divided community where you have got haves and have nots.

[11:15]

I would say from a Government point of view, it is a legitimate position for a Government to take, if it wished to, to say we are going to cater for the rights of the minority and of course there is also the rights of the business community. From a Consumer Council point of view, was that something that you have taken into account and consider, if I were to ask you, how do we cater for the rights of the minority in that situation where more and more places are not taking cash?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

I am here to represent the view of the Council and that was the majority view. But I get the point, it is a strong argument, that ...

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Were there voices in the Council who had contrary views? So when you say a majority view ...

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

Yes, there were. But I have got to try and take ...

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

I am not trying to catch you out.

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

No, I have got to try and take the majority of it. I get that. But it is a good point, but I do not know what is easier. For the Government to try and legislate that a retailer has to take cash or whether the Government comes up with some sort of facility that allows people who are cash only to deposit that cash in return for a COVID-style Mastercard that everybody got. But then you become a bank and then it becomes a bit of a red-tape nightmare. I do not know.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Thank you. That is useful. The next question is: have there been any difficult situations where you have had to advocate, you or the Council, on behalf of consumers on this issue? An example might be somebody is contacting you and saying: "Look, I cannot go and use my cash in this place where I went to buy something", it might have been: "I filled up with petrol. I bought a coffee, drank the coffee, and then when I went there, they said no cash." Do you ever get complaints like that?

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

We have not had that, but we have actually had it from a retailer recently, actually, just before you announced the review. It was a café who came to us and said: "Look, we are in a bit of a pickle because the bank is charging us ... the amount that we take on card every transaction adds up to the same as ... we are paying the same in bank fees as we would do for a part-time employee, like a Saturday girl or whatever in the café, and it is killing us. It is eating into the profit and I need to put ... I want to put a sign up or something to encourage people to pay in cash but I do not want to put people off. How do we do it? How do we go about it?" So our advice to them was just be transparent. Just say that. Say that in a notice on the till and I am sure ... if you try and force it people will feel forced and may be reluctant to do it. If you explain the reasons why and give the transparency: "For every pound you pay the bank are taking 2.5p or 5p, please, if you can, pay in cash", which is why I think some retailers have a limit on the amount you have got to spend over before you can tap because it just becomes too costly for them. We have had it from that perspective rather than consumers saying ...

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

We noticed the signs going up. I do not know if it is the same place, but I noticed in the market, which is where we often go for lunch, that the signs started appearing saying we accept cash and card but we prefer cash. In your experience, does it depend on the business model so is it a question of the scale of transactions being passed?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

It seems to be, yes. Because the big supermarkets will allow you to tap for a packet of chewing gum whereas a little tea shop cannot afford for you to tap for a slice cake and a cup of coffee. They want

you to pay cash if you can. So obviously those fees are proportionate or maybe the bigger supermarkets markets can negotiate a better deal with the credit card providers.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Do you know what fees are for both cash because cash costs to bank as well?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

It does. I do not know the precise fees no, but I know that they range ... in terms of accepting tapping or cards it can range anywhere ... between a debit card and a credit card, a debit card can be the cheapest at maybe 1 per cent or 2 per cent, right up to an American Express which is the most expensive, which is why you see a lot of places actually decline. They do not except American Express because its fees are so high. But proportionally, I think Jersey has a much higher take-up of American Express because it is linked to British Airways and people like to collect the miles.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Thank you. Just the last question from this part from me. Do you collect any data on the use of cash that is circulating?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

No, we do not.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

I would not necessarily expect you to. That is probably a question for Treasury. Thank you. Max, are you okay to carry on with 5?

