



Common Strategic Policy Review Panel

Common Strategic Policy

Witness: The Chief Minister

Friday, 3rd May 2024

Panel:

Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North (Chair)

Deputy H. Miles of St. Brelade

Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour

Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade

Witnesses:

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

Deputy M.R. Ferey of St. Saviour, Assistant Chief Minister

Mr. P. Wylie, Group Director of Policy, Cabinet Office

[12:00]

Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North (Chair):

Welcome to the public hearing with the Chief Minister in relation to the Government's proposed Common Strategic Policy. I would like to draw everyone's attention to the following. The hearing will be filmed and streamed live. The recording and transcript will be published afterwards on the States Assembly website. I have been asked not to move the microphones to make sure that the quality of recording is good enough for the transcript. All electronic devices, including mobile phones, should be switched to silent. I am checking myself. I would ask that any member of the public who has joined us in the room today does not interfere in the proceedings, and as soon as the hearing is closed, please leave quietly. For the purpose of the recording and the transcript, I would be grateful if everyone who speaks could ensure that you state your name and role. We can

begin with the introduction. I will suggest that the panel members introduce themselves first. My name is Deputy Inna Gardiner. I am the president of the Scrutiny Liaison Committee.

Deputy H. Miles of St. Brelade (Vice-Chair):

I am Deputy Helen Miles. I am the vice-chair of the Scrutiny Liaison Committee.

Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central:

Deputy Catherine Curtis, a member of this panel.

Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

I am Deputy Hilary Jeune, a member of this panel.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour:

Deputy Louise Doublet, a member of the panel and chair of the Health and Social Security Panel.

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

I am Deputy Montfort Tadier. I am a member of this panel and chair of the Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel.

The Chief Minister:

Deputy Lyndon Farnham, Chief Minister.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Deputy Malcolm Ferey, Assistant Chief Minister.

Group Director of Policy, Cabinet Office:

I am Paul Wylie, director of policy in the Cabinet Office.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Chief Minister, first of all, thank you for finding time in your busy schedule and very short notice that this review panel was formed, and all of us members for the Scrutiny Liaison Committee. For effectiveness, we decided we all can get together to discuss the Common Strategic Policy. Thank you for finding time. As we have only the Common Strategic Policy in front of us, but we do not have updated Ministerial Plans; I know that some will be published in July. We do not have delivery plans, updated ones, and we do not have an updated Government Plan. We thought that it would be really helpful for the public and for us, as a Scrutiny, to make sure that if there are things that for sure you are going to be delivering, but obviously everything could not be included in the Common Strategic Policy, so our comments about the Common Strategic Policy and the understanding for

the Scrutiny work will be more complete. We are not making comments because you are going to do it, but it was not included, as it will be in the delivery plan or somewhere else. Our questions will be really to find out what is in and what the Government is going to deliver. I will start with the first question.

The Chief Minister:

Sorry, can I stop you? Do I have a list of questions? Have we received any?

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

It is just about the C.S.P. (Common Strategic Policy).

Deputy I. Gardiner:

It is all about the C.S.P.

The Chief Minister:

The Chief Minister:

Okay, no I thought we had an indication of what was ...

Assistant Chief Minister:

General topics.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

We would usually send an indication of topics, but the topic, as I say, it is just the C.S.P.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

It is all about C.S.P. It is nothing beyond what is not included in the C.S.P.

The Chief Minister:

That is what I was looking for, thanks very much.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Chief Minister, would you please describe to us how the Common Strategic Policy was developed by the Council of Ministers? How many sessions did you have as to formalise the Common Strategic Policy?

The Chief Minister:

I am not sure how many sessions we had. We will have to come back to you on that with the exact number, but there were quite a few. We worked to prioritise basically essential services and the immediate challenges facing Islanders with a focus on cost of living, hospital health and affordable housing. Focus was on delivering what we consider to be sensible, practical solutions. Bearing in mind we had a shortened period of ... the term of office remaining is 2 years.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Can you give an example how the process worked and how the competing priorities were debated and resolved?

The Chief Minister:

We focused on, like I said, what we felt were the immediate priorities facing Islanders. For reference, we used the lifestyles survey. I am not sure if members are familiar with that.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Yes, absolutely.

The Chief Minister:

Which is a good representative sample of Islanders and is updated biannually, I think. Which again demonstrated those were the main concerns of Islanders. We also aligned ourselves, as a foundation of the plan, used the Future Jersey work that has been done, so we could see some continuity there. In addition to that, we then prioritised from Ministers what they wanted to achieve from their portfolios.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Would you have any kind of one example or 2 examples when you had obviously more than 12 things to put in the first 12 priorities, and how you decided what is going in the 12 priorities and what was on the table, but you decided it is not in the first 12 priorities? Like give a specific example.

The Chief Minister:

I am not sure if I can remember without having all the notes in front, but Ministers were charged with working with their departments to decide what they wanted to bring forward, to get on to the plan. Ministers had conversations and they came to the table with a short list.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

If I understand correctly, we have 12 priorities and each of the 12 Ministers would specify why that priority would go into the 12 top priorities connected to their portfolio.

