



Health and Social Security Scrutiny Panel

Government Plan 2022-25 Review

Witness: The Minister for Social Security

Wednesday, 13th October 2021

Panel:

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat of St. Helier (Chair)
Deputy K.G. Pamplin of St. Saviour
Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier

Witnesses:

Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier, The Minister for Social Security
Mr. I. Burns, Director General, Customer and Local Services
Mr. P. McGinnety, Director of Local Services
Mr. M. MacGregor, Senior Policy Officer 1, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance
Mr. M. Viney, Senior Policy Officer 2, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance
Ms. A. Muller, Director of Improvement and Innovation, Health and Community Services

[14:11]

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat of St. Helier (Chair):

... title as well I would be grateful, thank you. I am Deputy Mary Le Hegarat. I am the Chair of the panel and I am a representative for Districts 3 and 4 of St. Helier.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin of St. Saviour:

Good afternoon. Deputy Kevin Pamplin of St. Saviour District No. 1 and vice-chair of the panel.

Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier:

Good afternoon, everyone. I am Deputy Carina Alves, a member of the panel, and I am the Deputy of St. Helier District 2. I am losing my voice slightly so bear with me. Thank you.

The Minister for Social Security:

I am Deputy Judy Martin and I am the Deputy for St. Helier No. 1 District and I am the Minister for Social Security.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Good afternoon. I am Ian Burns. I am the Director General for Customer and Local Services.

Director of Local Services:

Good afternoon, everybody. My name is Paul McGinnety and I am Director of Local Services.

Senior Policy Officer 1:

Hi, my name is Mark MacGregor. I am Senior Policy Officer for S.P.P.P. (Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance) in the Government of Jersey.

Senior Policy Officer 2:

Hi, good afternoon. My name is Matt Viney, also Senior Policy Officer in S.P.P.P. supporting the Minister for Social Security.

Director of Improvement and Innovation:

Good afternoon, Anuschka Muller, Director of Improvement and Innovation, Health and Community Services.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

I think that must be all of us, I think. If there is anybody that joins or has not introduced themselves yet but does actually end up participating, just remember if you do that to say who you are and your job title. Firstly, a reminder that scrutiny public hearings operate under the same rules as if we were in the States Assembly. We are going to start ... as I say, today is to do with the Government Plan and starting the questions this afternoon is Deputy Alves and, as she said earlier, her voice is a little bit of a problem at the moment so we will see how we go. Thank you.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Thank you, Chair. So, just to begin with, Minister, we would be grateful if you could provide the panel with an overview of what your priorities are in your role as Minister, so what they were for inclusion in this proposed Government Plan for 2022-25 and also what impact, if any, COVID has had on those priorities. Thank you.

[14:15]

The Minister for Social Security:

Well, the priorities were ... most of the priorities that started at the beginning of the Government Plan I have achieved. The outstanding priorities is the home care at home and independent ... financial independence in old age. Next year there will be the actuaries of all the funds, so there has not been a lot of work done on them. Because every 4 years they have had an actuary early on, so the new Council of Ministers - this was agreed 4 years ago - they have up-to-date figures that everything is doing well. I do not think I have any other outstanding priorities.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Okay, that is great, thank you. So, on to the resource allocation, so we can see the resources mapped to your ministerial profile on page 127 of the proposed Government Plan. We know that your allocation has fallen since 2021 and the estimates for 2022 to 2023 have also been reduced. So, please could you provide some further information and reasons for the decreased estimates in comparison to last year's Government Plan and can you give us an overview of what has changed?

The Minister for Social Security:

Are you talking about the bigger amount, between about £7.5 million to £8 million? Because we ... yes, obviously we knew very early on in the pandemic we were just under 1,000 unemployed, 900 up to about March, then we got about another 700 or 800 people. If you work it around a ballpark figure, 100 people cost about £1 million for income support, so that is basically that big figure. We are down to basically I think where we were before the pandemic, near enough, so we have not asked for any extra money for income support going forward.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Okay, so this was also about the estimates of net revenue. So in the 2021-24 Government Plan, for example, for 2022 it said just over £130 million, but in this Government Plan that has been reduced to £121 million, so that is approximately a £9.5 million decrease from the last ...

The Minister for Social Security:

Is that in my budget or Customer and Local Services?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

So it is under the allocation by ministerial portfolio. As the Minister said, we had additional funds for coronavirus for income support and that is why the allocation for 2022, which was forecast last year to be £130 million, is now going to be around about £121 million. As the Minister said, the great progress that we have made in reducing unemployment, alongside obviously all the business support packages that the Council of Ministers has put together, have meant that we have seen a

reduction in unemployment far beyond what was forecast, which means that the extra £7 million for additionality on top of the existing budget is no longer needed and that is about £7 million, plus you also have, of course, in 2022 you will be aware that the department Customer and Local Services will be making nearly £600,000 of savings and that obviously was not in the forecast last year. That is, therefore, in the 2022 forecast in this year's Government Plan and the like. So, obviously some other minor changes make up the whole £8 million difference, so that is the reason why that drops between 2021's forecast for 2022 and what was in this year's Government Plan for 2022.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Okay, thank you. Please could you provide some further detail about the £575,000 of efficiencies that are identified from the Minister's portfolio on page 84, specifically the £271,000 identified as general reduction in non-staff budget and the £204,000 identified as general staffing productivity increase?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, the general staffing is a vacancy factor, I think, equivalent of 1 per cent, and that is a cost of £144,000, and service areas forecast financial impact ... we have some money for a voluntary scheme that is being rolled out across all of government, a relief scheme which is another ... is it £60,000?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

£60,000.

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, £60,000, and then there is £371,000 identified in general reduction in non-staff, which Ian might be able to help you more for that one.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

So that one is 2 reductions in benefit lines the Minister was happy to support, which was ... obviously the panel will be aware that the television licence, the BBC are now paying for our previous scheme and so, therefore, there was no longer a need to have the money put in the budget to fund the television licence scheme that the BBC are paying for. So that is £311,000. The panel will also be aware of the compensation for mesothelioma scheme. We originally forecast ... I think we have about 5 claims a year, so we have a budget to reflect that, and what has come through since the scheme has gone live is much lower and, therefore, we are reducing the budget to reflect the actual activity being seen. So there is a further £60,000 reduction in that benefit budget. So that is the £371,000 there, as the Minister headlined.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

So you mentioned the mesothelioma compensation. If that happens that those claiming that then increase again, do you have it within the budget to be flexible with that to provide that?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes. So we have the Treasury ... when it comes to statutory benefits, such as the mesothelioma scheme and, indeed, income support, obviously if we start going over budget, then there is absolutely a reserve that the Treasury ... a contingency that Treasury will allow us to use to make sure we can continue to pay our benefits at the agreed level. So there is no issue there, but it is also not sensible to carry additional budget that is not going to be ... we do not think is going to be used because it cannot be used for anything else. So that is the reason why we are bringing that forward and saying based upon a couple of years now of history we were only seeing a very small number of claims come through and so that makes good sense to reduce the budget and, therefore, it allows us to put that forward as a saving.