**Deputy M.B. Andrews:**

Thank you very much for being in attendance today. I just wanted to know whether ... I believe there is a need to intervene in some cases where you see, for instance, digital payments being the only select payment available to consumers, and whether those concerns have been raised to the Council?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

We have not had consumers come to us about saying: "We cannot pay this, we do not know how to do that because this place is taking this, that and the other." I think society is ... as I said earlier, you go on a call centre or whatever, you try and speak to somebody, everybody is pushing you online. I think there needs to be - we might come on to it further - help for those people; a bit more of an explanation. It is more education and explanation potentially than to say: "There are these routes available, this is how you do it. If you have only got cash, this is how you can come and do

it.” At the moment, I do not think that is clear to people and I am thinking about if I was trying to pay ... rather than buy something in a shop, I am talking about if I wanted to pay a bill, if I wanted to pay, ... you needed to top up your tax or whatever it might be, interact with Government or other big organisations, because we are seeing the demise of the post office, we are seeing bank closures, we are seeing A.T.M.s (automatic teller machines) being removed. It is very difficult to interact with human faces and pay bills in the way that people used to do a long time ago.

**Deputy M.B. Andrews:**

Have you ever encountered individuals who come to you, who for instance cannot open a bank account and maybe they have problems because they are trying to make a payment and the only process available is, say, digital service and there is no cash being transacted.

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

Not specifically, no. If somebody did come to us like that, we would potentially point them in the direction of Community Savings. We have met with Community Savings in the past about this issue quite a while ago, particularly during COVID, when people went cashless potentially for a different reason but have now discovered: “Oh, it is actually a bit easier for me. I do not have to send a member of staff down to the bank every Friday or with a big sack full of cash” or whatever it might be. Which is where we learned about this collection of people that cannot get a bank account for one reason or another or do not have one.

**Deputy M.B. Andrews:**

Also, we have been asking other stakeholders who have come before the panel about technical failures that may have happened as we saw with the I.T. (information technology) counter just a few weeks ago. Do you believe there is a fundamental importance for cash to remain if we are going towards a digitalised society?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

That was really interesting, that outage, because obviously nobody knew how long it was going to last. I am curious as to how many of those businesses who have gone completely card only or cashless suffered, and I have realised maybe we made a bit of a mistake because my competitor 3 doors down did a really good business; made a lot of money that day. I know that for instance there are certain protections, like we saw Jersey Telecom were fined recently because they did not maintain the 999 service, which was deemed to be crucial. We know that in the U.K. (United Kingdom) there is regulation on energy supply, so if your energy is cut off, we have been dealing with this with the Island Energy outage, but in the U.K. they are fined or they have to pay compensation if the gas supply is cut off or electricity supply is cut off. So there are ways to regulate industry and it is potentially possible to regulate and force them to take cash, but equally if that



outage had lasted a week I am quite certain businesses would have adapted overnight and said: "Well we cannot sit here for a week and just let all this stock rot, we have got to start taking cash. We will just go back to how it was 5 years ago." So again I think in that scenario, consumer demand and market forces would force that to happen itself without intervention or legislation.

**Deputy M.B. Andrews:**

Thank you very much for that. I just wanted to also ask: have you had any businesses contact the Consumer Council regarding digital payments or cash payments and are they seeking advice in terms of what they should be doing or maybe if they have raised any concerns as well?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

Yes, just as I mentioned earlier, that tea shop was one of them who wanted to highlight ... who wanted to try and force people down a cash route because it was cheaper for them but did not want to upset people. So our message was just be transparent, just be honest. That is what people ... consumers understand that life is more expensive in Jersey but what they do not like is prices going up without them being ... without an explanation as to why. If somebody explains: "Well, this is why our prices have gone up" in the same way that when you walk into a supermarket and there has been a storm, there is a sign up to say: "I am really sorry, there is no bread at the moment because ..." and you think: "Well, fair enough, there is nothing I can do about it." Whereas if you walk in and there is no sign and there's no bread, you start to get cross or you might complain or you go elsewhere. So just transparency, be transparent with consumers and they will understand. And that was our advice to them.

