

23.05.23

**15 Deputy L.V. Feltham of the Assistant Chief Minister regarding her policy position in relation to population and migration (OQ.100/2023)**

Will the Assistant Chief Minister outline what her policy position is in relation to population and migration?

**Deputy L. Stephenson (Assistant Chief Minister):**

I thank the Deputy for her question. I was very pleased to accept the request of the Chief Minister to support her in this important policy area. I took on this responsibility around 5 weeks ago and am, therefore, still doing some catching up in terms of the work already completed by the Population and Skills Ministerial Group, of which I am now a member. What I can say is that I fully support the overall direction of that group in its desire to create policies that support the population as a whole and equally value every individual within that population. My policy position has not changed since I wrote my manifesto.

[11:30]

I support an improved skills agenda to grow and develop local talent, balanced with a need for some inward migration to ensure we have a skilled workforce fit for the future and remain a vibrant place to live, work and do business. We need improved data, which is being worked on, and a flexible system which can respond to emerging challenges. I am currently working with a subgroup of the Population and Skills Ministerial Group to complete our annual report on population policy issues and this is due to be published before the end of June.

**3.15.1 Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

As the Assistant Chief Minister does have delegated responsibility, how does she intend to provide leadership in this area?

**Deputy L. Stephenson:**

I thank the Deputy for her question. I very much see my role in this as working collaboratively with the Chief Minister. I am not taking the responsibility of population away from the Chief Minister entirely. I would also point the Deputy to that Population and Skills Ministerial Group, which is providing collaborative leadership as a group of Ministers working together to set policy direction and discuss all matters related to population. Population is about more than just the number of people on our Island. I believe all Ministers related to that important area will be showing leadership on it.

**3.15.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Does this mean that the Minister does not support a zero population policy growth?

**Deputy L. Stephenson:**

That would be correct.

**3.15.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Can I ask whether the Minister agrees with the Assistant Chief Minister who recently spoke at a conference about being able to produce significant increase in our growth and our economy up to 5 times the growth to where we are now without any increase in our population?

**Deputy L. Stephenson:**

I am aware and I know that the Chief Minister is aware because she said it at Scrutiny only last week that some Ministers did stand on platforms of net inward migration. I would point the Deputy to the future economy programme, which is working towards growing the economy with as little pressure on population growth as possible. We have heard very publicly some very stark warnings about where our population could stand in a couple of decades if we continue to want to push growth, as we have been doing previously. It is quite clear we need to take some action which does not continue down that path. I think there have been some clear indications that all those Ministers I talked about before, working together as part of that group, are working collectively towards that aim.

**3.15.4 Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

Could the Assistant Chief Minister inform the Assembly if she intends to take any work to identify what a sustainable population may be for the Island, given our size?

**Deputy L. Stephenson:**

The Deputy may well be aware that the States Assembly in 2021 required the Council of Ministers to discuss and agree their common policy on population on a regular basis and at least annually. Ministers are currently in that process and a report on that position will be lodged with the Assembly in the coming weeks in June.

**Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

Sir, I do not think that was an answer to the question. My question specifically related to what work would be undertaken to identify what a sustainable population was.

**Deputy L. Stephenson:**

In a few weeks in June I am sure the Deputy will be able to read that report and have some more answers to that. It is very much a part of that.

**The Bailiff:**

Very well. Then we now come to question 16 that Deputy Tadier will ask of the Minister for Housing and Communities.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

There is someone to ask I presume.

**The Bailiff:**

The Chief Minister will be answering that question.