



Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel

Government Plan 20-23 Focus Groups Results Presentation

Presentation Outline



Research Aim and Objectives

The research project **aim** was to explore views on Jersey's new proposed Government Plan 20-23.

Specific **objectives** included exploring:

- awareness and knowledge of the new Government Plan, plus how aware, e.g. Government communications and/or social or traditional media coverage etc
- public opinions on the overall direction of the Government Plan and the over-arching economics e.g. £824m in 2020 versus budget of £735m for 2019, especially in light of expected income and the other headline figures
- views on Government plans to introduce £40m in efficiencies in 2020 and how approached
- gaining an understanding of public opinions on the specific potential headline tax raising measures in the Government Plan e.g. duty rises, increase tax exemption thresholds, Long Term Care charge increase etc
- opinions on the amount of money going into new projects in 2020 and the relative amounts/priorities e.g. putting children first £20.7m, modernising Government £25.4m etc
- views on level of transparency with regard to the Government plan

Outcome: Provide public views and perceptions to inform the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel about the new Government Plan built upon evidence based research

Project Scope and Sample

Scope:

Jersey islanders



Sample:

The target sample was General islanders.

All respondents were recruited and screened to a screener questionnaire, this aimed to primarily include a mix of social demographics for the general public, such as age, income level, employment status, Parish, gender, ethnicity etc.

The screening criteria were discussed at the kick off briefing meeting, along with the actual target structure for each group. The screener questionnaire was designed by 4insight as well as reviewed and agreed with yourselves, prior to use. The screening excluded those in the media and those actively involved in politics.

The recruitment strategy including social media activity was discussed and agreed with yourselves at the kick off meeting.

Qualitative Methodology

Conducting focus groups for the objectives of this research ensured that we truly explored the level of **depth & understanding** needed from BOTH the rational and emotional perspective.

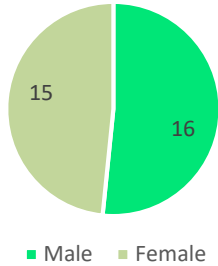
4 focus groups were conducted, each with a mix of the various socio-demographics.

Each group targeted 8 respondents and lasted about 90 – 110 minutes. All groups were conducted to a topic guide prepared by 4insight which was agreed prior to use by the panel. Various headline figures from the proposed Government Plan 20-23 were presented as stimulus within the groups, (6 slides in total). Projective and enabling techniques were utilised to explore respondents perceptions at an individual and emotional level. The qualitative focus groups were professionally facilitated / moderated by a Director of 4insight with initial scene setting regarding how a mix of views is acceptable, and the moderator utilised Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP). With these 2 approaches together we were able to eliminate any potential 'group think'.

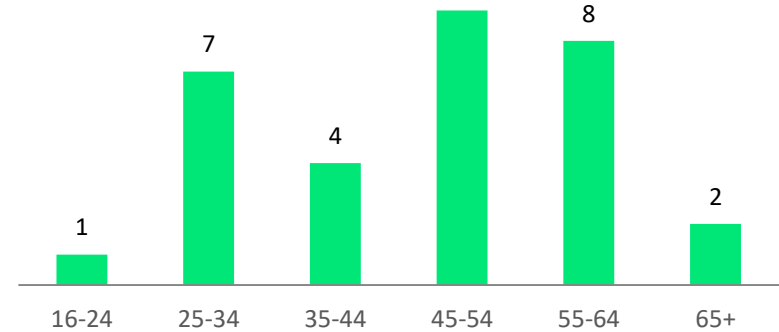
All groups were held at 4insight's professional observation facilities which allowed key team members to view live, whilst not biasing responses by being present in the sessions. Any extra questions from those viewing were able to be added just before the close of each group. All groups were digitally recorded and professionally analysed.