**Deputy M.B. Andrews:**

In your experience as well, we have heard from the Hospitality Association, the 2 people we had before us, they mentioned the importance of Government giving people an option of both digital and cash payments. But have you had anybody approach the Consumer Council about concerns with the availability of digital services or cash services to them that the Government provide? Have you had to contact the Government as well to try and rectify any issues that have arisen?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

Good question. Off the top of my head, I do not think so. No. But if I find anything, I can send it on. But I do not think we have had that sort of inquiry from people.

**Deputy M.B. Andrews:**

Also, the panel is fully aware that the local spend card that was used during the COVID-19 pandemic, did you have any feedback from consumers, and potentially some people who maybe are not used

to using cards, who then asked you questions about how the cards would work, et cetera, and what was the overall feedback like from everybody who gave you feedback?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

Well, interestingly, we were contacted during COVID, during lockdown, by the then Minister for Treasury and Resources and her team to ask ... who asked us for ideas of how they could get people spending locally again because, as I alluded to earlier, everybody had shifted online at the time. They were toying with the idea of removing G.S.T. (goods and services tax) for a time or for a period to get people out and about spending. We said that would absolutely not work. A 5 per cent saving on a television or whatever it might be, when you can already get it for much cheaper online and if you are lucky get the V.A.T. (value added tax) removed is not going to make people head back out into town again. People were still fearful. So we actually put it to the Minister that they should come up with a voucher scheme. At the time we said targeted towards hospitality because we knew that industry was suffering, so give people a voucher that they could spend in a hotel for a meal or a staycation. That discussion then evolved and we looked at something that happened in, I think it was Malta, where they had done something similar and then came the idea of the card. So we were fully behind that, fully supportive of it, but we knew then there needed to be restrictions because you did not want people walking into the betting shop and spending, whatever it was, £200-and-something straight on the next horse race and I think pubs. I cannot remember if it was restricted on alcohol or not, but the feedback we got from people was that it was a great idea. We did not have any negatives from that; it did seem to work. That could be something that solves this issue for people. I do not recall ever being contacted by somebody elderly or who did not have ... you did not need the internet for that. You did not need internet banking. I think if you look at buses now, I think they charge more if you pay in cash. So it forces you down the route of having a card and it would be interesting to see what proportion of their local users use the card now. I am sure quite a lot of those people who have not got access to the internet but use the buses would have a card, so they are used to tapping. It is all the data and the fiddling around behind it that is putting them off doing it. So a simple way of being able to tap as a backup could be a solution.

**Deputy M.B. Andrews:**

Obviously with the Consumer Council you hear from businesses and consumers but do you think cards could potentially be used domestically in the future, maybe to be supporting agriculture, and do you think there would also be a demand with consumers wanting to purchase locally but they do not have good enough reason to purchase locally maybe due to the expense of local produce for instance in agriculture compared to what is on the shelves in domestic supermarkets that is brought over from the U.K.?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

What you are saying, like if there was a card issued but it could only be spent on local goods?

**Deputy M.B. Andrews:**

Yes.

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

I am sure that people are not going to throw that away and not use it. They would use it because it is ... it depends whose money it is. If it is the Government's money and here is a treat that is different. If it is their own money and you are forcing them to spend it on local produce you are potentially marginalising because you are forcing them to buy something that in some instances might be twice the cost of or something that actually they need and they cannot afford to spend locally sometimes.

[11:30]

In some areas it is good value in other areas it is not.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Do you think we can expect to see shops ... we heard yesterday I think from Digital Jersey or the LINK representative that some countries have reverse ... I think they are called reverse cash machines where you put cash in and you get issued a card which you can use at a particular mall or supermarket. Do you think that is something that companies over here might look at? For example, the Co-Op might be a good starting point or do you think there is enough ... have you ever heard of that?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