The Minister for Social Security:

I think if you remember, and I always ask that question, Deputy, in the first very Government Plan we gave back £5 million out of the income support because we had not seen the people coming. That was my first question: well, what if they turn up? They turned up a year later. The money was given to me straight away, and this is going to be the same. So it is just not holding it in our budget. Those statutory schemes, if people turn up they will be paid.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Okay, that is great, reassuring, thank you very much. We know that the C.L.S. (Customer and Local Services) revenue has an extension increase for the estimates that were provided last year. Please could you provide some further details about why the estimates increased?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes. I think that is a question for me. So, what has happened, of course, is that there have been revised experiences in terms of the number of people who are claiming income support. Most of the Customer and Local Services budget is made up of benefits and the main part of that is income support. If we had ... like we have had revised experience of that forecast, plus we had from the Fiscal Policy Panel revised forecasts for inflation and for unemployment levels and so on, so the general principle in developing the Government Plan is you take the latest forecasts and apply those to various budgets to help forecast accurately based upon the F.P.P. (Fiscal Policy Panel) advice, and the increase in inflation that we have seen has, therefore, meant that there is an increased allowance for income support in 2022. That feeds through into the future years, 2023, 2024 and 2025. So, there has also been additional transfers from other parts of government services to

Customer and Local Services and that obviously, of course, adds to the budget of Customer and Local Services but it is not growth money. You will see somewhere a reduction in the transferring area where that money is being moved. They are predominantly the big changes that are outlined in the annex. I think in table 8 there is a breakdown of all the movements for 2022 all the way through to 2025. Some of them, of course, are to do with rebalancing, some of them are to do with transfers in and the pay awards that get allocated to staff budgets.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Okay, thank you. Please can you explain the process you undertake to estimate the funding requirements for social benefit payments, particularly with regards to the Fiscal Policy Panel forecast around inflation?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes. So we work with the economist team, so that would have been previously chief economist Nick Vaughan, to make a forecast based from the Fiscal Policy Panel on the number of unemployed people that will be on items and, therefore, paid benefits. That is the key factor that we use to adjust from year to year and from quarter to quarter our forecasts for income support based upon the number of people claiming. As the Minister says, if you add 100 people on to the actively seeking work numbers, then you do have an additional cost come through on to income support and vice versa: if you reduce some of the people who are actively seeking work, it will reduce the number ... the amount of money ... the number of people claiming and, therefore, the amount of money on the income support budget. So, first off we have an up-to-date forecast from the chief economist, which of course this year has been quite tricky because of the ongoing movement around COVID and what would happen when business support schemes finish, but obviously we are pleased at the progress that has been made in reducing unemployment. So, that is a key number, and then the other one will be the forecast for inflation based upon the Retail Price Index. That then gets factored into the budget for income support for the years ahead, as I mentioned earlier. So those 2 factors are based upon ... of course, we start from the number of people currently claiming and work back from there, so we are trying to take the number of ... will there be an increase or decrease in the number of people claiming income support based upon unemployment, and then we also factor what will happen to R.P.I. (Retail Price Index) and then build that into the budget.

The Minister for Social Security:

You will probably remember I have taken not that long ago the uprates for all income support for this year, which was October, and for next October because of the timing of the election. It went through the Assembly for 2 years so it is there, it is ready and people sitting on income support will not have to wait for C.O.M. (Council of Ministers) to get its act together and get something in the Assembly, et cetera.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Okay, that is great. Thank you very much. We understood from the panel's hearing last year on the Government Plan that there are differences between the expenditure allocation to C.L.S. and the resources mapped to the ministerial portfolio due to the fact that areas of ministerial responsibilities do not completely align with the departments. If we compare figures in the tables on page 126 and 127 of the Government Plan, we see that the difference between the 2 allocations will increase from approximately £25 million in 2023 to £99 million in 2024. Is this difference mainly down to the inclusion of the States grants where applicable in the ministerial portfolio?

The Minister for Social Security:

Where you are saying it is 236, 234 ... it is the States grant?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, it is the States grant just reintroduced for 2024. That is what makes the difference in the allocations between Customer and Local Services and the Minister for Social Security.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Okay, and is the States grant allocated differently to the transfer from the social security reserve fund?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

So the ... just to make sure I am referring to the correct figure, do you have a page number you are referring to that was the transfer? Because the States grant is the amount of money that the taxpayer pays into the social security fund on an annual basis and that is based upon a calculation that calculates the amount and that kicks back in in 2024. Did you have a page reference?

Deputy C.S. Alves:

This is taken from table 13 on page 126 where you have the C.L.S. revenue heads of expenditure and then you have on page ... 1014 on page 127 you have the social security ministerial portfolio.

[14:30]

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes. So the States grant is not featured independently on these 2 pages, it is actually built into the ... so if you look at the departmental breakdown at 126, the States grant will be in the Treasury expenditure ... no, it will not be, it will be in the transfer from ... yes, it is in the Treasury expenditure. So if you look on page 126, you see the Treasury expenditure, Treasury and Executive expenditure

also increases from £69 million in 2023 to £153 million in 2024. So that is where the States grant is held by department in the Treasury and they pay it across into the social security fund. So it is not in the C.L.S. line in that sense, whereas when you break things down by Minister that expenditure which is held by the Treasury Department comes under the Minister for Social Security.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Okay, thank you. The States Assembly approved stopping the payment of a States grant from the consolidated fund to the social security fund for 2020 or 2021 to help with the costs of COVID-19. However, it was understood that any further decision on stopping the grant for 2022 or 2023 would only be taken when a full review of the social security fund had been completed. So, please can you provide us with an update regarding the outcome of that review of the social security fund? Thank you.

The Minister for Social Security:

Well, last year it was my plan to have a review of the social security ... all the funds, the social security fund and the health insurance fund, and actually the returns were a lot better, and then I was reminded that we are ... early next year all the funds get an actuarial review and we have enough money in there to last until 2070 ... is it 2070?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, 2070, 4 times.

The Minister for Social Security:

2070, 4 times, so they were done. They have not gone across. It will need another States decision. They have not gone across. They do not pay them into me. So it is held at Treasury and normally the States grant would come to me and it has not come to me for the last 2 years and it is not intended to come to me this year or next year, and then it goes back up to its full cost in 2024.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Okay, thank you.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Sorry, just, though, to confirm that the decision for 2022 and 2023 still has to come back to the States Assembly for agreement?

The Minister for Social Security:

Oh, absolutely, it has to come back to the Assembly, yes.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

So when is that likely to happen, bearing in mind 2022 is just around the corner?

The Minister for Social Security:

Well, it always happens in ... the legislation that happens directly off the States ... the Assembly passes the Government Plan. That is how it has happened the last few times.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

You are right.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

So the Minister will be lodging shortly that additional piece of legislation and then it will be voted on or agreed or otherwise at the end of the Government Plan.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Just so that we remind ourselves of when it is likely to be. Perfect. Thank you. Sorry, Deputy Alves, over to you.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

That is absolutely fine, thank you. Okay, so we note that the Government Plan for 2022-25 proposes that the States grant would not be paid again in 2022 and 2023, so has any alternative to funding the social security fund from the reserve fund been considered?

