

**STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE CHIEF MINISTER
ON TUESDAY 18th APRIL 2023**

Appointing an Interim Chief Executive and Head of the Public Service and the ongoing work to define the future of the role

I wish to make a statement as we embark on our search to recruit an interim Chief Executive.

Before I do, I would like to place on record my thanks to Suzanne Wylie for her dedication to leading the public service. Many of us have seen first-hand the time commitment she has given to her work. She has been popular and a steady influence during the transition between Governments and to the public service following years of change.

It now turns to us all to ensure we continue to focus on delivery for Islanders and to provide a smooth transition to new leadership for the public service.

The role of Chief Executive has, without question, been subject to much discussion and, as is quite usual with any senior level resignation, it is right to take time to pause and to think about whether the role needs redefining to meet present and emerging needs.

I am considering this along with colleagues from the public sector, Ministers and non-executive members. The outgoing Chief Executive has also contributed to this process, offering her own helpful insight.

The resignation of a CEO impacts upon the dynamics of an organisation and naturally it is my priority and my responsibility to ensure that we provide stability to the Public Service as we go forward to recruit a replacement.

I have huge respect for colleagues across the civil service and I appreciate that there may be concerns about any subsequent changes that may take place. The Public Service has recently endured significant change over a prolonged period of time and there is no intention to create such uncertainty again.

It is also critical that, as a Government, we do not become distracted from the agenda that we have been elected to deliver for our community.

Equally, it is important to think carefully and with objectivity about how the role can be delivered successfully in future, with the right conditions to ensure the best outcomes for islanders.

The way forward therefore has three elements:

- Firstly, the recruitment of an interim appointment
- Secondly, taking time to review whether any high-level changes are required to the office and
- Then the recruitment of a permanent successor

The process for the recruitment of an interim will begin immediately – with tenders going out to recruitment agencies this week. This will include local agencies. It is being overseen by the Jersey Appointments Commission. I am keen to see the membership of the selection panel for the role

broadened, to include additional independents, and individuals with a more local perspective and involvement than has previously been the case.

The role description is being worked on and will be in the public domain once the recruitment process starts. I want to be absolutely sure that it reflects what the priorities for the interim role are, which will include:

- Supporting the Council of Ministers, by offering clear advice and ensuring our priorities for the island are delivered.
- Supporting the senior leadership in delivering improvement of our systems and governance so that our fine public services can run smoothly and efficiently and concentrate on doing what they are trained to do, in terms of protecting and supporting the public.
- Reviewing the number of direct reports to the Chief Executive, to make the leadership model more manageable.

And

- Preparing the organisation to move into the new Cyril Le Marquand House. This is an opportunity to further develop and modernise our culture and working practices, for example moving to a paper free environment.

I am pleased to say that there have been expressions of interest in the role of Interim from talented local people and I hope that others, who are considering how they can contribute to the public life of the Island, will put themselves forward for consideration whether they be from the public or private sectors.

This process should be complete by the beginning of June, to enable some time for the interim to be in place in order for a good handover before the current CEO leaves to take up her new role at the beginning of July.

Turning to the recruitment of the substantive successor, this process will also be subject to the oversight of the Jersey Appointments Commission and many of the same considerations will apply.

The aim is to commence the recruitment process soon and I hope that we can use much of the work undertaken for the interim role as a basis for this.

At this stage it is difficult to say much more about the process or timeline, however it is likely to take between 6 and 12 months before a permanent Chief Executive is in place. This allows for time if required for any candidate to serve any notice period in their current role.

The other element related to the recruitment of the Chief Executive is the review of any high-level changes required within the organisation.

The successful delivery of Government rests, of course on the skills, motivation, energy and infrastructure of the whole of the organisation.

Now is the time to ensure that we put in place key corporate arrangements that provide the accountability that islanders were calling for at the election.

Equally, it is evident that a small, well focused corporate management board is needed to support the CEO.

Looking back at the words of the former interim Chief Executive as he reflected on his time in Jersey, he told the Chamber of Commerce that there are “considerable opportunities for improved efficiency and value for money.”

In my statement to the Assembly when seeking to become Chief Minister-designate, I set out that I would create a Cabinet Office and increase the accountability of departments to their Ministers. This followed recommendations made by the former PPC’s Democratic Accountability sub-committee review and report.

The Cabinet Office should be a direct support function to the Council of Ministers and not just another department of Government.

This will require leadership that is focused on a culture of service to Ministers, not distracted by heavy corporate or operational systems.

With significant delivery departments such as health, education and children’s services as well, the role of the Chief Executive spends a considerable amount of time on operational matters. This can be detrimental to the time available for strategic thinking and policy research and development.

In 1971, the late Colin Powell, a much-respected public servant for over 40 years published the Economic Survey of Jersey. This was to be one of the most significant economic papers for the Island. This forensic, evidence-based, challenging and daring thought leadership is needed now, as it was then. The Island requires entrepreneurship in all sectors at a time of significant change and challenge.

This thinking should be within the Cabinet Office, led by Ministers and informed by the best intellect from the Island and around the world.

As Ministers we are accountable for our policies, and it is only right that we are given the tools to implement them effectively and quickly.

Members who have served in Scrutiny before will understand how they have become more effective through the additional investment in the States Greffe to provide support, research, communications, and secretariat functions. Improvements that I advocated for when I was President of the Scrutiny Liaison Committee.

We are a relatively small organisation, but complex in how we work and what we deliver. This requires good governance, strong performance management and clear lines of accountability. It also requires focus.

The CEO should be able to focus on operational excellence. Ensuring there are the right strategies, systems and processes in place to provide assurance around the outcomes and delivery, that are critical to operating a well-oiled machine. I think we all have our own experiences when we meet our constituents that the machine needs repair, and TLC in some areas and that require a technician that knows what to do.

Recent events create the right moment to reshape this key role, to create the right conditions for serving the Government and, in turn, the whole of the Island. It is my ambition that by getting the

next sequence of actions right a successful structure will emerge that will be both effective and enduring for the Island.

This statement has intentionally focussed on the future.

What is important now is how we take the Island forward and attract the best candidates who can work with us and make a long-term commitment to Jersey and our mission of creating a community where everyone can thrive.