

4.3 Deputy J.A. Martin of the Chief Minister regarding consultation in respect of Population Policy:

Does the Chief Minister propose to consult on the Population Policy and, if so, who will be consulted, and will he ensure that the policy will be brought to the States prior to the expiry of the Interim Population Policy and provide a timetable for this work?

Senator P.F. Routier (Assistant Chief Minister - rapporteur)

Having focused on the delivery of its Strategic Plan and the associated M.T.F.P. plan which has just been lodged, within the time limits which have been set by the States, the Council of Ministers is now able to turn to the proposed development of the new long-term Island vision. As a community we need to understand where we are now, what we value most about Jersey today and agree our shared ambitions for the future. This will require broad-ranging consultation across our community. Strategic planning requires that we agree the goals we want to achieve and then develop a coherent set of policies to get us there. The purpose of the Population Policy must be to help achieve Jersey's long-term social, economic and environmental goals. It must also work in tandem with other policies. Our Strategic Plan identifies, for example, how health, productivity and skills are key population policy levers. Developing a population policy before the long-term vision would put the cart before the horse. In September the Council of Ministers will review the planning framework that has been designed to support the development of an Island vision, and will engage with Members on the proposed process and timetable at that point.

4.3.1 Deputy J.A. Martin:

I never got an answer to the timetable. It is somewhere after a vision, which is very good. I would like to pinpoint the Minister down to where we are now. In Scrutiny the other day, the supply of housing, I put to Andium and the Minister for Planning and Environment: "What population figure are you working on to provide 1,000 homes by 2020?" I had a little bit of a conversation or some spin probably from the Minister for Planning and Environment but a direct question from Andium was: "Have you got a population figure?" the answer is: "No." How does the Minister think we can plan for even the homes we need if these massive departments and Planning do not have a population figure they are aiming for?

Senator P.F. Routier:

I appreciate that that is an issue which we do need to get to grips with. In September, as I mentioned in my answer, we will be sitting down with Members to discuss the planning framework, which will inform what we want to do with our population levels. It certainly is an issue which we need to address and that is something which I am keen to do. September is when we will start discussing things with Members.

4.3.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

If I may suggest that September is too late because what we will have in front of us is the draft Medium-Term Financial Plan 2016 to 2019 without a population figure in it. Will the population attached to that plan in terms of housing, education and health needs be 106,000, which currently the Chief Minister is on target to reach by the end of the financial plan? Is the figure 106,000, because that is what we are headed for?

Senator P.F. Routier:

The Medium-Term Financial Plan has been worked on for a number of months and obviously the planning assumptions which the department have been working to is 325, but we do know from experience and from the population numbers which have recently been published that that will ... that figure has been overtaken. The Medium-Term Financial Plan does have some flexibility in it, certainly with regard to the Education Department. We know that they have allowed for some

flexibility within their class sizes. We know that they have planned for that. The future hospital is more about not necessarily population numbers, it is more about the ageing demographics, and they are planning for that as well.

4.3.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

An ageing demographic stays the same apart from the numbers go up when the population goes up. That is the reality. What figure will be attached to the Medium-Term Financial Plan under the Minister's proposals?

Senator P.F. Routier:

The Deputy is trying to get a particular figure and we know that population is very difficult to stick a particular number to. It is something we need to understand that our population changes all the time and it is not just a matter of migration. It is about the way our own population within the Island, people who live outside the Island, who have rights to come back here. There is a big issue and it is very difficult to have an exact number for our population.

4.3.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the rapporteur accept the fact that the 325 figure was disingenuous and that it would be much better to double that figure to 650 as an interim population target anyway, at least that way the Ministers can say we are meeting our target or perhaps even not quite meeting the target that they have set?

Senator P.F. Routier:

We cannot get away from the fact that there is a desire from a large proportion of our Island to have controlled population growth and that is something we are charged to do with the Control of Housing and Work Law. If we were to have a higher number it would not be the right thing to do. What we need to do is to look at the long-term vision for our Island and decide what sort of Island we want to live in and then work from that to see what the numbers should be.

4.3.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

The Minister has said it does not really matter if we exceed population targets because the Education Department for one and maybe Health are getting extra funding. But what about other departments like Transport and Technical Services and the Environment Department, and we could name others who are going to have to cope with higher than expected inward net migration because all these people need to use the roads, *et cetera*, and there is going to be an environmental impact. These departments are facing a reduction in their budget, not an increase, and how will that be managed if we do not meet the expected target?

Senator P.F. Routier:

This issue is going to go on for ever and ever discussing what the population of our Island should be and it is something we want to address realistically and probably not in this forum here with questions going backwards and forwards about numbers and trying to trip each other up about what is being said and what is not being said. I think the future really is we need to sit down together with everybody in this Assembly in September and discuss what we really want to do. We have been focusing on the M.T.F.P. and the Strategic Plan since the last elections. We now need to focus on the long-term vision.

4.3.6 Deputy J.A. Martin:

Would the Assistant Minister please agree that the working or the name of Control of Housing and Work Law is not a control of our population? Will he agree to finally look at a policy that does work because it is utterly failing at the moment because they will not ... sorry, the Ministers or the Council will not admit that this is not the policy we should be following? We need a proper Population Policy and I would be really relieved if the Minister would admit this.

Senator P.F. Routier:

What is being missed here is the Control of Housing and Work Law has been working. We have been refusing licences. I think as many members in this community will know there are licences being refused. We refused 325 applications last year. It does work. It does stop businesses employing people but there is a balance to be struck. I am sorry if I did not answer that completely. I lost track of where I was.