Demographics: Age, Parish and Gender

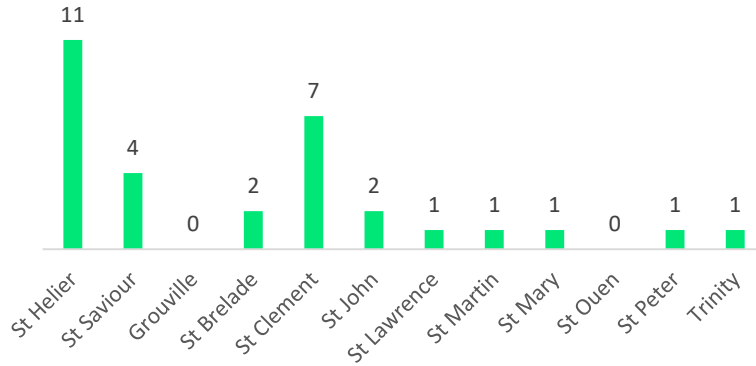
Gender



Age

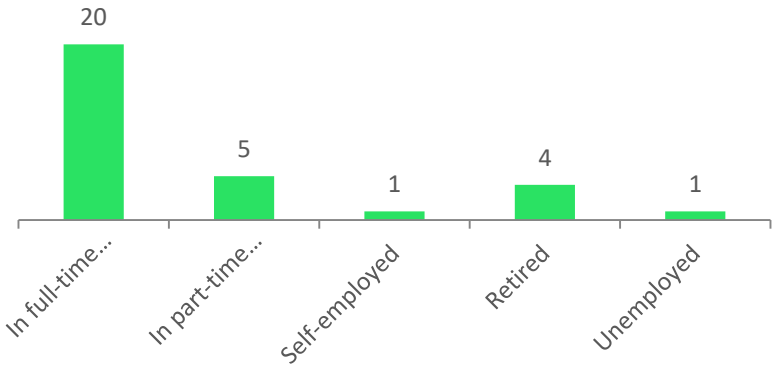


Which Parish do you live in?

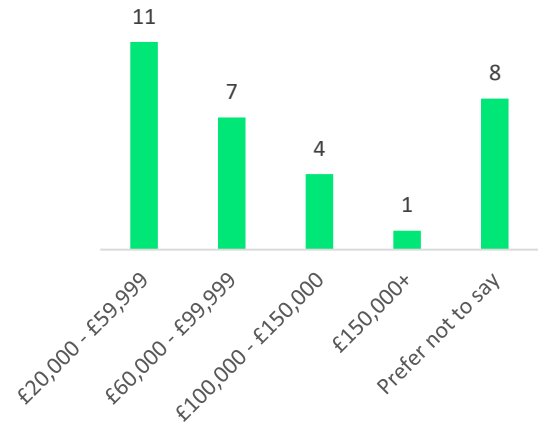


Demographics: Born in Jersey, Employment Status and Income

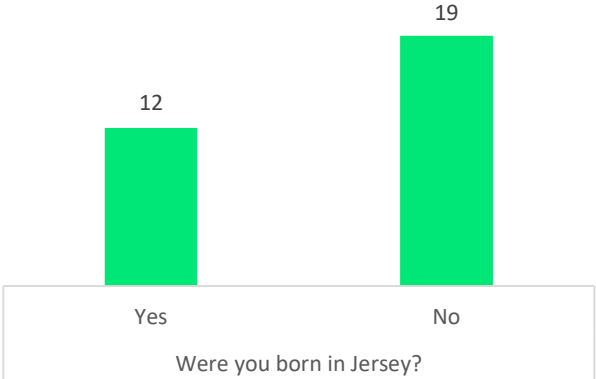
Employment



Which of the following best describes your total annual household income?