I was looking at something in South Korea where they load up cards, so it is not linked to your bank account and everybody has some form of ... whether it is still a card or not it could be a watch or a key fob or something, but when you get your change they were trying to ... I think they have removed all coinage now and when you get any change from something it loads into a card so you constantly have that rather than money. That could work and it could be that people could make a regular payment into that or they could have their pension paid into that or their benefits paid into that or whatever it might be. It could be that the Government may wish to consider legislating against paying people's wages in cash anymore and saying: "Right, well if the person does not have a bank account they load it into this card rather than ..." But then I suppose you are pushing down the route of a cashless society. But those sort of card or fob things do work elsewhere for sure.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

I suppose one thing we are interested in is the transition that I alluded to at the beginning. Do you think that you have got a role and what might that role be in helping with that transition to a less cash society, if we call it that?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

Yes, the Consumer Council certainly could make sure ... it can scrutinise retailers and the industry to make sure they are doing what they are supposed to be doing. It can help promote and reassure consumers that this is a good thing to do, this is the way to do it. It can offer advice. We understand it is a trusted organisation and brand and if we felt it was the right thing to do then absolutely we could do that and advocate for it. But just going back to your earlier point there about loading something, I think as long as the technology is simple or if there is even no technology behind it, so there is not the need to also have an app or to get into the backend and load the internet, just some sort of simple way of loading up a card through the Co-Op or the post office or whatever it might be. I think that could be quite a good solution and a backup.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Thank you. There is one question here actually. Do you have any thoughts from a Council point of view in terms of differentials that might be charged depending on the way you pay? For example, do you have any thoughts ... if it became the norm to say: "You can have this coffee, but it is an extra 50p if you pay either one way or the other."

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

Yes, the bus is one. But at the moment, I think if you ... I am not sure it is whether you ... if you pay in cash I think your bus fare is maybe £2.80, I cannot remember. Whereas if you tap or you use one of their cards, it is £2. So you are being penalised for paying in cash there.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

I think they have got 3 charges.

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

Is it 3?

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

I think preloaded is the cheapest contactless card, like your bank card, I think it is £2.35.

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

So that certainly exists.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

If they take cash, because I was on the bus yesterday and someone came with a tenner and they said: "Sorry, I do not have any change", but I think he got on for free strangely enough.

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

Fair enough, friendly service.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

It might be hit or miss.

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

So there is an example. I think there was legislation passed in the U.K. which covers credit card providers and card providers, which prevented retailers from charging a percentage for using the card because that was the norm maybe 20 or 30 years ago. However, it excludes the travel industry. So if there are any travel agents left and you try and buy through a high street travel agent and pay with the credit card, they can put on an extra 2 per cent or 3 per cent or whatever it might be on top of the price.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

But as a general point of view, without committing, would you generally prefer not to see price differentials applied across the board?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

100 per cent. Yes, it should be fair. It is cash nonetheless. I understand that retailers take a slight hit if you pay with your card or your tap. But ultimately the game for them is they can attract more people because not everybody has cash in their pocket anymore.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Are you okay with this, Max, if we have not done it already?

**Deputy M.B. Andrews:**

Yes. Many respondents to our launched panel review into cash payments highlight concerns about certain individuals who maybe do not hold bank accounts. So what actions do you believe could be undertaken by the Government to try and support those individuals? Parking aside those who cannot have access to a bank account for one reason or another, such as they may have an addiction, they may have been declared bankrupt, they may have recently been released from prison, whatever it might be, I think there needs to be a piece of work to help that section of community, who are predominantly the elderly, who have been left behind by the race towards

technology accelerated by COVID. How that looks and feels, I do not know. We were discussing this as a Council as a piece of work for next year. In an ideal world, you would have somewhere on the high street that simply has an army of people in it armed with ... whether it is laptops, iPads, or simply there to help, that people can come in and simply say ... if you think about it now, if you for whatever reason did not have access to the internet and you needed to get to a funeral in the U.K., how do you book a flight? Where do you go and book a flight? You have got to get on the phone therefore you are charged extra because you are booking it in person, you have got to sit on the phone for hours, you are paying a bit ... so there are people who are being excluded from doing things because they do not have access to the internet. I know that is slightly different from the argument that we are or the debate that you are looking at but that is where I think some energy should be placed to help those people continue to buy things and join in with the rest of the community ... and also go in with help, take their phone in and take that ... "I cannot ... for some reason it is locked, I do not know what has happened." I see that all the time and it is those people that need that sort of help, I think.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Do you think there is an obvious place that could do that or a department or an arm's length?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