The Chief Minister:

You are probably going to need to get the Ministers in front of you to ask them that.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

No, but I am asking. So do you think that all 12 Ministers would have had an opportunity and describe one of their priorities that has gone into your 12 priorities or some Ministers?

The Chief Minister:

I am not sure I am following the question.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

If we were looking at the page ...

The Chief Minister:

The 12 priorities, they are all listed there.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

There are 12 priorities. There are 12 Ministers. What I am trying to establish ...

The Chief Minister:

Ministers did not necessarily have a priority each. You can see they are labelled there.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Okay, if you are going back, what do you think ... can you summarise what the collective long-term vision of this new Council of Ministers for Jersey is?

The Chief Minister:

I do not think we have done a long-term vision. I mean, this is a 2-year strategy, and the priorities are short-term strategies based on things that can be deliverable. But the emphasis is on Future Jersey work. The foundation of the plan is the work that is set out in Future Jersey. The 10 priorities in Future Jersey underpin the whole plan.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

I understand.

The Chief Minister:

We have just lifted out 12 things that we aim to achieve. Those are not the only things we are going to be doing.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Maybe I will reframe the question and I will try to get to the point that I am trying to get as well. What would you, as a Chief Minister, consider the biggest, most ambitious promise in the Common Strategic Policy?

The Chief Minister:

You are probably not looking for this as the answer, but the first thing is to try and deliver all of these 12 priorities. Are you talking about outside of these 12 priorities?

Deputy I. Gardiner:

No, if it is your Common Strategic Policy, how you as a Council ... if you are thinking as a Chief Minister presenting this Common Strategic Policy, what would be what you would consider is the biggest, most ambitious promise in this Common Strategic Policy to the public of Jersey?

The Chief Minister:

I am not sure I could answer that in a few sentences. I think the ambition is to deliver all of these 12 priorities collectively rather than single some out. If we wanted to go through there, I think probably the biggest challenge to us that we fail to deliver on is the hospital. I think in terms of size of investment, getting the hospital started is probably, for me, the thing we need to get over the line. If I had to prioritise out of all of those.

Deputy H. Miles:

One of the areas in the introduction of the C.S.P. states that you will curb growth in the public sector, that you will reduce the use of external consultants and that you will develop local talent. I have been around a very long time. I think successive Governments have always been saying that and always promise that. How is this Government going to do things differently to achieve that aim?

The Chief Minister:

We are going to start by curbing the use of or restricting/reducing the use of consultants and fixed-term contracts from external service providers. We are also going to be looking at the internal structures, mainly Cabinet Office and other areas that have grown in number, as part of a focus of reprioritisation of the work that the Government does. Over the years, Government has become involved in a growing portfolio of services, some might describe it as overreach. We are going to look closely at that to reprioritise. We are not looking at cutting so much as reprioritising work, looking at what we are doing that we do not really need to do, that is not essential. And pushing those savings into areas that have been highlighted as Islanders' major concerns.

Deputy H. Miles:

You were a member of the previous Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel, and you noted a dire situation with recruitment and retention in the public sector. Bear in mind what you have just said about your views on aiming to curb growth, how does that balance with your other stated aim in the C.S.P. of providing stability and operating quality essential services?

The Chief Minister:

Well, the idea is not to reduce structures to the point where they cannot deliver the essential services. It is about making sure we do the basics well. What I think has happened is over a period of time, when we look at certain aspects of the infrastructure of the Island and a lot of the basic services that the Government should provide, because we have committed to providing many, many other services. I think we have not often ... not neglected, but we have perhaps lost sight of the key things we should be delivering.

Deputy H. Miles:

Are you not concerned that there is a very delicate balance there? I think I am interested to know that you have said how you are going to do things differently, but every previous Government has said exactly the same thing. "We are going to reduce external consultants. We are going to develop local talent. We are going to focus on front line services." I think it goes back to the question, if you are going to reduce growth in the public sector, how are you going to maintain your stability and operate the essential services?

The Chief Minister:

Because I think the areas we are looking at to reprioritise, which we have not fully identified yet, that is an ongoing piece of work, will be aimed at areas that are perhaps not essential. The fact that we decide not to do or continue with certain things will not be destabilising. We want to put more resources into the areas that will stabilise the Island moving forward.

Deputy H. Miles:

What sort of evidence base are you using to make those sorts of decisions around reprioritisation?

The Chief Minister:

Again, I refer to the lifestyle survey and to the overall concerns of Islanders. I will refer to the challenges we are having in health, the challenges we are having with infrastructure. When we look at essential infrastructure outside, that includes the hospital building separate from health; the building of the new hospital. But also other essential infrastructure such as roads, sewage systems and all sorts of utilities, areas that are going to need renewing and repairing in the years ahead.

[12:15]

Deputy H. Miles:

How are you going to do that if you are going to curb growth in the public sector?