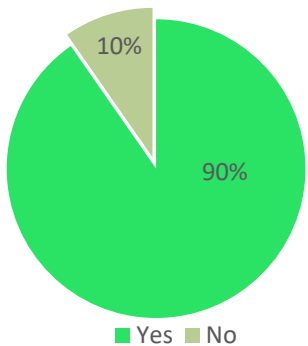


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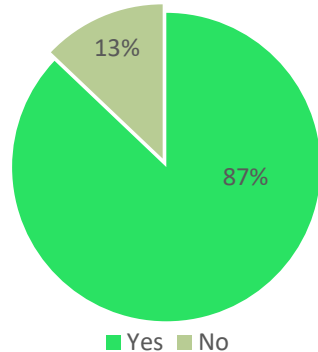


Demographics: Registered Voter, Voting in Jersey Before, Voting in the 2018 Election

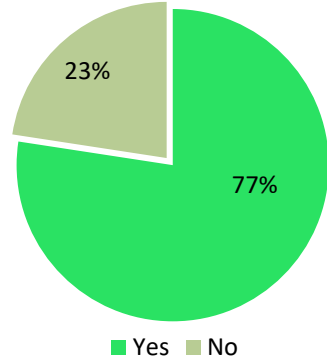
Are you a registered voter?



Have you voted in Jersey before?



Did you vote in the 2018 election?



n=31 note: sample more politically engaged

Detailed Results

First word associations, “New Government Plan”, little consensus



3X “What is it?”
2X “Hospital”
2X “Population”

2X “Brexit”
Excl: “Waiting on Brexit”,
“Impact of Brexit”,
“Brexit mess”



Awareness and Knowledge

- On average 6 people in each focus group said they were aware of the Government Plan, although it then emerged that some were confused with the Island Plan
- The majority of respondents had not fully read the whole Government Plan with most skim reading it online
- Those who were aware of the Government Plan it was through:

Traditional Media



Online



General Views

"Facts and unknown facts"

"There is a lot of blue sky thinking"

"Dependent on Brexit not all things will happen"

"Not easy to read or to understand"

"No performance indicators, difficult to comprehend"

"Quite long"

"Some of the policy sounded sensible, whether they carry it out will need to be proven"

"Complex"

"A lot of irrelevant statistics"

"Obvious"

"Just about ideas"

"The plan doesn't seem to be based on previous work, it seems like a stand alone document"

"it has to be been written in a way that everyone understands it and reads it the same way"

Views on Headline Figures

"I thought the idea was to reduce spending, to reduce spending you have to reduce expenditure"

"why is additional expenditure increasing 640% from one year on?"

"there is a lot going out compared to what is coming in"

"It's not small increases either is it? 175% is massive, where is all that money coming from? 640% increase!"

"You'd expect for the spending to go up if they are going to do what they said they are going to do with the taxes... but it's not telling me anything else"

Headline figures

Public Sector Spending / Income in 2020	2020 (£m)	Notes
Budget as per 2019	735	
Additional spending	81	2019: £11m = x7 increase or 640%
Inflation and legislative decisions	41	See p136 of Govt Plan for details
Efficiencies	-33	Additional amount of £7m generated through more efficient tax collection. Total efficiencies = £40m
Total department spending	824	2019: £735m = 12% increase
Capital projects	90.5	2019: £32.9m = x3 increase or 175%
Total Govt spending	914.5	
Funded by		
Forecast income	892	2019: £857.5m = 4% increase
Existing sources (Consolidated Fund)	22.5	

Views on Headline Figures

- Majority thought the budget for spending was too high and were concerned with the spending increases from 2019 to 2020
- Majority found the figures difficult to understand
- Most respondents were confused as to what £40 million “efficiencies” mean/include and where it is coming from
- Within all groups at least one person thought that efficiencies may mean tax increases and job losses
- A wide proportion of respondents felt that the way spending is calculated in the government would “not be sustainable in an organisation”
- “Additional spending “ was questioned within 2 groups
- Some were unsure what “capital projects” may be, and questioned the increase
- Some participants thought that “inflation” was often used to justify higher spending
- A number of respondents questioned “where the 4% income increase will come from?”

