

2025.02.04

Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South of the Chief Minister regarding an IT strategy and IT security framework for Government (OQ.22/2025):

Will the Chief Minister detail what work, if any, has been undertaken with regards to an I.T. (information technology) strategy and I.T. security framework for Government to ensure that they are fully equipped to handle the growing use of A.I. (artificial intelligence) tools?

Deputy L.J. Farnham of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter (The Chief Minister):

An A.I. working group was set up by Digital Services in July 2023 to advise on the Government's strategic direction in that area. As a result of this group's work, Digital Services developed draft A.I. policies and standards, which are currently under review but aiming to be published shortly. The Government's approach to I.T. security is guided by well-established national frameworks and best practice, including from the U.K.'s (United Kingdom) National Cyber Security Centre and the National Institute of Standards and Technology, which helps protect our Island systems and data. We also have change control processes for our digital systems to ensure we can embed innovative technologies such as A.I. while maintaining the appropriate safeguards, not least to protect Government and Islanders' data.

4.3.1 Deputy T.A. Coles:

As I recently went on a C.P.A. (Commonwealth Parliamentary Association) trip around A.I. security, part of the influence is on how our security frameworks work around critical infrastructure such as energy, supply and telecoms. Is the Chief Minister confident that the policies that are produced nationally would include Jersey in such a scheme?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Jersey works closely with the U.K. agencies in those areas and looks to adapt or adopt the safeguards and procedures that would be relevant to us. The answer I think in most cases would be yes.

4.3.2 Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade:

The question of A.I. use in Government has been debated quite a lot in the U.K. at the moment and being seen as a potential to massively increase the efficiency of delivery of government services. I wonder if the Government is approaching A.I. from this angle, not just from a security angle.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I think A.I. will increasingly be embedded in the lives of everyone and everyday tools and applications to enhance personal and professional tasks. For example, in Government, it could include integration into daily life and processes, healthcare advancement, workplace transformations in relation to how routine tasks are dealt with. I think A.I. will touch all areas of personal and professional life as it develops. What we want to make sure is we have the

appropriate safeguards in place from a Government perspective for when we utilise A.I. that first and foremost Government and Islanders' data is protected.

4.3.3 Deputy J. Renouf:

I think the Chief Minister's response was quite a passive description of the role of A.I.; it will do things to us. I wonder if he could perhaps take a more interventionist view, and could I ask the question, therefore, would he consider putting anybody in Government, either at a Ministerial level or at an officer level, in charge of seeing how A.I. could be positively used to increase efficiencies within Government?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I would not think at this stage we need to create a Ministerial role for that. That sits in the Department of the Chief Minister and for the Assistant Ministers. But, as I stated in the opening answer, an A.I. working group has been set up and have developed draft policies and standards, which will, as I understand it, also address how we might apply A.I. in certain aspects, certain streams of Government work.

4.3.4 Connétable of M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade:

Given the exponential rise in the use of A.I., both in Government and by what I might describe as bad actors, would the Chief Minister confirm that he feels that his department has got adequate resource to deal with this at the moment?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Yes.

4.3.5 The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Will the Chief Minister confirm that he will be using A.I. to write his own speeches in the future?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

No comment.

The Bailiff:

I am tempted to ask if you wrote that yourself, Chief Minister? **[Laughter]**

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Yes, I did, Sir.

4.3.6 Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

The Chief Minister mentioned that we leverage national frameworks and in January 2025 the U.K.'s Government digital service published a policy paper titled *A blueprint for modern digital government* in which it outlines its vision and strategy to continue to deliver modern digital public services. Has the Chief Minister considered the vision and action points outlined in this and whether there are any lessons to be learnt?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

No, but I was not aware of its existence. I thank the Deputy for pointing me towards it. I will certainly take a look at it.

