

# STATES OF JERSEY



## MIGRATION AND POPULATION DATA (P.120/2020) – COMMENTS

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Presented to the States on 30th October 2020  
by the Chief Minister

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STATES GREFFE

## COMMENTS

### Executive summary

#### Parts (b) – (e) (as amended):

The Chief Minister acknowledges that parts (b) – (e) of the proposition as amended set out a number of detailed datasets to accompany a future population policy. Whilst there are reservations as to the contribution that some of these datasets would make to the development of a population policy, the overall principle that a sustainable population policy should be based on appropriate and detailed information, is supported.

#### Part (f) (as amended):

The Chief Minister has already committed to a broad public debate as part of the development of a population policy and confirms support for the overall principle that public consultation should be included in the development of any future population policy.

#### Part (a) (as amended):

The Chief Minister cannot support the timetable identified in part (a) and has lodged an amendment to the amended P.120/2020 to propose an alternative commitment to publishing an interim population policy by the end of 2021.

The Chief Minister does not consider that it would be possible to adopt a rigorous approach to the development of a full population policy, including public consultation, and to achieve a meaningful debate by the end of 2021.

### Background

The Deputy's report clearly sets out the motivation behind the proposition. To implement a sustainable population policy the government requires "data, detail, rigour and academic approaches". This is completely in line with the actions that Ministers have already taken and are committed to taking in the future.

#### Parts (b) – (e):

The Chief Minister does not oppose (b), (c), (d) and (e) on the grounds that a comprehensive dataset should support any proposed population policy. However, it is noted that some of the areas identified in the proposition are unlikely to provide useful information in the setting of a population policy.

The Chief Minister set up a Migration Policy Development Board ("The Board") in early 2019. The terms of reference set by the Chief Minister included:

- *The board should rely on statistical and economic modelling, including long term fiscal modelling and analysis of the implications for taxes, services, and our economy, of migration.*

- *The work should be cognizant of and cover wider population policy issues, such as fiscal policy, the ageing demographic, public service provision, planning, transport policy and the impact of migration on housing affordability.*

The findings and recommendations of the Board, published in March 2020, emphasised the importance of collecting and maintaining good data and using expert advice:

*The Board notes that consultation with business leaders, environmental and community based groups can be inconsistent, and to address this issue an independent expert population panel should be established to research population issues and gather detailed evidence from local and external sources in order to provide regular, informed advice to the Council of Ministers to support the maintenance of a common population policy.*

The Chief Minister has now published a policy proposition P.137/2020 on migration control proposals which endorses the findings of the Board.

Part c(vii) of the proposition provides for:

*an independent, statutory, expert panel to research and advise on population matters;*

This is described in the accompanying report as follows:

*The expert population panel would take evidence from local business, environmental and social groups as well as collecting statistics and examining international factors. The panel will make use of the expanded data collection available from the improved CHW administration system (see section 7) and will provide advice based on an analysis of this data and other survey evidence as needed. It would report to the Council of Ministers on a regular basis to ensure that the overarching population policy can be developed and adapted to take account of emerging issues. Given the breadth of the subject matter, the panel may also use subgroups to investigate specific topics such as skills development or specific sectors such as tourism.*

*The panel would ensure that research and advice on population matters were guided by and took account of parallel workstreams such as a periodic objective assessment of future labour market needs - which would inform the Island Plan Review, migration policy, and skills strategy - and how recommendations would impact previous modelling such as the objective assessment of housing needs and population projections. Ministers could also request the independent expert panel to carry out research into a specific area, wherever specific concerns on the current population policy were highlighted.*

In addition, an executive commitment is given in the report on page 34:

*To enable the Council of Ministers to maintain a coherent population policy across government as a whole, and to allow the Minister or Ministers with political responsibility in this area to maintain meaningful guidelines on immigration and migration controls, **Ministers have also started a review of the range and accessibility of migration and population statistics available to the Government and the public.** (emphasis added)*

This is described as:

*Funding has been requested in the 2021 Government Plan to provide an initial £1 million budget to support the provision of an improved IT system to ensure decisions for business and individual CHW permissions can be made expeditiously under the new controls, and to gather data and provide statistics on CHW applications and the characteristics of businesses and workers holding current CHW permissions. The planned development of an e-census and the introduction of monthly reporting to government of manpower information will also improve the monitoring of the working population.*

*As these separate projects are completed, they will be incorporated with other existing information sources to provide a regular, comprehensive report that brings data together from all areas of government activity to give a more accurate view of housing, immigration, migration and population issues to aid the development of ongoing immigration / migration control policies and to inform the public of the outcomes of these policies.*

*Investment in a tech-based migration control system and database will support the provision of forecasts, modelling and evidence-based decision making to support future population, migration and immigration policies.*

The wide range of data areas set out in the proposition reflect the level of detail that the Deputy is expecting and Ministers can confirm that appropriate long-term planning already takes place across all government activities. Whilst projections will be extended out to a fifty-year period, it should be noted that this will not necessarily reflect or take into account the actual needs of future generations.

**Part (f):**

The Chief Minister supports part (f) of the proposition.

The need for public debate is clearly set out by the Chief Minister in the foreword to P.137:

*This policy paper does not attempt to set a population target. This will require wider public and political debate on how the island wants to move forward in our post Brexit and Covid-19 world.*

The report to P.120 includes an estimate of the cost of public consultation as between £3,000 and £5,000. A meaningful consultation process on this subject will require a significantly larger budget.

**Part (a):**

The Chief Minister rejects part (a) of the proposition, which calls for a States debate before 31 December 2021.

The Chief Minister has lodged an amendment to the amended P.120/2020, which provides a commitment to publish an interim population policy before the end of 2021.