Headline Figures

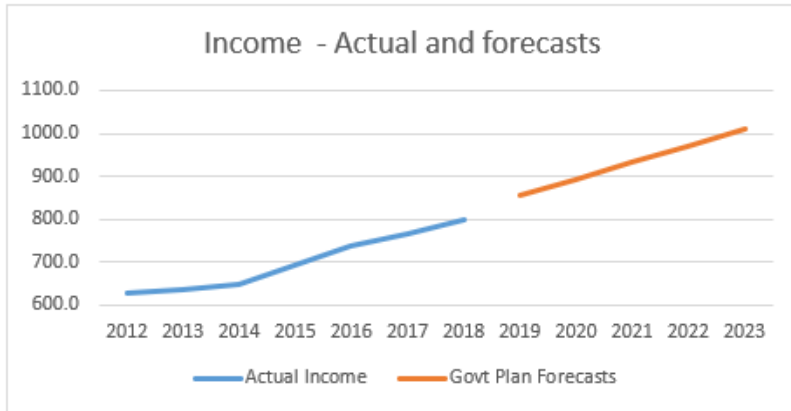
Public Sector Spending / Income in 2020	2020 (bn)	Notes
Subject as per 2019	736	
Additional spending	81	2019: £15m = 2% increase or 14%
Inflation and legislative decisions	41	See p158 of Gov Plan for details
Efficiencies	-33	Additional amount of £7m generated through more efficient tax collection. Total efficiencies = £26m.
Total department spending	824	2019: £726m = 12% increase
Capital projects	60.5	2019: £32.5m = 83% increase or 17%
Total Govt spending	914.5	
Funded by		
Forecast income	892	2019: £821.5m = 4% increase
Existing sources (Consolidated Funds)	22.5	

“it seems like the wrong time to shake things up”

Views on Income Figures

Income

Income forecasts	2019 (£m)	2020 (£m)	2021 (£m)	2022 (£m)	2023 (£m)
Sept 2018 (included in Budget 2019)	826.4	855.4	887.5	933.3	959.5
Spring 2019 (included in Govt Plan 2020)	857.5	892.5	931.2	971.5	1,011.0



"Unrealistic graph"

"Makes no sense"

"How have they worked this out?"

"It seems strange to be able to predict this far off in the future"

Views on Income Figures

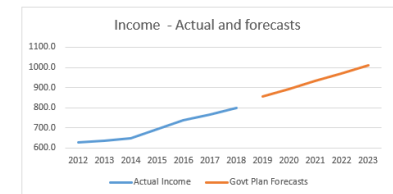
- Most thought that there are going to be taxes increases to cover income forecast
- Majority were concerned on whether it is achievable
- Most thought that Brexit will have a negative impact on these targets
- Many were sceptical of the trend line and questioned how accurate income predictions for previous years had been

"It seems like an uniform growth, doesn't seem to be the right approach considering the way Brexit is turning out, the way that prices are going up. It doesn't seem right that income just carries on"

"I'm not sure whether it's achievable because of Brexit... If you're basing it on those living in those times anymore "

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Thoughts on Spending Figures by Strategic Priority

“What does modernising government actually impact people on the day to day, improving wellbeing will help people, modernising government will not help the general people”

“Modernising government it’s easy to dismiss because you don’t see a person like putting children first or wellbeing but it’s still important”

- Within all groups some questioned why “Modernising Government” has such a large budget, while others thought that this may improve efficiency within the government e.g. IT systems, tax
- Some thought that “Put Children First” is important but also with concerns on the budget and how it’s going to be applied
- The budget for Put Children First was also challenged within 2 groups with thoughts that other priorities such as Wellbeing need to be implemented before putting children first

“Children I would expect that to be a priority, they are the future, for me they are the ones that should always take priority”

“I did take an issue with the thing of putting children first... there are lot of issues around the children’s sector that first need to be resolved before anything else can be done, the children services need to be reformed quite a lot”

Expenditure by Strategic Priority
(Comparative figures for 2019 not available)