The Chief Minister:

We are not going to be curbing growth or resources in the areas that provide the essential services. Okay? We are looking outside of those areas, new areas, areas that have appeared.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Will there be job losses in the public sector?

The Chief Minister:

Possibly. I think there could be a resizing.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Which areas will those be focused on?

The Chief Minister:

I could not tell you at this time because that is ongoing work.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

When will public sector workers find out which areas will be affected?

The Chief Minister:

During the course of this plan, I would think over the next few months will be a period where they will be ... we would be looking at that closely because we will need to include in the Government Plan changes to the budget. But over the course of the next 2 years ... I mean, it is not something we to do in one great swathe. I think it will be an ongoing piece of work of reprioritisation. I do not want to be too specific now because I do not want to set, as I said before, hares running and get people second-guessing of what we are we are looking at.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can you give us an example though? We get the idea that you want to concentrate on the core areas of government, and you have been asked a few times in the Assembly. What are the areas that you think are peripheral? You do not have to give specific jobs that might be restructured or go, but what are the areas that government delivers that you think they should not?

The Chief Minister:

I think we would be looking at various roles in the Cabinet Office, including communications. We will be looking at management structures, senior and middle management structures right across the public sector.

Deputy H. Miles:

Can I just ask a supplementary there, if you do not mind? You talked about Cabinet Office. Public Health is part of the Cabinet Office, and there is no mention of Public Health at all in the Common Strategic Policy that you have presented. But public health underpins the concept of sustainable well-being, which is featured obviously ... the feature of Future Jersey, which takes us to 2037. Jersey spends less on public health per capita than probably anywhere else, certainly in other jurisdictions. But it always seems to be low-hanging fruit in terms of reducing budgets. You have highlighted the Cabinet Office as a potential for that. Do you recognise the importance of Public Health in the area of the Cabinet Office?

The Chief Minister:

Absolutely I do. You use the phrase "low-hanging fruit". One of the reasons it was taken out of Health and put into Cabinet Offices is because when Health budgets were looked at, Public Health tended to be one of the first go-to areas for cuts. By putting it ...

Deputy H. Miles:

Can you give us the assurance that by putting it in the Cabinet Office, it is going to be protected?

The Chief Minister:

Yes, I can give you the assurance that we are going to protect the areas that are essential to us. I cannot give you assurance that we will not.

Deputy H. Miles:

Do you think Public Health is an essential area?

The Chief Minister:

I do think it is an essential area, but I cannot be sure that the number of staff and the work we are doing in there is right-sized. We could actually need more. We might need a bit less. That could be one of the areas of front line services that we decide we need more resources in. We could look at it and think maybe we need to right-size that a bit better.

Deputy H. Miles:

Okay, thank you.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I am going to continue asking about the public sector. Do you accept that the public sector also contributes to the well-being of the economy, and it could be considered the foundation of it? Do you accept that there is a risk that cuts or restraint in growth or even in recruitment freezing could have unintended consequences if not done correctly?

The Chief Minister:

I am not sure there can be consequences. I suppose it has to be done correctly. It has to be done properly and professionally.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I should not have asked them all together. The first part of the question was really: do you accept that the public sector is not just important for delivering services, but it can act as a basis for economic well-being in the wider economy?

The Chief Minister:

Of course it is because public sector employees make a huge contribution to the economy.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Okay. And not just in terms of the tax and social security they pay, but do you accept that it provides a framework on which the private sector can then operate within?

The Chief Minister:

It can to a point. But we need to ensure that the public sector is not growing at a rate that it is actually taking from the private sector. We saw last year, with the figures that have just come out, that the public sector grew in terms of jobs more than the private sector. That is quite concerning. That is not helpful to the economy because we are not allowing the resources for the private sector to grow to its full potential, if we take up a lot of the resource in the public sector.

Deputy M. Tadier:

In terms of the second part then about unintended consequences of cuts made in the public sector, is that something you would bear in ... is that a consideration for you?

The Chief Minister:

Yes, in relation to ensuring we can deliver the essential services better than we are doing at the moment. If those are the sort of consequences you are talking about.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes. Can I just go back? I am not sure I follow the logic in saying that if growth in the public sector is higher than in the private sector, it is somehow taking resources out of the private sector. Is it not the case that the 2 can be in different positions? There are factors in the private sector we might look at in a moment, which do not necessarily bear any relation to the needs of the public sector to either grow or to change or to restructure.

The Chief Minister:

Public sector does not compete with retail staff, hospitality staff, agricultural staff. But we have a finite amount of housing here and resources. In relation to if we are pulling ... we have seen areas recently where employees have come in from private sector businesses who have been left with vacancies that they cannot fill because there are not the skills or personnel here to fill them.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can I move on then? It feeds into the next part of the question really. First of all, you have said that this is a short-term plan, but presumably you accept that there needs to be a longer-term vision, certainly a medium, longer-term vision, let us say, for the next 30 years. How does the Common Strategic Policy seek to tackle the real economic challenges that we have at the moment to ensure a strong community in the next 30 years?

