

Social Affairs Scrutiny Panel Income Support Sub-Panel

Meeting 2

Date: 7th April 2006

Location: Le Capelain Room, States Building

Present	Deputy F.J. Hill, B.E.M., Chairman Deputy J.A. Martin, Vice Chairman Senator B.E. Shenton Deputy G.P. Southern Deputy S. Pitman	
Apologies		
Absent		
In attendance	Mr. C. Ahier, Scrutiny Officer Mr. W. Millow, Scrutiny Officer	
Ref Back	Agenda matter	Action
	<p>1. Minutes of Previous Meetings</p> <p>The Sub-Panel approved the minutes of the meeting of 21st March 2006.</p>	
[21/03/06, Item 6]	<p>2. Action Updates</p> <p>The Sub-Panel noted the Action Updates.</p> <p>The Sub-Panel considered a response from the Department for Social Security relating to information from the Department of Housing and agreed to write back asking for clarification on a number of points.</p> <p>The Sub-Panel agreed to write a further letter to Social Security in order to establish whether dental costs were included in any Income Support components.</p>	<p>CA/WM</p> <p>CA/WM</p>
	<p>3. Draft Strategic Plan</p> <p>Deputy Southern distributed copies of Senator Routier's written response to his questions on references to Income Support in the Draft Strategic Plan tabled in the States on Tuesday 28th March.</p> <p>The Sub-Panel noted the references to Income Support in the States of Jersey Draft Strategic Plan 2006-2011 and agreed that a separate paper was unnecessary as the Social Affairs Scrutiny Panel would include Income Support in their submission to the Chairmen's Committee.</p>	
	<p>4. Citizens Advice Bureau</p> <p>The Panel was attended upon by Mr. F. Le Gresley of the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to discuss the Income Support proposals.</p>	

The Chairman welcomed Mr. F. Le Gresley and explained the purpose of the meeting.

Mr. Le Gresley informed the Sub-Panel that the CAB had been advocating the introduction of an Income Support scheme for fifteen to twenty years. They had had concerns about the Parish welfare system and the inconsistencies in the system of administration. He welcomed an integrated system that offered genuine help for people, especially the unemployed.

Mr. Le Gresley informed the Sub-Panel that the CAB had had early involvement with the Income Support proposals and that their suggestions had been taken on board.

There were still some concerns such as the 5 year residency requirement for the Rent Rebate Scheme. Mr. Le Gresley expressed the view that 3 years would be more appropriate. He also highlighted that the qualifying age for the housing component was 21 as opposed to 18 for other benefits.

Mr. Le Gresley informed the Sub-Panel that he welcomed the inclusion of an element of health costs in people's living allowance as it reverted to the principle that everyone should pay something to visit their doctor. He felt this would encourage people to value the service.

The Sub-Panel discussed their concerns in respect of individuals with high medical costs. Mr. Le Gresley agreed that this was an area of concern and stated that it was hoped the Citizen's Fund would provide a safety net in these cases.

The Sub-Panel further discussed the Citizen's Fund. Mr. Le Gresley stated that the need for a similar fund to the UK became apparent during early discussions. He further stated that he hoped the majority of assistance would be in the form grants rather than loans. He went on to say that he did not agree with any attempt to keep the Constables involved in administering the Citizen's Fund. Mr. Le Gresley expressed the hope that, in order to ensure consistency, administration would be central rather than in the form of satellite offices located at the Parish Halls.

Mr. Le Gresley expressed concern about arrangements with 'cash poor, asset rich' residents. At present, some Parishes clawed back welfare payments from the estate of individuals they had helped. He felt this was an area of concern that needed to be addressed under the new system. He went on to state that the tribunal to consider complaints or appeals was an important part of the new system.

The Sub-Panel discussed the method of distribution under the proposed system. Mr. Le Gresley stated that under the new system it was essential that people have access to a bank account although a lot of people currently receive their payments in cash.

	<p>The advantages of 24 hour access to ATM machines was also discussed. It was agreed that there needed to be provision for cash payments under the new system.</p> <p>It was agreed that the proposal to pay the housing component directly to the landlord should be advantageous. However concern was expressed that some people currently claiming rent rebate would be worse off under the new proposals. Mr. Le Gresley commented that benefits should be targeted at the most in need and although it was possible for some people with a high income to receive rent rebate he did not believe that the current system was overly generous for the vast majority.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked Mr. Le Gresley for attending the meeting. Mr. Le Gresley departed.</p> <p>The Sub-Panel discussed the meeting with Mr. Le Gresley and agreed to invite him back for further consultation once detailed Income Support proposals were available. The Sub-Panel further agreed to send a letter of thanks to Mr. Le Gresley.</p>	<p>CA/WM</p> <p>CA/WM</p>
	<p>5. Terms of Reference</p> <p>The Sub-Panel approved the draft e-mail and agreed that it should be sent to Senator Routier.</p>	<p>CA/WM</p>
	<p>6. External Adviser</p> <p>The Panel received background biographical information relating to a shortlist of potential advisors suggested by the University of York. The Panel noted the information and agreed to the concept of employing an advisor. The Panel further agreed to defer further consideration until a future meeting.</p>	
	<p>7. Review Progress</p> <p>The Chairman informed the Sub-Panel that he was considering standing down in order to concentrate upon the work of the main Social Affairs Scrutiny Panel. The Chairman undertook to discuss this with the main Panel and confirm his decision at the next Sub-Panel meeting.</p>	<p>BH</p>
	<p>8. Future Meetings</p> <p>The Sub-Panel noted that the next meeting would take place at 9:30am on Monday 24th April in the Le Capelain Room, States Building.</p>	

Signed

Date

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Chairman,
Income Support Sub-Panel,

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