£137.9m	Put Children First
£223.9m	Improve Wellbeing
£65.9m	Vibrant Economy
£188.9m	Reduce Inequality
£22.8m	Protect our environment
£76.8m	Modernising Government
£140.5m	Other Government Services (and inflation)
-£33.0m	Efficiencies
£823.7m	Total Expenditure

Thoughts on Spending Figures by Strategic Priority

- A few questioned what “Other Government Services” mean
- Some questioned why “Protect our Environment” has the least spending budget
- Majority thought that “Improve Wellbeing” was a positive, although some questioned whether cuts (that have recently been announced) in the health sector will impact this priority

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“Haven’t they just announced today that they are going to take a big hit? That the Health department are going to have to reduce £8 million? So it’s a bit confusing about what is in here and what I have heard on the radio this morning”

“There is a lot of repetition, they say we want to do this but don't say how they plan to achieve it”

“I would question why protecting the environment has so little funding compared to everything else?”

Thoughts on Spending Figures by Strategic Priority

- Most had issues with how “Reduce Inequality” will be carried out and measured
- Some thought that some priorities could be linked e.g. “Wellbeing” and “Put Children First” or “Environment” and “Wellbeing”
- Some were unaware of what “Vibrant Economy” may include, within all groups there were questions of what this priority means, how it’s going to be applied and it’s amount of spending
- Some were concerned on the budget and how it’s being disbursed and implemented between different priorities

“Without a vibrant economy the rest will probably not happen”

“The priorities seem right but not the sort of budget”

“If you have more bills and less money to spend how are you going to create a vibrant economy?”

“Can you measure inequality, before you reduce it? How do you measure it?”

Expenditure by Strategic Priority
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Thoughts on Spending Figures by Department

Expenditure by Department
(2019 Budget v 2020 Budget)

2019	2020	% ↑	Department
21.8	37.7	73%	Chief Operating Office
130.7	147.6	13%	Children, Young People, Education and Skills (CYPES)
90.2	90.6	0%	Customer & Local Services
54.3	64.4	19%	Growth, Housing and Environment (GHE)
197.9	211.4	7%	Health
10.3	12.4	20%	Overseas Aid
52.2	54.1	4%	Justice & Home Affairs
12.6	19	51%	Office of the Chief Exec
6.2	12.5	102%	Strategic Policy, Performance and Population (SPPP)
119.3	129.8	9%	Treasury
27.2	32	18%	Non-Ministerial Departments Reserve (contingency)
12.1	45.2		Efficiencies
	-33		
734.8	823.7	12%	Total Expenditure

- Most not familiar with the latest government structure
- Thoughts that “Customer and Local Services” should have a higher budget
- Most thought that spending on “Chief Operating Office” and “Office of the Chief Executive” are large spends and very large increases over 2019
- Some thought that the budget should be further broken down by departments
- Perceived lack of explanation to what the ‘expenditures’ mean



"If every department is increasing expenditure, how are they getting efficiencies with £33 million?"

Thoughts on Spending Figures by Department

- Some thought that there was a big difference in the percentage increase in “Chief Operating Office” and “Office of the Chief Executive” in comparison to “Health”
- A few were concerned whether this is the right time to increase overseas aid
- Most thought that percentage increases from 2019 to 2020 too high