The Minister for Social Security:

No. As I say, they need to look ... the Chief Minister has a concern that there is too much that goes across that is tax and it used to be - and I do not really completely understand it - a third and a third and a third, but there is nothing in this Government Plan, there is no surprises, you have seen everything there, there is nothing going up. Because it sort of saved our bacon, really; really good returns on all the funds. Then, as I say, the new Ministers or new Government will have all the up-to-date figures to work on. But no, the money is ... at the moment it is just not coming across to me, but the fund still has without that money what I have just predicted up to 2070.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, so obviously markets did crash around the world during COVID but the social security fund has recovered strongly, as indeed have markets, so the Minister has that knowledge that the reserve fund has increased back to the balance pre-pandemic. Even without the £65 million being paid across the 4 years, based upon the latest estimates, even in 60 years' time there will be 4 times the fund balance available. So as far as these things go, that is a very good place for a Government to

be in and a good place for social security because it gives that assurance that people's pensions will still be paid for some time without having to take significant action. Now, clearly, as the Minister is very aware of, if decisions are made around population growth, then that obviously has an influence on the sustainability calculations because there is assumed in there that there will be an increase in population as we have seen in the past.

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, and that was another reason it was not to have a ... you had these unknown variables on what the population, what the figure will be, what we are trying to do, and then sort of trying to do something this side and then finding out we have enough money, it is not ... do not touch it, we have breathing space, so it is exactly where it was or better off than it was, as Ian said, before the pandemic.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Can I just pick up on that? So you have mentioned earlier that obviously we will find this in a good place until ... what was it, 2070?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, 2070, yes.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Yes, and that is better than it was pre-pandemic. Are you able to give us what the current valuation of the social security reserve fund is?

The Minister for Social Security:

£2.2 billion?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

At the end of August.

The Minister for Social Security:

At the end of August.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Okay, great. So just to kind of go back a little bit, I suppose, obviously stopping the payment of the States grant to the social security fund has meant that it had to be topped up with transfers from the reserve fund, and there was ministerial decisions to approve the transfer of £55 million from the reserve fund to the social security fund in 2020 and the transfer of £94.9 million in 2022. So the

proposed Government Plan suggests that there will be transfers of approximately £81 million in 2020 and approximately £87 million in 2023. So, I think another question would be: what impact have the outward transfers had on the health of the reserve fund?

The Minister for Social Security:

Well, you can see I have paid that out, so I have paid from reserve into social security fund so it can pay then the current account that pays your pensions and benefits, et cetera. Not income support, the fund benefits. Then, as I say, because the fund has still had a lot of money and it has just reacted well, it has still at 31st August got £2.2 billion in there.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Okay. So what advice have you taken about the impact those outward transfers could have on the long-term sustainability of the reserve fund?

The Minister for Social Security:

Well, when I knew that they were not coming across and that was the advice, I take financial advice, economic advice, and it just has to be done because, as I say, it is like you have your savings account, which is the reserve fund, and your current account, which pays out the benefit, so I have had to transfer from one account to the other to pay the benefits out for those years. But going forward everything should stay the same.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

I do not know if it assists but we might bring in Mark MacGregor at this point - he is online - and Mark is ... he has done a lot of work with the actuaries.

Senior Policy Officer 1:

Yes, that is right, Ian and Minister. So we worked with the actuaries to update the last projections that they did for us after the actuarial review a couple of years ago. They did their best to update them based on the latest information and the valuation of the fund and given the proposed changes to the States grant, and that showed that the reserve fund would have the equivalent of 4 years' worth of expenditure in the reserve fund in 50 years' time. So that is kind of what the actuaries saw based on the most recent information they had and so that is a similar explanation to the previous question you asked the Minister. It is all kind of connected. I hope that answers. Thank you.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Thank you very much.

The Minister for Social Security:

Mark, was that based on the population or what was the population figure they based it on? Because that was a concern.

Senior Policy Officer 1:

Yes. So they used the same population assumption, the central one that they used in their last actuarial review, which is net plus 700 a year, which is roughly what we have seen in recent decades being projected forward. So, as you were saying, Minister, the outcome of the population debate and future decisions around population in the long term will also affect the balance of funds and that will need to be kept in mind.

The Minister for Social Security:

Thank you, Mark.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Thank you. So is there any intention or has any consideration been given to refunding the reserve fund from the consolidated fund in the future?

The Minister for Social Security:

No.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

That is fine, okay, thank you. Just moving on to the health insurance fund, can you provide an update on the review that you committed to undertake of the health insurance fund?

The Minister for Social Security:

Well, we are a bit the same there. I wanted to ... I was going to do a review of everything, time ran out, and I also have been kept updated. That is why we have Anuschka online. You can do this now, but it is a completely different thing. There has been no review of the health insurance fund. We know that is the one that is going down quicker and we know there will be work needed, but we were not where we wanted to be with the healthcare model and all the health funding going into one pot at some point. Now, that is a big job of work and I suggest whoever is the next Minister for Health and Social Services and the next Minister for Social Security, along with all the other Ministers, get on and do it, but we are not there. We have been kept up to date and Anuschka is online to tell you in terms of the near enough penny ... not penny but lots of things if you want to know where the £11.3 million went last year ... actually we have not paid all of the costs yet, have we?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

That is right. So the Minister in the Government Plan last year set out a transfer of £11.3 million and the Minister has yet to make that transfer, so that will be made towards the end of the year based upon activity and ... so in that respect the Minister had yesterday an update from colleagues in health and will continue to do so going forward in terms of the expenditure on both the Jersey Care model and also the investments in the digital work.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

So from what you are saying basically the review is not going ahead, it has been stopped completely, is that correct?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes. As I say, the health insurance fund has done what it has done for years. It pays bits to ... they normally just pay a payment to G.P.s (general practitioners). That model has been changing over the last 10 or 11 years. We do different things in different ways, and the healthcare model again was to do that differently. The idea we want, and I think the Minister for Health and Social Services - you will have to ask him - and the health officers, there needs to be one stream of funding for all of health under the new healthcare model, which will help the doctors, which will help physios, other people who provide care, et cetera. So, as I say, the healthcare model ... and it is only because ... we cannot keep blaming COVID but that was the sector that was worst hit. It is probably a year behind than it should be, so that, as I say, is going to be a massive ... it should be a good piece of work. It can be done, it should be done, and the bare bones of the model has been already through the States.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

So just to sort of summarise it, the reason why a review is not being undertaken into the health insurance fund is because there were some issues with the healthcare model and really finalising what that is about?

The Minister for Social Security:

No, no, we know what the healthcare model is, it is the funding. So what do we want to include? Myself and the Minister for Health and Social Services want to look at more things that may need to be funded. We need to know the figure, then we need to know how we fund it. It was just basically a waste of time to look at the smallest fund on its own, which is keeping changing, again when we are going to have an actuarial review, we are going to have a population debate, we are going to have a new Council of Ministers, and they can all work together and provide the healthcare funding that will be needed.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

So it is time constraints as well then?

The Minister for Social Security:

Sorry, I did not hear that?

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Sorry, so time constraints have also been part of the reason for the ...?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, absolutely.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

There will be an actuarial review next year, as the Minister just said, to help inform the new Council of Ministers.

The Minister for Social Security:

On all the funds.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, on all the funds, so there will be ... yes.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Okay. I have just seen that Anuschka has just come on so I do not know if you wanted to come in and say something on that?

[14:45]

Director of Improvement and Innovation, Health and Community Services:

Yes, just to help maybe out here, so there was a commitment also from the Minister for Health and Social Services on providing a review of healthcare costs and health funding, which kind of overlaps the other bit, the health review. So that work has started in consultation with ... working together with C.L.S. officers, with policy officers, and Treasury as well. As Judy explained, it is a wider health economic cost review to take all options into account and to provide a really comprehensive option appraisal back to the next Council of Ministers. But that has not stopped, it has actually started and is ... as provided in the Government Plan is aimed to be finished by the end of next year.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Thank you. That is all of my section done. I do not know if any other panel member wants to come in on that. If not, then I am going to hand over to Deputy Pamplin for ...