The Chief Minister:

That is, I think, the very reason why we have aligned it to the Future Jersey work, which is a long-term strategy; it is planning for the long term. C.S.P. is a short-term document. Every Government has to produce a Common Strategic Policy, which sets out priorities for its term of office. We only have half a term, so it is 2 years. This is an extra short piece of work, which again is why the priorities are as they are, because those are things we can deliver in this term of office, which I think is in line with what is required legally of the Government.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can I focus on a specific then, and then I think I am happy to pass on. Under the section which is titled "Business environment, Jobs productivity growth", there is a recurring theme which is about lowering barriers to business, reducing red tape. There is a specific quote which says: "We will work with businesses to tackle private sector labour shortages, where they are made worse by government policies or processes." We are aware that there are significant issues in the private sector but I think public sector is not immune to that. What are those government policies and processes which are affecting private sector shortages? How will they be changed?

The Chief Minister:

The aim of this is to make it easier for Islanders and businesses to go about their business on a daily basis. We have got challenges in certain business sectors that are not always ... we do not always have the ability to control them, such as work permits, post-Brexit I.D. (identification) cards, visas, that type of thing. That area for businesses is quite cumbersome. It is costly.

Deputy M. Tadier:

They are not all within the gift of Government, are they? A lot of these are impositions from either the U.K. (United Kingdom) or from the Brexit situation.

The Chief Minister:

Some of them are, and we have worked hard to work around with the U.K. and provide ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can I ask you specifically: the red tape as I see it - and I pass no comment on whether it is necessary or justified - but we have essentially a housing rule that says you have to be here for 10 years to rent and to live or to buy. We have a 5-year rule which says that you cannot work in the open market. That latter one, in particular, are those barriers to business? There are people in Jersey who would want to work in certain areas who cannot. There are employers who would like to take on people who live in Jersey who cannot work for them. Is that one of the barriers you are talking about?

The Chief Minister:

Not necessarily because those are rules based at managing population.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Those were rules that were brought in at a time when we had a problem with over-population. There is a risk, I think, now that we are facing depopulation. We have struggles with an ageing population and the demographic is shifting. I am just trying to understand what those barriers are and what the levers Government thinks it has to influence that.

The Chief Minister:

That is a piece of work that is being ... the population policy is being considered by an extended Housing and Work Advisory Group. You are right, the substance of that has completely changed post-Brexit and post-pandemic but we are seeing a decline in population; a predicted decline. We are seeing a decline in the birth rate now. The biggest challenge we have long term is working age population. I think by 2046, we are going to have twice as many Islanders in their 80s.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I will pass over to my colleagues. I know Deputy Doublet wants to come in. This will be my last question, is that it seems that the barriers that we have put up in the past have been deliberately put up to keep people out, which then have an influence on business having difficulties to recruit. Are we talking about taking the barriers down now so that people can come in?

The Chief Minister:

Specifically in terms of that, I think that is connected to the first point I was making around visas and work permits. I think one of the things we need to be looking at in this plan is ensuring that certain sectors of our economy can get labour more easily. Having said that, we cannot do it in an unfettered way.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Chief Minister, very quick understanding. Are you going to make changes into the current population policy during your term of office?

The Chief Minister:

We do not know yet. We do not know. That is work that is being considered.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

In terms of population, and you mentioned the ageing demographics, none of those things were mentioned in this C.S.P.; why is this?

The Chief Minister:

Because this is a short-term plan. The ageing demographics are something that is covered. I keep referring to the Future Jersey vision work, which encompasses all of this, which is the foundation of this plan. But this is a short-term plan. We cannot deal with that in the remaining 2 years of office. We have tried to make this plan - as it should be - focused on things we can deliver during this term of office.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Does Government not have a responsibility to deliver within its term but also to plan for the future?

The Chief Minister:

Yes, I am not sure how I can keep saying this. The Future Jersey vision is the foundation of this work, so the work we do aligns with, hopefully complements and supports, the Future Jersey work.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

What are the key issues that you see as arising from the ageing population and changing demographics, and how will you tackle those?

The Chief Minister:

Just say that again, please?

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

What are the key issues that you see as arising from the ageing population, and how will you tackle those?

The Chief Minister:

Two key things; working age population. We are projected to be able to struggle to find the workers, to provide the economic growth that we need to sustain our Island financially. The second point is, as I alluded to before, by 2046 we will have probably twice as many Islanders in their 80s and over living. That alone could require up to 4,000 more care workers and associated facilities. Those are big issues, long-term issues related to that.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Do you agree that health is likely to be one of the biggest areas facing an impact as a result of these changing demographics? We are aware that there is an £18 million overspend forecast just for 2024. Again, we could not find any mention of these issues in the C.S.P. Could you explain why and what you will do to ensure that these areas are addressed during your term of office?

The Chief Minister:

Are you talking about the health?

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Health overspend and health financing.

The Chief Minister:

The Health overspend. This plan is focused on building the hospital because that is something we can get started in this plan.