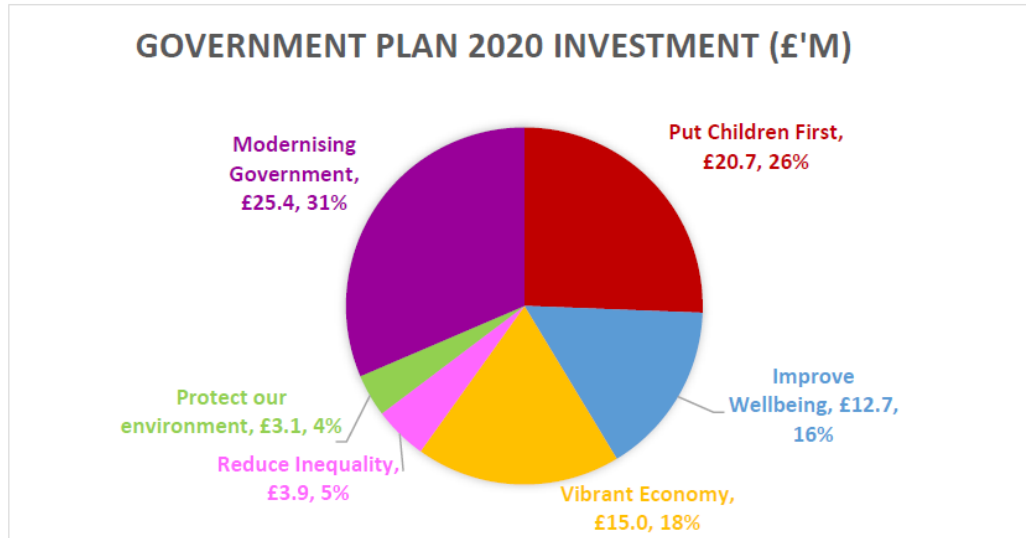
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734.8	823.7	12%	Total Expenditure

“The Government departments table on the right doesn’t necessarily fit into an amount and it’s not easily linked to the priorities”

Key Take Away: on investment figures

Investment



"things that affect most people are second"

- Some thought that “Protect Our Environment” has a low budget in comparison to the “Modernising Government”
- A few questioned “Vibrant Economy”
- Some thought that “Put Children First” had a big budget and were unclear as to what it means, while others were concerned that “Modernising Government” had a bigger budget

Key Take Away: Tax Proposals

Headline tax proposals

- **Duty rises in line with inflation** (except for tobacco and high strength alcohol which are increased between 8 – 14%)
- **6p per litre increase in petrol duty** (of which 4p to go to a new Climate Emergency Fund)
- **Tax exemption thresholds increase in line with inflation**
- **GST de-minimis reduced from £240 to £135**
- **1% increase in Long Term Care charge (from 1% to 2%)**
- **Employers Social Security – 0.5% increase (from 2% to 2.5%) and the cap increased from £176k to £250k**
- **No changes to Stamp Duty**

- Most would like more explanation on the reasons behind the tax increases
- Some recognised that tax increases on alcohol and tobacco may have health benefits
- Most thought that tax increases such as the petrol duty will mainly affect the middle class/people with lower income and make the island more expensive
- Most thought that GST increase on online shopping would not generate much revenue as there are costs
- Majority were concerned that when taxes go up everything else goes up causing a wider effect and increasing cost of living, again squeezing the middle class
- Mixed reactions to no changes to stamp duty – some pleased and others think of it as an opportunity for extra revenue from expensive properties, e.g. over £2m

"The government doesn't want us to stop smoking and drinking, they want us to pay more while we are doing it"

Most responses negative to tax proposals

Tax Increases

Positives

"At the moment a pack of cigarettes is around £9.80 and I think taking the price of the £10 mark will be a psychological limit to a lot of people smoking. Maybe at that point you may see a health benefit"

"I think they may be doing that for the social aspect of Jersey, reducing anti-social behaviour, reducing alcohol and tobacco for the health, to be on a track to having less people drinking"

"I hope that that reduces the number of cars on the road"

Negatives

"I don't know how much this is an incentive to stop drinking, if there are people who drink and smoke too much they are going to continue to do that"

"Petrol will be above inflation and will kill tourism, there are people that enjoy a drink and are not alcoholics and they are punishing them"

"When you try to order things to Jersey companies don't deliver because they can't handle GST"

"I work at a pub, you get less customers, you have to pay more taxes and then have to let staff go and then I'll go to Social Security and claim income support which is going to cost them more!"