I thought maybe Digital Jersey could be one area but it is a little bit out of town, but there are plenty of empty shops, which I am sure the landlords would rather have somebody in than nobody in and it could just be a pop-up service.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Maybe a partnership between, say, the library and Customer and Local Services.

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

Precisely. There is enough of us who could pull together to offer that service. We were trying to look at doing it ourselves, but it is the funds. We just do not have the money to buy that sort of equipment and you would have people queuing out the door, potentially. But if Islanders knew there was somewhere they could go to help them pay a bill, pay a doctor's, whatever it is, how to book an appointment, how to reserve a seat somewhere, even Liberation Day.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Do you think Parishes could play a role in that?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

I do. Because even now to book a seat for Liberation Day, unless you are someone who was here during the Occupation, you are pushed on to an Eventbrite site to do that potentially. It is just easy for us, but not for everybody. I know that is slightly straying from the debate, but I think it links back to it that says you cannot go one way or the other until we have addressed these people.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

It definitely links. There is an irony that is the richer you are, the cheaper things are, you have got more means.

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

Correct.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

The converse is true, but it is not quite what we are here to talk about, but I think there is a relevance there about if you have only got one method of payment, like you said, you have got ... in a sense, you are a captive audience but also you have got limited options. But that is not really a question.

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

No, I know it is an observation. I agree.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

This is not necessarily directly relevant, but a lot of the submissions that we have had, and this is, I guess, where we get into the emotional attachment to cash and people's philosophies behind how they pay for things. There is a concern about security. Do you have any thoughts about security, also about people's data, and what companies, what governments, what banks know about us when we are consuming?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

We have got big concerns about this at the moment because we have recently seen a move towards retailers not wishing to issue receipts and instead almost pressure you into giving an email address. That email address is like cash to a retailer because that is king, they can sell that data. We have recently issued guidance on that through social media and we will be doing printed media soon. We are trying to educate consumers not to feel pressured into giving that email address, because they should not have to.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

I have noticed that. It is also an issue I think for the staff, because the staff are being told to ask for ...

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

And they are embarrassed. They are as embarrassed and you know it is coming when you get to the till in certain retailers and it is embarrassing for them, it is embarrassing for you. Some say: "Oh we are trying to save the environment, so please give it." The best option is: "Would you like a receipt or not?" Which is fine, you can opt ... if you have bought a pint of milk are you really ever going to take it back. That is fine but it is ... and again you are marginalising those who do not have email addresses. You are making those people feel awkward. You are leaving those people out. "What am I missing out? Why am I not getting these offers?" They are getting offers because they have registered their email address. "I am being bombarded with emails, I do not know how to unsubscribe", et cetera.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Is that something you would raise with the information officer?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

Yes, we are going to speak to them about it for sure.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

I do not think it is directly relevant for us to do that with this review but I think it is ...

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

I think we have spoken to them previously and they were in support of us reminding consumers that they should not have to give their email address.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

It does feel under hand if they can have your email address, it is not directly relevant and unfortunately you need to be savvy to know why they are asking.