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Thank you, yes. Just a question, though, it might be not something that you can provide this afternoon but we obviously would like to know how much of the £11.3 million has actually been spent and how.

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes. We had an update yesterday, Deputy, and the page is ... and I thought ... we had it initially in mind but I think when you meet the Minister for Health and Social Services maybe you could get these in advance, et cetera, otherwise it is a lot. I think we had the brief, it was 35 minutes or so, you know.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Yes, okay, and we are due to get ... okay, that is fine then. So we are due to get that in the next week. Okay, perfect.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Okay, thanks, everyone. I am just going to touch briefly on the long-term care fund. You gave us the current estimate and the value of the other fund. What is the current value of the long-term care fund?

The Minister for Social Security:

£51 million.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

By the end of 2022, yes.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Also the estimated balances for the fund have improved from the estimates provided last year, and just again a brief explanation of why that is.

The Minister for Social Security:

Well ...

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

So I think we have had ...

The Minister for Social Security:

We put the long-term care fund up but it ... yes.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

It is the increase and I think that there has been higher income receipts than expected and, of course, the tax, and long-term care is obviously income and it is taxed, so, therefore, if we collect more money from tax we will have a higher amount coming in for the long-term care charge and that is reflected through, I think, the forecasts that this Government Plan has included and will also benefit the long-term care fund.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

A steady increase of I suppose people claiming the fund as well, I guess, because it is still relatively new in terms of funds that you are seeing, unlike the other funds we were hearing where they slowed a bit like ... we were hearing that this one, it is still steady, people are claiming what they need.

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes. Again, it is with the baby boomers, as Ian told me I was one of them, and you are going to get this bulge now, people reaching 65 and then hopefully still quite healthy, but then when they get to 75 we know the bulge is coming and it will be long-term care. I went for ... not last year, the year before, a 1 per cent increase but that would have seen us happily for the next 15 years, I think, with all the ... and we got half. It was fine. It says quite clearly we have enough for the next few years to see through the Government Plan, but it is one of those things, health will have to be paid for.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Yes. It brings me back on to the care model. So could you bring us up to speed and maybe for the public's information: what has been done together with the Minister for Health and Social Services to calculate all of this, if you could briefly summarise this? The impact of the implementation, just talk about the implementation of the care model on the fund, on the healthcare fund?

The Minister for Social Security:

So far we have given ... well, we have not paid it across yet, the £11.3 million, and that is to help get things started, get the healthcare model started. Obviously, that money has come out and money still goes in. I think we get 2 per cent of the overall social security.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

You said that out of all of them, the funds ...

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, it is there. Well, it is going up but ... it does go up but then we will get more people ...

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

The health insurance fund, Deputy, are you referring to the health insurance fund or to the care plan?

The Minister for Social Security:

Oh, the long-term care fund, sorry?

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I was going back to the H.I.F. (health insurance fund) fund.

The Minister for Social Security:

Sorry.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

You mentioned earlier it was going down out of all of them.

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, the healthcare fund does go down and that is why ... and I think Anuschka just said we are all working together now. I have money. It used to do a certain thing and it needs to do a lot more. I think we need to ... what we want to provide through health and then the bigger bit of work Anuschka is doing as well. Because the Minister for Health and Social Services, you will have to ask him, but he wants to look at other things that could be included in different ways, dealing with doctors possibly, I am not sure. But that is all under the health ...

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Yes, that is something we know a lot about on this panel, the care model.

The Minister for Social Security:

Well, it is ... yes, the care panel as well.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Yes, and we have not heard the last of it either. Okay, just jumping ahead, the COVID-19 helpline, it was noted there is a £500,000 figure, provisions being set aside for 2022. It is listed that it will be a fund as required, so could you just, just for our benefit, provide the further information how the

fund as required will be approached? For example, the scenarios that probably are pretty obvious but the operational costs to be considered to why this number is the number it is?

The Minister for Social Security:

Well, obviously, we are not out of it, we do not know what the winter will bring. That is the figure they have that has been brought down from the detail that we think it will cost that. This has all been worked out by the officers and it is in there for the helpline, but that ... when you say helpline, it is much more, it is wider than that.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, that is right. So on table 11 in the ...

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Excuse me, can I just ... because the cameras have just started to configure, it is updating Windows 10.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Okay, I think we are still live, though. Let me just check. I think we are still live, so if anybody is watching this, excuse us for a moment. I feel like I have just gone back to the old job I used to do, but stay with us, we are still on air. Yes, sorry?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

So on table 11 there are I think about 10 or so items in the Government Plan which are all described as fund as required. They are all generally ... for example, a lot of them are COVID related, including the helpline, vaccines, test and tracing programme, but there are other ones there as well. I think the idea is that should we still need those services next year, then money will be taken from the general reserve to fund them. Obviously, we have estimated that to run a helpline for the full year next year we are expecting it to be ... fingers crossed, if we had to run one it would be a lower level of resource that will be needed. We have estimated it will be about £500,000. Obviously, that will be different if we only ran it for 6 months or if we ran it for 3, et cetera. So it is good to know from our perspective that that ... that is a good service to the public. The resources are there if needed. Of course, we all hope that it is not needed, but that is in place, as is indeed the vaccine programme and the test and trace programme as well. So that is just the way it has been done I think just because of the circumstances to give the most flexibility to the overall funding envelope for the Government Plan.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Okay, so when suddenly there is a need to further enhance the service required for any reason, like we saw at Christmas or whatever, that is easier for you to get that resource in place?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Appropriately I would imagine also people are now doing it via email so that supports that service. So it is the whole in the round. The helpline is not just telephone, I would imagine?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes. You can book obviously vaccine appointments and P.C.R. (polymerase chain reaction) tests online and that is helpful, very helpful indeed, for people just to be able to do it. There are members of the public who still need help and will still prefer to speak to somebody over the phone, and so that is the reason for the helpline. Of course, things change so rapidly. Every time we think it is quietening down, then it gets very, very busy. So other countries' announcements obviously could cause Islanders to seek advice, particularly about travel arrangements.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I guess when it comes to travel forms, so everybody has to do their pre-arrival form and that has to be all ...

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

That is part of the test and tracing programme, absolutely.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

It all comes under this?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes. So table 11 has I think 3 very specifically COVID-related items in it, all of which I think are in C.S.P.2 (common strategic priorities) for more detail under the Minister for Health and Social Services, and they are explained around the individual amounts that will be required for those services. So I think if not in that section in the back pages it is broken down. But yes, for the helpline, which is a C.L.S. responsibility, it is half a million pounds.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

So just for analysis, going back to life pre-COVID, how different is it for your C.L.S., for what was being billed as the one shop, one gov approach? I remember 3 years ago we had the customer

service waiting people team that was brought in and it was all different, and then suddenly now everything is more geared to the operation around COVID. Can you give us some sort of analysis?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Well, the helpline was initially resourced from colleagues in Customer and Local Services. It needed to be done at short notice, so we moved people across, for example, from back to work and the library as well as from colleagues across government, so we had people in support centres and Skills Jersey all helping out. As time progressed we were able to secure resource specifically for that so that people could go back and help out in other priority areas around government, and the whole helpline is now 100 per cent funded, 100 per cent staffed and funded by colleagues who have been brought in just for that purpose. The leadership is still seconded people but all the support team working hard to cover the phones all throughout the week are all there for that purpose. So they are doing a great job and as and when the helpline at some point will no longer be needed I am very confident that those individuals will be assets to work across government and we will do everything possible to help them if there were vacancies they could fill.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Thank you. That sounds great, thank you. We also see the estimated costs for COVID-19 support significantly reduced again from the previous estimates. Again, just some background as to why that is the case and just confirm what the reduced balanced budget will be focused on for income support? I guess it is going to be obvious as things start to ...