[12:30]

The health work. Again, I refer to the longer-term aspect of this, which is from Future Jersey vision; it is a piece of work that has been a huge challenge for many, many years, and we are wrestling

with that now. The debate is whether we are overspending at Health or whether Health is underfunded. We have to sort out the ...

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Are you going to develop sustainable health finance. This is for the future, Chief Minister, but the question was what we are doing we need to do today, but your Government needs to start today, that the next Government will not start from zero to start to address the ageing population. One of the things is to create a framework for sustainable health finance. Is it something your Government is going to do?

The Chief Minister:

To finish Louise's question, so basically ...

Deputy I. Gardiner:

It is the same question.

The Chief Minister:

The big challenge we have is finding a more cohesive model where health professionals are working more collaboratively with the management of the hospital in facilities that provide for them to be able to deliver, unlike what we are doing now. The key thing is getting medical professionals, front line staff, medical consultants and hospital management to be more aligned and work more collaboratively.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Due to that increased need, will there need to be more employees within the Health Department?

The Chief Minister:

We are not sure. That is a piece of work ongoing. There is a school of thought that says, yes, there is, and a school of thought, no, we can be more efficient. It depends on what we want to keep on-Island, what we decide to do off-Island. There is an argument to say we can deliver services more efficiently off-Island, but do we want to be sending Islanders away when we can treat them here? But if we are going to treat them here, it is going to be more expensive. Those are the conundrums we are wrestling with at the moment.

Assistant Chief Minister:

The issue of funding is not for C.S.P., it is more for the Government Plan. So if there was going to be a change ...

Deputy I. Gardiner:

No, are you going to develop because it is not ... I am not asking about the funding. It needs to be developed, a framework for sustainable health financing going into the future. It is not for one year, it is not for 2 years. It is actually how we are going to fund our health services going forward with the ageing population reaching the levels that you mentioned.

The Chief Minister:

When you say "sustainable health finance", is that a title or a concept or do you just mean sustainable health finance?

Deputy I. Gardiner:

How we will finance our health service because we know that the cost will increase.

The Chief Minister:

Okay. So I mean, we have a duty, the States Assembly and the Government, by law to deliver sustainable budgets. We have to do that by law. All the funding for the running of the Island has to be sustainable. We are not allowed to present unsustainable budgets.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

But Health, as we know last year, it was a £30 million overspend. This year we are projecting £18 million overspend. Like you absolutely rightly mentioned, we do not know do we put enough money into Health or it is wrong spending, and going forward with the ageing population we can see this overspend will continue and probably will grow. This is why I am talking about how we actually sustain. What is the vision of the Council of Ministers and what this Council of Ministers would do to ensure that Health is financed going forward? The calculation may be wrong. Is a piece of work going around to financing Health now going forward?

The Chief Minister:

Something that the Minister for Health and Social Services is focusing on now so he and his team have a better idea of what funding looks like. To be honest, I think there are mixed views around the Council of Ministers table, probably in the Assembly. Do we look to increase funding and keep more services on-Island for the benefit of Islanders, or are we going to go the other way and do more? Those are the conversations we need to have. I suspect, if I can, that we will see increases in Health funding, but to how far we go ... because we have looked at other jurisdictions, where one in particular is a similar situation to Jersey, and they significantly increase Health funding. Everything they increase was just spent right through.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Where does that increased money come from?

The Chief Minister:

I am just talking about another jurisdiction. They increase it.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

You just said Jersey might need to do that; where would the money come from if we needed to increase our spend in Health?

The Chief Minister:

It would come from revenue. We would have to reprioritise revenue expenditure.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

So other areas would be cut in order to reprioritise funding?

The Chief Minister:

Potentially, yes. If you wanted to give more to Health, depending on our income, you would have to give less elsewhere.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Yes, sure.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Chief Minister, you have mentioned in this meeting so far today several times about you are prioritising essential services and yet, for example, there is insufficient budget for the police to maintain the recommended 215 officers. How does the Common Strategic Policy support the front line emergency services?

The Chief Minister:

Again, we have not presented the Budget yet and I am mindful of ... having been a former member of the Police Authority and the concern we had in relation to the Government Plan last time and the 4-year ... Deputy Miles will know what I am talking about because I think she shared some concern there. The police are funded now but what was in the previous Government Plan for the future was concerning. But we have not discussed that yet. We may well address that when we come to the Government Plan figures presentation for this year. I know the current Minister for Justice and Home affairs is fighting the same battle as the previous one to protect front line policing.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

As our Scrutiny Panel was concerned about as well. This is something that is considered, I think, as business as usual in the C.S.P. Where central public services are considered to be business as usual and do not specifically feature in the C.S.P. priorities, is there any correlation for how they will secure funding as part of the next Government Plan?

The Chief Minister:

In the Government Plan process; the process we are just about to start now.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That has to be considered and worked on now, you are saying?