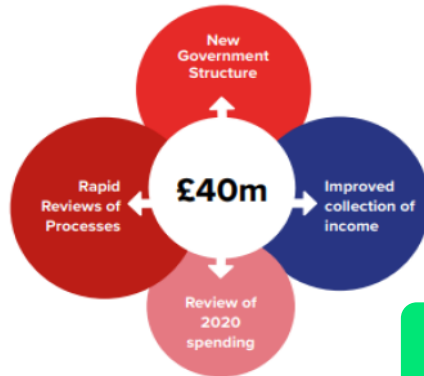
"Tax going up has a massive impact like buses go up, everything goes up, it's not just petrol it actually has a much wider effect"

Lots of challenge on Efficiencies figures

Efficiencies

1. The Government Plan proposes [£40m of efficiency savings in 2020](#). Of this total, £7m is increased tax revenues arising from more efficient tax collection. The remaining £33m is included at the bottom of the [summary tables](#) to be approved by States Members, but **has not yet been apportioned to departmental budgets**.
2. Out of the £40m total efficiencies for 2020, the Government Plan sets out [£19.7m identified so far](#). A detailed report on the efficiencies programme will be provided to the Council of Ministers in October and published prior to the debate of the Government Plan in November.

Activity	Value (£'m)
Combine back office services, reduce duplication	0.3
Reviewing supplier contracts	3
More efficient tax collection	7
charges and subsidies	1.2
Department efficiencies	8.2
Total	19.7
Yet to be identified	20.3
Total 2020 Efficiencies	40



- The £20.3 million “yet to be identified” was **strongly questioned** within all focus groups. Affects credibility
- Concerns on how the figures for efficiencies are being calculated
- Tax efficiency being questioned due to recent delays in tax collection
- Opinions that these are not SMART priorities
- Questioned “Reviewing supplier contracts” £3 million
- Most expected to have more detail on the efficiency figures and what they are being used for

“It seems to be, take a number and work towards it”

“How have they come up with a figure for ‘yet to be identified’?”

How well the plan is addressing the Strategic Priorities

- Questions to whether the plan will be reviewed
- Questions on what the plan is based on
- Concerns on how some priorities are going to be measured, as some overlap within departments
- Recognition that “Put Children First” and “Modernising Government” are important priorities – with challenges
- Feelings that “Protect Our Environment” should have more focus

“Modernising government is easy to dismiss because you don’t see a person like putting children first or wellbeing but it’s still important”

“You’d never get this through at any of the organisations that I worked for, how many checks and in how many quarters do they do?”

“Would not vote for this plan without being measured properly and within different variables, it’s going to impact a lot of people, people are just going to be depressed because they can’t drink, smoke or go in their car”

Transparency

- Concerns on how the plan was designed, and whether it was targeted towards the general public
- Thoughts that the plan is not being clear and inclusive
- Concerns of how accessible the plan is
- Thoughts that budget figures are unclear and concerns as to where money is coming from
- Majority believe that the plan is NOT transparent

"They use "fluffy" wordings to make you think its a good plan"

"They are obviously doing it in some data that we don't know, they've got the background"

"They are trying to create this picture to make it sound like everything is great but actually in house it's not"

Key Take Away Messages from 'Lift Ride' exercise

- Perception that it's the 'everyday person' that is getting taxed the most
- A need for; transparency, accountability, measurability, evidenced, SMART objectives/KPIs
- Efficiencies should have been identified by now and included
- It raises questions and challenges credibility

Conclusions

- Most were aware of the new proposed Government Plan, however in discussion it became apparent that some had confused it with the Island Plan
- A few had read it in detail, however most had skim read it online after been made aware by traditional media (JEP, Radio, TV) or online via social media (inc gov.je and Chamber news)
- Initial perceptions were that it was not easy to read, not a lot of detail and lots of ‘blue sky thinking’
- Most were concerned about the headline figures and thought that the spending increases were too high
- Spontaneously at this early stage the £40m efficiencies were challenged as to where from and why not qualified yet
- Majority concerned on whether it’s achievable and doubted the forward income trend, especially in the light of Brexit implications
- Strategic Priority expenditure figures raised many questions; *What is Vibrant Economy? Why is Modernising Government so high? What is Other Government Services and why so high? How Reduce Inequality and how measure it?*
- Most not familiar with the latest Government structure and thus raised many questions
- Challenges on spend by department figures 2020 vs. 2019, especially Chief Operating Office and Office of the Chief Executive plus versus low Health spend increase
- Investment figures again raised challenges on the large proportion 31% Modernising Government vs. 4% Environment and what is included in Vibrant Economy
- Tax proposals felt to squeeze middle income the most, not the rich or poor
- Comments on lack of SMART objectives and KPIs