The Minister for Social Security:

So, as I said, a few years back I gave back £5 million because we did not need it because we had estimated ... now when we needed it, we asked for £7.5 million because people turned up, that 600 or 700 people unemployed, all in the first 6 weeks, I think. It was manic, absolutely manic. Now we have gone back to practically pre-COVID in the actively seeking work numbers and we do not need the money, so it is held in the centre. But if we did need it again, as I said earlier, it is statutory that it must be paid and we will get the money from the centre.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Right, yes. Just moving on now to financial independence in old age, in response to this panel's recommendations to the Government review last year you accepted our recommendation to provide a report to us detailing the outcome of the scoping work undertaken in 2019 for the deferred financial independence in old age project. However, in our quarterly hearing with you in March you advised no further work again had been done. I am sensing that it might be something you touched on earlier in your answer to Deputy Alves. Could you clarify whether you expect to provide the panel

with this report on the scoping work or is it you are going to be delayed or, as you were mentioning earlier, just time is against you?

The Minister for Social Security:

No, we are literally ... so this is one stream we are picking up again and we are going to go back to D3P and we are going to ask them to finalise and publish their report, which we will then provide to you. We will work with ... get that by the end of the year, this year, hopefully, and then we are planning next steps and the work will restart shortly. Mark MacGregor is the lead on this one.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Great. We are happy to hear from Mark, but it is just that we went back and we picked up from that quarterly hearing there was a possibility it could be delayed, but you are a bit more confident today that that could be ... that is good to hear. Feel free to step in, Mark, if there is anything you could help to flesh it out, just to brief us and bring us more up to speed.

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, you probably are more up to date on where we are with D3P, et cetera.

Senior Policy Officer 1:

Yes. So they did do a kind of a draft scoping report, a good quality draft scoping report before COVID, but they will need to finalise that and make some small updates, given what has happened in the last year around international experiences. But I would hope they would be able to do that and then we will be able to obviously publish that, as the Minister was saying, hopefully by the end of the year, but that is doable. I think what is also important, as the Minister has also said, is that we are picking the work up again.

[15:00]

Most of the report is mainly looking at what they did already before COVID but we will be moving forward and looking at ... you know, considering the work, looking at the options in Jersey, how Jersey is working, and making sure with the Minister that we can all hand over that to the next Government and make sure we continue the progress on the project at that point.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I know this is a sticking point with this panel and it came up in another area really, but will the scoping work undertaken still be useful for when things get down the line? Because things have moved so fast so quickly and it is still changing, and we also still do not have the census data, which we know is going to be really vital to all of this, and, of course, with the election looming it is just how ... is

there enough time to do all this? Also, we did not see any proposed budget to progress the project in 2022, unless we have missed that as well?

The Minister for Social Security:

No, I think we are going to pay for it out of the social security fund and pay for it ourselves.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Okay. But you are confident that the information, the data, will still be as good as?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, because they have worked around the world, they have done one in New Zealand, they were really good and it was really ... it was tight to get even in principle before the next election and a scheme, and then we had COVID. So they are good, you know, they know Jersey, they know ... it will look like ... it was called financial independence in old age, but it will probably look like a work-based pension like the U.K. (United Kingdom) opted, and it is not too much to do. It is about who pays in and what, et cetera. I think they are the finalising things we need to do. I do not think we need to reinvent the wheel, and that is where we were sort of coming to. Even in the early part when we met last in February 2020, Deputy Tadier was on the subcommittee with the Constable of St. Ouen, Richard Buchanan. He has done pensions all his life and he was very impressed with them. So the world has changed but it is nothing ... someone paying it, you are working, use up a little bit, you take a little bit. The younger you are, you have a nice pot and that is your pot, not like the social security pot is, like someone is going to pay my pension who is starting work next week hopefully.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

A lot has changed but demographics wise that is going to be changed so we are ... I think the Minister is still very committed to ensuring that the work gets completed because it will hopefully end up with people saving for their own retirement, and that is an important step forward beyond ...

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

So could you confirm how this money - it does not have to be right now - has been spent so far on the project up to date? Just can you email us or ...?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Mark can probably give that to you on his fingertips there.

Senior Policy Officer 1:

Not at my fingertips but I can provide it separately, that is not a problem.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Great. Our brilliant colleagues will be chasing you. Thank you. Moving on to single parent components now, so this is page 113, how many single parents are supported by this funding and how many children are in the single parent households supported by this funding? If you could break that down for us that would be helpful.

The Minister for Social Security:

So the total claims is 1,190, total adults ... 1,417, total children is 1,587 ... of course, you have adults with more than one child, and the claims with under-5s, which are the same children, are 333.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Okay. Can you just explain ... so the reason why there are more single adult, single parent, the reason there is more adults than claims is because some of the children will be adults?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

That is good, thank you. The estimate for the components is slightly higher again - it is 2.5 or £3 million for 2022 - than it is for 2023, 2024 and 2025. Can you explain again why the proposed funding reduces in 2023, just for clarity, to clarify for us?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

It will be the same sort of issue as before in terms of obviously as part of income support and income support inflation would have been adjusted to the F.P.P. forecasts. I do not think there is any significant move within the number of estimates around single parent households in the system, but some of them will be counted in that unemployed number. We are expecting to see a reduction in ... or we have seen a reduction in unemployed people so that is ... hopefully it should mainly be around the forecast around inflation.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Right, okay, no reduced need or any other measures that you have seen? Okay. How often will the monetary value of parent component, which is £40.39 per week, be reviewed? Or will it be reviewed or it will be reviewed?

The Minister for Social Security:

Well, as I say, I have put all the components up this year and ... not that one. So that is for the next Minister for Social Security. It is a ... that is not the word. It has been in, it has been out. I wanted it in. It is what it is, but it is there for this year and it is there for next year. It has not increased.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

You have increased the ...?

The Minister for Social Security:

Everything else.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Yes, the amount going to children?

The Minister for Social Security:

Oh, yes, so per head again they get an extra £5 per child, just a payment, and then the rest I have goes ... and then the rest ... but the single parent in both years stays at that, yes.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Okay, filled that gap for us. Great, thank you for that. Back to the Chair.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Thank you. We are going to move now to care needs at home. Please can you provide the panel with an update on the deferred pilot scheme for the care needs at home project?

The Minister for Social Security:

Well, there really is not a lot to say from last year, unfortunately. We did have ... the officer that was doing it is now not doing it. I think Matt is online and he is doing it, obviously with other people. It is a very small cohort of people with very different needs. People need to go in to see them; they have adult social workers working with our team. I have the date ... it will not launch until quarter 3 again this year. We do not know when it ... possibly it will end early in 2022. That is it.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Sorry, you said something, it will not launch? Can you repeat that?