The Chief Minister:

Yes, that work has started. So that will be threshed out at Government level, Council of Ministers and then presented to the States in the usual way. Following discussions, we are aiming to present the Government Plan, lodge it on 9th July for debate, as we agreed ... I cannot remember the date. November is it, I think.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Mid-November.

The Chief Minister:

We are well into that work ... well, I say we are well into it. We had our first full meeting on it yesterday.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Okay, thank you.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Thank you.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Chief Minister, you mentioned at the beginning that the C.S.P. has 4 overarching priorities; one being affordable housing. You have also mentioned there is a lack of overall infrastructure. You already mentioned roads and liquid waste, for example. Yet we see that in the C.S.P. there is no mention of infrastructure. There is no mention of the liquid waste strategy or safe waste disposal. I would like to ask you: how do you plan to deliver affordable homes and maintain this priority when the particular issues of getting to the point where you can actually deliver homes on these major infrastructure is not mentioned in the C.S.P. or as a priority?

The Chief Minister:

Delivering more affordable homes means more affordable homes to rent and to buy. In relation to the short-term aspect of this, what we can do in the next 2 years, which is limited, but already had a successful pilot scheme launched, which was the ... I forget what it was called. The affordable home scheme run in conjunction with Andium, the shared equity deposit scheme, which was a £10 million fund, that is one example of how we can have a quick impact on that. That scheme was oversubscribed significantly.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I was talking mainly of course, quite a few years ago now, the bridging Island Plan identified some rezone sites to be able to develop affordable homes, which by now we would hope that at some point soon there will be at least plans to put the spades in the ground and actually starting building them. But we have identified that there are some significant infrastructure restraints to even get to that point. I would have hoped that this priority in C.S.P. would identify being able to - sorry to say it - unblock the abling to build and deliver. I understand that in the next 2 years you may not be able to see any rezoned affordable homes. But what we would like to have seen is to have sourced out where we can go with safe waste disposal, and also the liquid waste strategy to be able to fund and figure out how to deliver infrastructure to these areas.

The Chief Minister:

That did not make the 12 priorities, but it remains an important area of focus for the Minister for Infrastructure and the Minister for Housing, because we are aware there are approved housing sites ready to go, but cannot be built because there is not enough drainage or infrastructure in the area. That is a separate piece of work the Minister for Infrastructure and relevant Ministers are focusing on. That may well feature in the Government Plan, depending on what sort of funding is needed. It is just that there are probably dozens and dozens of examples like that, that we could not all put as priorities in the Government Plan.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Yes, which makes us, and I think that comes back to where the president was talking earlier at the beginning, about how it is difficult to see from the Scrutiny perspective what is prioritised and what is prioritised but not in the priority plan. It is a bit confusing to understand that. The concerns, I think, is you are also talking about streamlining and having to deprioritise. But we do not know yet what that is. We are 45, 40 minutes in and I myself am still unclear what ... the C.S.P. has 12 priorities yet there are many things like delivering affordable homes. Okay, there is this equity scheme that has been launched but Islanders would like to see affordable homes starting to be built and starting to be able to get up from the ground. That is not being seen in this, and that is why but

it is yet ... you are saying it is but it is somewhere else. It is just understanding what is this document versus what other documents are.

The Chief Minister:

The C.S.P. is not intended to be a document that answers every question, otherwise we would have a tome that thick.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

No, absolutely.

The Chief Minister:

So what we will do, we are looking to the Ministerial and departmental plans, which are due out in the summer, which will address those issues and hopefully make that clear.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

But if the liquid waste in and out, kind of ...

The Chief Minister:

Pardon?

Deputy I. Gardiner:

If the liquid waste strategy is it in or out or you still do not know if you will keep the C.S.P.

The Chief Minister:

Like I say, the C.S.P. is the C.S.P., it is a short-term plan. These are the things we are going to deliver in our term of office. Then we turn to the Government Plans and the departmental plans and to deeper into that. Outside of this, they present their priorities and workstreams.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

But do you agree with me that to deliver affordable homes, or a big chunk of affordable homes, we would need to with the infrastructure first?

The Chief Minister:

I agree absolutely with you, which is why it is a strong area of focus for the Infrastructure Department, and it is why reform of the Planning Department did make a key priority because we find reforming that to speed up applications for new affordable homes is also important.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Chief Minister, one of the priorities was reducing G.P. (general practitioner) fees, and a previous £20 subsidy was allocated to G.P. visits. Unfortunately, having looked at some of the fee levels at the moment, this has been absorbed by many of the G.P. surgeries. How will you ensure that any subsidy put into G.P. fees the public feel the benefit of that?

The Chief Minister:

That has to be absolutely covered for, with very little room for manoeuvre, in the agreement we have with the G.P.s when we provide additional subsidy.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Are you confident that that is achievable?

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Will costs be capped for G.P. consultations?

The Chief Minister:

I am not sure.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Or is that something that will be discussed or considered?

The Chief Minister:

I think that is up for discussion.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can I just follow up? How do you ensure that the G.P.s do not just pocket the extra and then put the prices up if there is no cap?