QUESTIONS



Appendix

Lift Ride: The Government Plan would be so much better if...

"If it had individual responsibilities allocated to named persons so there would be accountability if targets were not met"

"There was more transparency with spending and less focus on buzzwords, people aren't scared of serious terms e.g. economy/ healthcare/ social security"

"It was more reader friendly. Not read it yet in full so when I have (and I will) I will be in a better position to as but it makes it hard to see where it's being spent"

"It was clearer, more accessible and less vaguely worded. Do the numbers add up? Is anything hidden?"

"We had further transparency around what the key points are despite each subject potentially having a long report and the need to condense into a government 'document' people's imagination will often jump to bad conclusions if they don't have the ability to drill down on details"

Stop wasting money do not put up taxes on the everyday person - tax the wealthy people and most importantly be more transparent in where taxpayers money is going. Get rid of the consultants who keep doing all these reviews let the locals who are in the job advise.

"They were more transparent/ made less costly mistakes. Had less people making decisions so decisions could be made and implemented. Hospital first make a decision and do it"

Lift Ride: The Government Plan would be so much better if...

"If people were more engaged and the Government listened more"

"It was better explained and figures could be evidenced"

"It was shredded! They listen to the Island People!"

"It had been prepared by someone who actually had an idea what they were trying to achieve and also had some numbers that added up"

"Simplified and less ambitious?"

"It was more factual with proposals to support as opposed to "yet to be identified".

"It was finished! i.e. more transparent, evidenced and deliverable"

"If there was more transparency and practicality. Lots of lovely ideas but all interlinked and the plan does not show it. People need better housing and education, including childcare and cost of living being affordable without going off island. Justice needs more governing bodies to enforce wellbeing and inequality"

"Savings that would be achieved across all States departments"

"We didn't know about it in the first place and every household should have received basic information months ago"

Lift Ride: The Government Plan would be so much better if...

"If it was accessible to the general public, where decisions and figures were communicated in a transparent manner, using plain language"

"It was clearer, more information about projects and proof of funds"

"Detailed breakdown of what strategy/spending relates to, impact on the public as a whole. Avoid vague explanation, how previous plans have been incorporated"

"The plan was for a longer period up to say 5/10 years and if then it was divided into 3 years periods. Better use of SMART & KPIs"

"Comply with expert reviews/ consultants set a final date. Get IT more involved in running the Gov"

"Better if there were SMART objectives/KPIs, less ambiguity as to income/savings"

"Finance for the non-finance person some more consistency on the how's to enhance the we will "

"It was clearer as to how the plan will be implemented. Also if the middle class earner is not affected as much"

Lift Ride: The Government Plan would be so much better if...

"It had KPIs which were measurable and a skill audit of experts already resident in Jersey had learned done first rather than assuming that consultants need to come from elsewhere"

"You cared about the island and the islanders and impact of living here and housing costs. People are leaving not because they want to but because they have to"

"Provide a summary of key parts with supportive and measurable information and targets"

"Everything was measurable, takes into account the middle/low earners. Follow regulation for accounting purposes and figures. Measurable and fully documented rather than projected streams"

"The Government Plan would be so much better if the plan featured the various departments and what they were individually going to do to meet the overall objectives and put children first, that way each department would be accountable their costs"

"We had a budget that truly reflected our realistic income levels over next 3/4 years. Can't be trusted"



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