The Minister for Social Security:

Quarter 3. People are not having people in ... no one is going in anyone's houses. I have Matt on the line. It used to be Will. But as far as I know nobody is going into anybody's houses yet. Is that correct, Matt?

Senior Policy Officer 2:

Yes. Just to clarify, as the Minister said, the project was initiated in 2020 and then subject to delays because of COVID. We are dealing with a small cohort of incredibly vulnerable shielding families. So the work was picked up early in 2021 when you start beginning the meetings in the first people's households again. That work was progressed. We started writing to the families. However, with the increase in case numbers around May/June time we decided to pause the work again. It is vitally important that these meetings take place with the person. So we did discuss the option of doing them remotely, but we need to be ... it is going to involve one, possibly 2, more likely 2, officers visiting these people in their own homes, seeing them in their own environment, and it is very important that we do not put any pressure on them or worry them, particularly in these times. So I think the intention now is to pick up those meetings again. We are in the process of working with colleagues in health and community services to write to those families and pick up those meetings. Once the meetings have taken place, which we are hoping will be complete by Q1 or Q2 of next year, that will be when we will have the data to launch the pilot scheme.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Okay, thank you for that. The mid-year review of references that planned savings ... sorry, planned ... I will start again. The mid-year review references that the planned saving is expected to be achieved, page 23 of the 2021 mid-year review. Please can you provide more information on what the saving is and how it impacts the project?

The Minister for Social Security:

What, care needs at home?

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Correct.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

So, has the saving basically been delayed because of not being able to go into people's homes to progress the project?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes. So because ...

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

It is probably the way it is worded.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Because the project was meant to start in 2020, the original forecast in the Government Plan from 2020 onwards was going to be that we would spend £150,000 in 2020, increasing to £400,000 on top of that for 2021 and 2022 and so on as the benefit came to payment. Of course, with the work not being progressed in 2020 it meant that £150,000 was firstly available, deferred in 2020, and in 2021 because the work has not started we have deferred that again. So I think that is what that is referring to, that there is savings there, I think, without looking it up immediately.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

So, basically, because the project is deferred, so is the money being given?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, that is right.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Can I quickly pick you up on that? Because, yes, last year we had a lot of ... we had big spreadsheets of projects that were deferred and so on. That does not seem to have happened ... well, as much this year, is that fair to say? I think a lot of us were expecting a lot more of that this year and now we are a bit further down within COVID projects ... but I guess last year was a different time period. Secondly, the issue ... just picking up on the COVID restrictions, but obviously a lot of COVID restrictions have changed and a lot of these vulnerable people would be double vaccinated, I guess, now under the boosters. So I am just trying to piece together the restriction side of things of why things have been delayed. Now, of course, obviously as we know the vaccination does not prevent you from getting the illness, but I just want to drill in a bit more to the delay.

The Minister for Social Security:

As Matt said, these are very vulnerable people and they are transitioning from ... a lot of the young people into adulthood and they have to come from one benefit to another. The family needs to go with them, they need to go into their homes and to assess their extra care needs, because you are in your house all day, you might have more electricity, you might need your washing machine on 24/7, et cetera. But that will not be the same all across so this is a unique piece of work. They are trying to make sure when they transition from one benefit to another they will not be any worse off.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

That is fine, it is just because the original answer back we had was the project requires home visits to clients who have long-term care needs and may be shielding under COVID precautions, but of course that does not seem to be so much of an issue now, or am I getting that wrong?

The Minister for Social Security:

Well, I can only go by ... Matt works with the adult social workers and ...

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Because, yes, it goes back on to say as soon as the health situation allows, this project will recommence. I am just trying to piece together what the actual ... is it COVID or is it more complex than was first envisioned?

The Minister for Social Security:

As I say, I think we thought we could go and then, you will remember, there were over 3,000 in the middle of June. Although we did not do too much these people were still people so it was just put back again. Then I had a change of officer. It will be done but we have to take it at their pace.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

The point we are getting to, and I think it is just COVID fatigue from our point of view, we totally understand why COVID has disrupted everything, we get that. For me, this does not seem like it is so much the COVID situation but other practical issues and maybe there are complex needs around certain individual cases, I totally understand that. Sorry, I just wanted to clear that up.

Senior Policy Officer 2:

It might be helpful just to add to what the Minister has said there to know that obviously part of the project was to understand what people's regular additional costs are. There is also something around the fact that during the pandemic there may have been a slightly salted look to the data that we gathered. There is something around that as well, just to note, but otherwise I would agree with what the Minister has noted there.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

If I can just come back on your question about the strategic review. That is indeed about the fact it has been deferred. I just looked it up on page 22 and 23 and that is exactly it.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Has any consultation taken place with the Jersey Association of Carers about the care needs at home programme?

The Minister for Social Security:

Not to my knowledge, no. Did you hear that, Matt, have we done any consultation?

Senior Policy Officer 2:

Can you just repeat that, sorry?

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Of course I can. Has any consultation taken place with the Jersey Association of Carers about the care needs at home programme?

Senior Policy Officer 2:

I do not know the answer to that question as I am here now. I will find out and come back to you.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Thank you for that, Matt. Moving on, how many adaptations are being made to the programme following the burdens placed on the carers by the pandemic?

The Minister for Social Security:

The care needs at home programme?

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Well, it is on the carers. I assume that somebody cares for those individuals and the programme obviously has not progressed so have any adaptations been made to the programme, because there are more burdens on the carers that are at home as a result of the pandemic.

[15:15]

Senior Policy Officer 2:

That families that are in receipt of the packages have seen no change. The support for them has carried on uninterrupted, no difference to what they receive. The plan is obviously for us to gather data and then execute the pilot project, which is what this project is all about. So we are at the stage of gathering the data but again another key point is for us not to disrupt, concern and worry what are very vulnerable families as well. Everything has remained consistent for them. They are, as far as we know, happy with things as they are at the moment.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

That is perfect, thank you for that. Food costs bonus. The food cost bonus was renamed the community cost bonus following the approval of regulations proposed in P.95/2020, which was approved by the States Assembly in September 2020. Please can you confirm how many people or households the bonus is given to? Do you have any data on the household demographics?

The Minister for Social Security:

The bonus was paid to 1,157 people ... that says 2019.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Is that 1,157 people or households?

The Minister for Social Security:

Households.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

So that is households not the ...

The Minister for Social Security:

The majority are pensioners. Largely pensioner households.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Sorry, so the demographics are ...

The Minister for Social Security:

Sorry, I do not want to give you the wrong figure. I have some more figures here.

Senior Policy Officer 2:

It might be useful just to ...

The Minister for Social Security:

These are the figures.

Senior Policy Officer 2:

The bonus as it is now originally goes back as far as 2008 where it supported a majority of pensioners who do not qualify for income support but are below the tax threshold. It was renamed the food cost bonus by the Assembly and then latterly the community cost bonus after the scrutiny panel lodged an amendment. The community cost bonus name reflects the fact that the fact that we now support household income for a range of products rather than any one specific element. The numbers, as the Minister mentioned there, vary between 900 to 1,000, there is a margin of error around 100 people, 2,000. So 900, 1,100 annually. The average age for the most recent set of bonuses is around 79, I believe. The bonus is applied for from October, so some of the way that the gathering of the details go sort of takes some time. So we do not have stats yet for 2021 because obviously applications for 2021 going into 2022 bonus have only just opened. As I understand it, for last year, up to 2020, somewhere around 1,000, just under 1,000, claims were made.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Perfect, thank you for that. Are you collating any data on what the community costs bonus payment is being used for by the recipient households? In addition to food, what are the other community costs it is typically used for? Are you gaining that data in relation to what it is being spent on and, if so, what other than food is it typically being used on?