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

Yes, and at that point of giving it over the till, you are then subscribed and it is not until you start receiving the emails that you can then go into it and start unsubscribing. If you do not know how to unsubscribe or you are just deleting these emails, that is it, your data is out there and you are getting emails from left, right and centre.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**



Yes, good. Thanks for that. In terms of the security, are there security issues? You have been involved with the scams, I think, and highlighting what scams are going on. Are there methods of payment which you think are more secure than others and what advice would you give?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

Yes, that is why the Consumer Council last year was quite heavily involved in this credit card problem that Jersey is facing in terms of them withdrawing from Jersey or not accepting new customers because while it might seem odd for the Consumer Council to encourage people to have credit or credit cards, managed properly they are the safest way of spending your money because you are protected under the Consumer Credit Act, the goods that you buy through there are covered with an extra warranty, it is safer than shopping online. I give talks to various agencies or the W.I. (Women's Institute) or whoever it might be regularly. The number of people who still shop online with their debit card is worrying because that, if hacked, if lost, if put in the wrong ... in a fraudulent website that looks like the same, that gives people direct access to your current account whereas a credit card you are protected, you are ring-fenced, they cannot get in. Even if they spend that money is recoverable. If you end up spending it on a false ticket site for tickets to a concert and it turns out to be you have been ripped off, that credit card company will refund that money back to your account and they will take it up with that, they will try and recover the costs themselves. So the safest way to shop is with a credit card, but that has to be done carefully because it is very easy to fall into debt and start paying interest on that. But managed properly, they are a great resource, plus you can earn points, cash back, miles, lots of benefits by using a credit card.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Thank you, it is useful. I think we have pretty much covered most of the questions that we have got for you. There is one question here actually. Does the Council have any evidence that the use of cash contributes to higher prices? If so, in what circumstances? It could be the use of either form of payment really. So is it cheaper to pay or more expensive to buy things? You have already talked about shopping online which gives access to discounts often.

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

Locally, I can actually only think of one example which is of a petrol station, because we publish all of the petrol prices, who actually discounts for cash.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Brilliant.

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

What their reasons are, I do not know. We know that often people who are employing tradesmen at home might offer to pay in cash to see if that gets a bit of a discount, I do not know. The only evidence I have got really is of the reverse, as in it is a bit cheaper sometimes. They used to say cash is king, whether it still is or not, I do not know, but it is more that you might get a discount if you operate in cash so it can go straight in their pocket rather than through a credit card company that then goes through a bank account and then comes back to you via the taxman.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

This is perhaps a slightly tongue-in-cheek question but the Consumer Council does not extend to the shadow economy, does it?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

It does not.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Do you have any thoughts about that? I mean this is not directly for you but there is legitimate trade, there is legitimate commerce and then there is the shadow economy, which can be all sorts of things from people doing legitimate work but not necessarily declaring tax to completely illegal economy of drugs and money laundering, et cetera. Do you have any thoughts about that aspect of moving towards a cashless society and therefore having less fiscal leakage, any effects that might have on the economy wider on our consumers?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

The Council does not. Sitting here personally, you would assume moving to a cashless society would all but erase that economy. It would force everybody to declare everything, potentially. In some ways, that could be a benefit. As you say, money laundering and drug dealing and all sorts of stuff that will ... and crime still uses cash. That could have some significant benefits on that side for sure.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Thank you. I accept that is probably a personal response rather than Council.

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

Yes, it is.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

I think for my part, that is basically ... we have covered everything that I need to ask. Have you got anything, Max?

**Deputy M.B. Andrews:**

No.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Have you got anything you want to ask us, or any additional information?

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

No. I would only just - I think I said it - but I would only add not to underestimate the influence that consumer behaviour can ultimately have. You look at the makeup of the high street, you look at our habits, that has all evolved naturally and it will evolve eventually. I do see exactly why you are doing it because you made an excellent point before. I had not necessarily considered about if all shops suddenly declared that they were not accepting cash and that is that, there is a problem for some that does need addressing 100 per cent.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Thank you. We have got a lot to think about. You have given us a lot to think about. We appreciate your time again. Thanks, Carl.

**Chairman, Jersey Consumer Council:**

No problem. Thank you for involving us.

[11:47]