The Chief Minister:

You make it a condition of the agreement of additional subsidy.

Deputy M. Tadier:

What condition? What would the condition be?

The Chief Minister:

Off the top of my head, I ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

You presumably have to say that if we are going to increase your subsidy ...

The Chief Minister:

Yes, you provide a relevant condition that would ... I think in the previous one, you might have allowed for cost-of-living increases in their fees, but nothing more than that. Something like that, as an example.

[12:45]

But I do not want to second-guess that because negotiations will be ongoing at the moment with the G.P.s.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Chief Minister, I refer to the Island outcome, which was to support children to enjoy the best start in life. Can you explain how this relates to any work Government is going to do on the town school estate and improving school infrastructure when there is no specific priority referencing school infrastructure?

The Chief Minister:

Because as part of the Government Plan it does include future vision for Jersey work. Education is a lifelong learning. It will always be, I think, a key priority for Jersey, as is Health. Just because we have not referred to it directly in the 12 priorities, it does not mean it is not going to be ongoing. In relation to your question about the town school, and I could probably say in terms of best starts for children, extra provision for early nursery care and investment in education could partially address that, depending on your own views about that. We are desperately in need of new primary school estate in St. Helier, but we have capacity in the other primary schools around the Island. Falling birth rates and reduction in population predictions means we are going to have capacity there. So we need to replace 2 or 3 or possibly 4 ailing primary schools with 2 new ones. I think that work is essential. There is a strong focus on that with the current Education team. Of course, there is a disagreement about where they are located. That is something we are going to try and thrash out as soon as we can.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Because I think certainly for people who live in that area of town would be very concerned of any question that those schools might not be going ahead. Certainly for the headteachers at Springfield

and Rouge Bouillon. So it may have been helpful if there had been some certainty described in the C.S.P. about what was already decided about the schools. Also, if I could just ask, there seems to also be changes and uncertainty around children in care now with no therapeutic home going ahead. What will happen to those children that would have used that home? This does seem at odds with the Island outcome about supporting children.

The Chief Minister:

Again, it is a 2-year plan. We have got 2 years left. We cannot deliver 2 new schools in 2 years. That is a longer-term aspiration that we will make sure the foundations are in place for that. That is why we asked for this to go to the Council of Ministers in relation to the town school, especially the issue around the extension of the town park, new primary school, what we are doing with Springfield, what we are doing with St. Luke's, what we are doing with Rouge Bouillon; and I visited the schools with the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning. I am aware of the concerns of the teachers and the dilapidation in some areas of the schools. We have undertaken to get a policy in place by the Council of Ministers, so we know exactly what we are going to do. Whether we are going to build a new primary school at Gas Place or whether it will go somewhere else, we will make that decision very quickly. Officials have been asked to produce all the relevant detail, so we can hopefully pick up where you left off.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Just a quick question, I am minded about the time. Apologies and we have like 10, 12 minutes left. To make sure that we are concentrating, would you have an extra 10 minutes or do you need to leave exactly?

The Chief Minister:

I have a meeting at 1:15. An extra 10 minutes will be fine.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Extra 15 minutes will be fine.

The Chief Minister:

If that is all right with you?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes, that is fine.

The Chief Minister:

Can Malcolm just come in on the education piece?

Deputy I. Gardiner:

The education, probably Malcolm if you are coming can you concentrate on the question around children in care, children services and reform?

Assistant Chief Minister:

That is what I was going to cover. So Jersey Care Commission have announced a full inspection of the care offer in Jersey. That piece of work will be starting on 13th May to ensure that those facilities are properly inspected, are adequate, and if improvement notices need to be served, then obviously that will be part of the process.

Deputy H. Miles:

Can I just ask a question about the therapeutic children's homes? Chief Minister, you make the point that we cannot deliver 2 new primary schools within the next 2 years. However, it is my understanding that there was money in the budget for the therapeutic children's homes and that until very recently was going ahead. In terms of necessary/unnecessary spending and in terms of meeting the aim of giving children the best start in life, could you tell us something about the decision-making for halting the therapeutic children's homes, when it was in train and the budget was there?

Assistant Chief Minister:

It was, but as part of the wider picture for a children's strategy, which is being revitalised and updated, and again that piece of work is ongoing and will be coming out in the next couple of weeks.

Deputy H. Miles:

The Children and Young People's Plan was due to be published for 2024 to 2027. I do not think we have seen that yet.

Assistant Chief Minister:

No, that is coming out in the next couple of weeks.

Deputy H. Miles:

Again, the strategy around therapeutic care for children was in that Children and Young People's Plan. Is what you are saying, that is moving away from that plan now and you are going to be doing something different?

The Chief Minister:

I do not think it is.

Assistant Chief Minister:

The new plan will speak to that issue.

Deputy H. Miles:

So the 2024 to 2027 plan, is that effectively being withdrawn and replaced with a new one for this Council of Ministers?

Assistant Chief Minister:

It has been updated. There is a new plan going forwards.