The Minister for Social Security:

I do not think we do.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

No, it is cash payments so it goes straight to the applicants and they can go and spend it. Even when it was called food cost bonus, they could effectively spend it as they wish.

Senior Policy Officer 2:

I will re-emphasise the point that the change in name from food cost bonus ... the Assembly decided to review it every 3 years and the bonus increased by food R.P.I. The amendment that was lodged by the scrutiny panel reflected overall R.P.I. As the panel will be aware, overall R.P.I. reflects a basket of goods rather than just one particular thing. The change of the name is more to reflect that the Assembly had recognised that it was doing more than just supporting the increase in food costs. It was reflecting an overall increase in a basket of household goods.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Okay, fine, thank you. The proposed budget for the bonus remains the same at £340,000 per year throughout 2022 to 2025. The report that accompanied P.95/2020 had estimated the increased costs per year and that by 2022 the cost of the bonus would be £361,000 per year. Could you advise why the draft Government Plan does not propose an increase in the estimate over the next 4 years? Will a further review of the value of the bonus be made to account for R.P.I.?

The Minister for Social Security:

I have that for 2022. I have 361. Where did you get that it stays the same, Mary, which page?

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

It was in the report with P.95 so in actual fact it will be available ...

The Minister for Social Security:

I have it going up to ... this year 2021 351,000 and 2022 to 361,000.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Okay, so maybe ...

The Minister for Social Security:

We can check that for you.

Senior Policy Officer 2:

Also to just point out that the community cost bonus is covered by a set of triennial regulations, which are subject to expiry after 3 years. Obviously it will most likely come back to the Assembly around 2022/2023 where obviously the Assembly will have the option of reviewing it.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Thank you for that. Sometimes one loses track of everything that is going on so thank you. How are you publicising the bonus this year to ensure that all that are eligible Islanders are made aware of it?

The Minister for Social Security:

Do we write to them?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Last year the Minister extended the application period formally because we had not had very many applications. Obviously there were lots of things on people's minds last winter so we will be making sure that we write to people as well as using other forms of communication to make sure that the previous claimants are made very aware of anything they can claim but also other new claimants who might come into that category will also be able to claim.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Disability social inclusion. Are you able to provide an update on the key priorities and deliverables that were due to be undertaken under this project? What are the areas of focus for 2022 and beyond?

The Minister for Social Security:

I have Paul on the line but as far as I know everything is completely on target, even with COVID. There has been a delay in the volunteer driver scheme because it says here vehicle would need new regulation, et cetera. Paul may be able to update on that, but I think everything ... the going into checking buildings, we have Liberate doing that. All of that is on time. We have the big event, I think it is next week, where we have done a survey and that will be revealed but I have not seen it yet. If you want to see it as soon as I have seen it ...

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Yes.

The Minister for Social Security:

They are just still getting it all together. Paul, do you want to add anything? Are we all on track with our feasibility?

Director of Local Services:

Yes, we are on track and in terms of the volunteer driver scheme what we decided to do is work with local logistic experts to help us map out what that scheme looks like because the thinking from the group was we have just employed a co-ordinator so what are they going to co-ordinate. That could lead to frustrations and so on. So we are doing that work now with Liberate, et cetera. In terms of next year, one of the key things that has come through from parent carer is around transition from children to adult services. Obviously that requires a cross-government approach, housing, education and so on. Then hopefully you saw the Embrace your Difference campaign that was launched to coincide with the Paralympics. As has been alluded to, we have had 768 datasets back. Thankfully it is a broad social demographic of age, gender, income and employment. We have literally just received the results back today. I have not had full sight of them. An independent from Insight helped us with that and I think we will be able to use that to help with the deliverables in other years. As you are aware, the strategy was originally produced in 2015/2016 and quite a lot of things have moved on from that, whether that be COVID, the care model, et cetera. So we are doing a piece of work just to go through all of the actions and see which ones have been completed, which we will report on at the end of the year and then work by civil society experts by experience to focus on those key areas that we want to improve. In terms of what we agreed this year, we will have the available information right across all formats, including working with the World Association for the Deaf to have B.S.L. (British Sign Language) in place by the end of the year. As the Minister alluded to, we work very closely with Liberate and others to look at the physical accessibility ... not just physical, as I think said in the last meeting, it is also about attitudes, staff training. We have been doing some work there across government and within the private sector to support people so they are getting it right every time to be more inclusive. As we said, one of the things that we looked at was more apprenticeships. We are working with private companies and I.o.D. (Institute of Directors) to look at how we can enable disabled people to participate in board membership. We working with the Greffe to make sure that people participate in politics. Obviously this is a good time period to encourage people to participate. One of the actions was around ensuring that disabled persons and carers could meet politicians and, as the Minister has alluded to, we have this event next week where Lord Blunkett and Stuart Penn, who I am sure many will know, will be hosting the event and it will be a mixture of arts, there will be some sport there, there will be some music but crucially there

will be some playback from those 600 or 700 people who have given their views about disability. Just to confirm, that is not just about strategy, that is looking at, as a community, how do we feel about disability, where can we improve, how accessible is government and the private sector, et cetera. It is a snapshot of where we are as an Island. As soon as we have that I am more than happy to share it. Some of the developments that you might have seen ... you will have seen the fiscal stimulus, again a fantastic organisation Healing Waves benefited from funding there to be able to have as specialist facility, which is wonderful. We also supported Citizen's Advice Jersey to update their website. The team have done a great job there but again technology is moving on and we talked about that at the start of the meeting and how things have moved on. That will come on stream by the end of the year. That has been developed by Islanders who looked at all 750 pages, they have road tested it, and that will come on stream. Just to conclude, in terms of this year's actions, we are on track. Like anybody, it has been a stop and start year but the infrastructure is there, we have the groups, we have more volunteers, we have a wide group of experts by experience and we will work with them as we have done to deliver the strategy, but we also need to look further and aim a bit higher. What the strategy sets out is fairly helpful but it is a baseline and I think if we are really going to be an inclusive society we need to work, listen and co-produce future services for Islanders to access. I hope that answers your question.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Yes, I think it does. I do not think I need to follow this up, actually, but how has the pandemic impacted on your project plans? By the sound of it, not that much, so well done.

Director of Local Services:

We have some fantastic, amazing civil society organisations, as you will know, and what they did was they changed their business model to support Islanders, so we just work with them where we can help them, providing them with support where possible. We have some fantastic volunteers and fantastic charities on the Island, which, again, I think helped the Island get through the pandemic. That is my view.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Thank you. From 2023 the proposed budget increases from 426,000 per annum to 491,000 per annum. Can you provide a brief outline regarding the increase in the estimated budget?

[15:30]

The Minister for Social Security:

My budget?

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

I assume it is your budget.

The Minister for Social Security:

I have my budget here.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

I think the Deputy is referring to the disability ...

The Minister for Social Security:

The disability ...

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Yes, we are still on the disability social inclusion. In 2021 it is 481,000 and then in 2022 is 426,000 and 2023, 2024 and 2025 is 491,000 so just really a brief outline regarding the increase in the estimated budget, that was all.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, Paul might be able to help with that. In the original plan there were a number of elements that started and stopped and other elements came in. Paul, do you have that to hand?