4.3.7 Deputy A.F. Curtis:

One of the action points in that is harness the power of A.I. for public good, but whether looking to the U.K., Estonia, Denmark, New Zealand or others, does the Chief Minister not see a significant risk to Jersey's reputation if we are not investing in better digital services and using any tool available to deliver better the public services?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I think the short answer to that is we want our digital services to be at the forefront of technology. We want to make sure we utilise the skills and resources we put into that to deliver the very best outcomes for Islanders through the use of technology. We want to be at the forefront and that is why we are taking the use and development of A.I. seriously. It is a work in progress, and I hope we start to see, not just as an organisation, more use of it internally. But I would like to support the way we can help it embed itself in to enhance the use for Islanders on an everyday basis.

4.3.8 Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North:

In the absence of the I.T. Government strategy in the Budget for 2025, departments had to cut 20 per cent of each department spent on I.T. How has the Chief Minister prioritised technology project, including I.T. across the departments, ensuring alignment with overall Government priorities rather than on a departmental basis?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I do not like to correct the Deputy, but we did not have to cut the I.T. budget by 20 per cent. Previous year's growth bids were reduced by 20 per cent, which is a significantly different situation. I am confident that our Digital Services Department has the right budget and resources to do all of the work we are expecting it to do to maintain the standards and levels that we would expect in relation to the development of our I.T. strategies and policies and the integration and the way we embed A.I. in our government services moving forward. We are well-resourced and adequately budgeted for 2025.

4.3.9 Deputy I. Gardiner:

I would ask if the Chief Minister can emphasise how he prioritised between the departments across Government priorities, and when the I.T. strategy for Government could be seen and delivered?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

That was all done as part of a lengthy Budget process, which was explained in detail during the Budget debate. That is how we re-prioritised, and that is how we allocated the budgets.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

It was not a question about the Budget. When is the I.T. strategy planned to be delivered?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Well, we have a number of I.T. strategies, if you like, in progress, and I am not sure if she could be a bit more specific; is there a particular part of the I.T. platform?

Deputy I. Gardiner:

It has been promised that I.T. internal government strategy, which overarching strategy for digital services within the Government has been developed over the last several years. My question is when this strategy will be presented.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I am trying to relate that to the question on A.I., but I mean if it is related.

The Bailiff:

Yes, I have to say, having heard you redefine the question, Deputy, I am not sure it is directly related to the use of A.I. and the growing use of A.I. tools and therefore I do not allow it.

4.3.10 Deputy T.A. Coles:

I will try to keep this simple, but it is not a simple question. A.I. to be properly functioned requires access to appropriate amounts of data, as well as ... sorry, I am trying to consolidate that. A.I. requires data to make informed decisions. So, for A.I. to function properly, it would need proper data-sharing agreements and systems that communicate with each other. Does the Chief Minister believe that proper data-sharing agreements can be established within Government so that any A.I. tool can make proper and informed decisions? If so, will those decisions have a human input rather than A.I. delivering the final decision?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I think that is a question for A.I. I think in principle, yes. I think that can be achieved by the Digital Services Department of putting the emphasis on change control process in the digital systems to ensure they can embed A.I. and other innovative technologies while maintaining the appropriate safeguards of Government and systems data. That is at the forefront of the work they are doing. I am not sure how they will achieve that, but I know that is high priority. That is the aim, I think. If we are going to use A.I. we need to make sure that private data is protected.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Sorry, Sir, there was the point about human decision-making.

The Bailiff:

Will it ultimately be human decision-making assisted by A.I., or will it be A.I. decision-making, Chief Minister, I think is the question?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I think the objective of A.I. is to reduce the input of human decision-making. But, of course, at the end of the day, it is only as good as the information that it has access to. While we can never let it replace human intervention, it is growing and expanding so fast across how it impacts positively on society, I think it is a question that needs very careful consideration and cannot be answered on the hoof by myself. But from a Government perspective, we would

like to use A.I. to improve productivity and improve government services to enhance the experience of Islanders.