Director of Local Services:

There was money allocated to different parts of the organisation, whether that be for education, et cetera. My understanding is it all brings it into one place to deliver the strategy but also then to focus on areas where we know we have gaps, such as transition, et cetera. That is what we will be working on with our partners and, again, that is something that will be brought on in a structured manner. I think having the information that we now have will help us look at some of those priorities and how we can give the best value for Islanders.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Thank you. We are not going to move on to capital programmes. Looking at table 20 of the proposed Government Plan we can see that there is a proposed budget in 2024 and 2025 for the crematorium. We understand the budget line relates to scoping a project including a replacement site in order to move the crematorium from Overdale. Could you please provide some further information about the project for the public record?

The Minister for Social Security:

The crematorium, so this is an odd one. The crematorium is still with Health but the customer facing parts are moving across to C.L.S., is that correct?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

That is correct.

The Minister for Social Security:

I know nothing. When I saw this ...

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

It is not the Minister for Social Security's responsibility, the crematorium legislation is still under the Minister for Health and Social Services. What has happened is it has moved ... the operation of the crematorium has moved from the health service to Customer and Local Services as a customer-facing part of the Government and we have looked at what we did in previous services and I am very pleased with the efforts that Paul and his team have already made to improve the experience. We have also, therefore, been able to pick up them fresh to say, irrespective of the hospital, this building is dated, the plant is dated, it is obviously at the end of its useful life, we need to start thinking ahead to see how we can change that situation. That is what that capital is for. It is an estimate, a very early estimate, at this stage, and we have not looked at any options at all in terms of if the crematorium changed the site where it currently is or whether it is somewhere else, but we have put some new funding in place to help do that project and business case and fund it if needed.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I would imagine if the hospital does go ahead you would have to move before because there is more technical stuff of a build at that point. If the decision is to move the building that needs to be done sooner rather than later.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Well, there are quite a few things to consider alongside construction but Paul can perhaps jump in.

Director of Local Services:

Going to back to Ian's point, the plant is coming to the end of its life, it is on a certain time. It uses fossil fuel which again goes against some of our policy intentions and really when we have looked around other jurisdictions we are a little bit behind. We do have it regularly serviced to make sure the public have confidence in that and it is working very well. We do not have the volume as perhaps other jurisdictions have. Just for the record, there is no intention whatsoever to move the rose garden. That is not something we have ever discussed and we are not thinking about it. What we have in place is what we call a service user group and has representation from different faith groups

and humanists. We also have the Islander's funeral directors on board and we work collectively to improve the experience for the celebrations of life for all Islanders. Two of the main things we have at the moment, one is how we can continue our services our exemplar services while construction of the hospital takes place. The other one is looking at a new facility. I would suggest, Deputy Pamplin, to try to retrofit the existing building while you were putting new machinery in would be quite a challenge. The machine, from what I am told, the lead-in time is literally months as opposed to weeks and is very bespoke. It is really once in a generation. As Ian has alluded to, we have not made any decision. There are lots of options around different types of plant. There are also options around woodland burials. There is lots to consider. Because it is a specialist project it would potentially have to be something that we looked for a design build option. We know there are manufacturers not just in the U.K. but in Holland and other jurisdictions so we are just flagging it now as something that we do not want to come up a couple of years when we have not actively planned. We want to be sensible. As we say, it is a very sensitive area and any sort of speculation or gossip is unhelpful and causes people a lot of unnecessary hurt, which obviously we want to avoid.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Thank you, that is obviously valuable to say in a public hearing. Are you confident that starting the work in 2024 will allow enough time for the crematorium to be moved before the new hospital is in operation?

Director of Local Services:

There is 2 parts to this, if I may. The identification of a site, if that is the direction we go down, the actual build itself will be in line with any other build. The lead-in time for the cremators is where you get a time lag. We worked closely with the firm or spoke to the firm that helped Guernsey with their facility and it could be anything from 18 to 24 months for new plant to be constructed and commissioned, et cetera. We would like to start this work very early. The point made, and is the position for myself, is we are seeing the logical intention in keeping with having the hospital and the crematorium next to each other but, again, maintaining the fact that we will maintain those existing rose gardens wherever the crematorium is.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Thank you. The final couple of questions. Benefits and payment system replacements. N.E.S.S.I.E. (New Employment Social Security Information Exchange). The total estimated spend for the benefits and payment system replacement project remains the same, £23 million. However, the budget for final year in 2024 has reduced by £1 million. Can you confirm how much has been spent on this project to date and clarify why the final year budget has been reduced?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, I can probably take that one. The system that is currently in place is called N.E.S.S.I.E. and that is now getting towards of its life as well. We have been keen to do something about that for a while but did not want to change the underlying system while colleagues were creating their system. They are now bringing over contributions into that collection system. Once that was through that is when we started this work to change the benefits and payment system. We started work this year and I have we have a budget for this of about £250,000. We have been looking to ... based on that work we started we have pulled forward the budget slightly and have just slightly refined our forecast really in terms of the progress we might be able to make. That is the simple reason for this change in budgets. We may find we need it back next year depending on progress in the 12 months. Yes, we are pleased with how that is going so far and a lot of that is thinking about how we design the services in the future, not just around benefits but trying to ensure that it is based more around the customer and their life events that may require some financial support at a particular time. That is quite a significant piece of work and will be quite dominating for us in Customer and Local Services over the next few years in terms of engagement with colleagues and stakeholders.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Are you able to provide the panel with a further breakdown of the costs involved from 2022 to 2025?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

We only have estimates in terms of the work. Some of it will be around buying a system. It will be around implementing and testing that system, there may be hardware, maybe not hardware that may be required and so on. At the moment we are working on what will look like. I sincerely hope it does not end up to be £25 million but we are working on what it looks like at the moment. We have not spent £250,000 yet, we have just been working out what we would like at this stage. There is not much more of a breakdown than that at that stage. That is an estimate we have worked through with modernisation and digital.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Perfect, okay. If there is nothing further from either of my colleagues ...

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Just one quick thing. I went back and looked at ... going back to the community cost bonuses and I have brought up the original proposition, P.95/2020. At the bottom of the report it just provides an estimate of the expenditure. So 2020 £240,000, 2021 £351,000, 2022 £361,000. So that is where we were getting that from.

The Minister for Social Security:

That is what I have here as well.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

So just for clarity.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

It is not in the Government Plan, which is £341,000 across the board.

The Minister for Social Security:

For the 3 years?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Now, I wonder if the inflation for that is included in the ... not in the growth bid but in the uplift in the Customer and Local Services benefit budget. So in 2023 the 2 months ... the budget goes up by several million pounds a year because of inflation, whereas that is £20,000. I think there is no danger of it not being paid out absolutely but I understand the panel have flagged that. There is no danger that food cost bonus will not go up as per the proposition and it will be paid out because that is a statutory benefit. There were plans to change the criteria for it so if we overspend the budget, we overspend the budget; if we underspend it, then we underspend.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Yes, that is what these things are all about and that is what we are here for.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Perfect. We have no further questions. I would like to just say thank you very much, Minister, and all of the officers from Social Security that have provided us with our answers this afternoon. Thank you to my colleagues, those listening and to the officers from the Greffe, thank you.

[15:42]