The Chief Minister:

But I have not seen that plan as yet. I have not seen the ... I expect to see that.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Not the final draft, no.

The Chief Minister:

Are we deviating too much from the previous plan?\

Group Director of Policy, Cabinet Office:

You saw a draft in your previous roles as Ministers. We have new Ministers, and they are refreshing it. But I could not speak to the significant changes until it is published.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

I think that Deputy Curtis's panel will look into this because the children social care reform were allocated I think almost £24 million that started 2 years ago. It is something that needed to continue, but it feels it stopped and it is reconsidered. So the worry I think ... sorry, Catherine.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I was going to say, one big issue is with reviewing and looking again at things and so on, is that just things do not happen, do they? Bearing in mind this is to do with children ...

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Needs are not met in the meantime.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

... it is very important because it cannot be delayed. Shall I move on to the next question? Chief Minister, there are cross-Ministerial issues, like, for example, substance use, online safety, neither of which are mentioned in the C.S.P. How can you ensure that these matters will not slip through the net, will be covered and considered properly?

The Chief Minister:

Because those matters are extremely important responsibilities of other Ministers and departments. Just because it is not in the plan, it does not mean ...

Deputy I. Gardiner:

But this is what we are trying to understand. So it will be there?

The Chief Minister:

Yes, absolutely. All of this, yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

For example, with substance use, it seems uncertain at the moment who is taking responsibility for that.

The Chief Minister:

Any uncertainties that surface we will aim to tidy up. There are a number of areas where there are cross-responsibilities. I was talking about that this morning with the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, so we are alive to it and we are going to try and resolve that to provide clarity.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I think we note in the C.S.P. that under "Environmental well-being", for example, you keep coming back to the fact that Future Jersey is about the outcomes, about the C.S.P. is linked to the outcomes. This really links with that cross-cutting Ministerial issue, is that under "Environmental well-being", only the built environment is mentioned. There are 2 other areas of the environment - natural and sustainable resources - which is cross-cutting. The thing that cross cuts the most is climate emergency and adapting to and mitigating climate change. This absolutely cuts across all Government. How do you intend to reach that environmental well-being target without the required prioritisation under the whole bit of "Environmental well-being"?

The Chief Minister:

Again, so the Common Strategic Policy was developed after Ministers reviewed the detailed, like I said, data from the Island outcome indicators, and the priority actions are linked to that. But Ministers and the departments are guided by these outcomes and future vision Jersey. So the environmental

well-being aspect of Future Jersey is guiding the work of the Government; natural environment, sustainable resources. They are all part of the long-term environmental aims, Carbon Neutral Roadmap and that sort of thing. That work is continuing. But we cannot really achieve what we are aiming for there in the remainder of this plan. We can keep moving in the direction as agreed by the previous Government and the Assembly, and that is a rationale why they did not appear there because we tried to put stuff there we can deliver.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Can I just ask on that, and it is completely different? The Violence Against Women and Girls Taskforce recommendations, some of them are very, very meaty topics. Do you think that you will be able to deliver all those recommendations within the next 2 years?

The Chief Minister:

Probably not all of them, but we will do our very best to deliver as many as possible. But we did not want to go through the 77 I think ultimate recommendation - 59 I think of which were Government based - we did not want to go through those and start prioritising them and then come up with a list what we can do in 2 years and what we cannot. We said we are going to start the work and deliver as many of those because they are tangible priorities if possible. But I suspect to deliver all will take longer than the 2 years. We could have done that with the environment but it was not as easy because there are not as many. You could probably provide the answer ...

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

That is the roadmap that has quite a specific timeline in that but I know Louise wants to ...

The Chief Minister:

We could have looked to prioritise that.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

When will we have clarity on what is going to be achieved and what is not possible?

The Chief Minister:

In relation to?

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

V.A.W.G. (Violence Against Women and Girls) and the environment.

The Chief Minister:

We have committed to providing regular updates on the V.A.W.G. work. So that will become apparent as we get through it. We think some things actually that we thought would take a long time, we can do quicker. Some things we thought we could do quickly might take a little longer, depending on what legislative changes are required.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I think we will follow up on those with individual panels.

The Chief Minister:

Yes, with the individual panels. And with the environment.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Deputy Jeune mentioned the Future Jersey and the environment. You mentioned it previously, Chief Minister, that that was where your long-term vision was coming from. The Future Jersey documentation states that it focuses on where Islanders want to be, rather than how we are going to get there. When will we find out the how for your long-term vision?

The Chief Minister:

Again, that sort of information comes in the annual departmental plans, I believe. Outside of that, where there are strategies and roadmaps in place with timelines the relevant Ministers will work to those, and it is down to them to provide regular updates.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Will each of your Ministers be publishing Ministerial delivery plans?

The Chief Minister:

We are going to combine the Ministerial delivery plans with the departmental plans. We do not see a reason for doing both.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

When will they be published?

The Chief Minister:

In the summer, I would aim for July, but I do not want to be too specific; as soon as possible. I think they are going to be very, very relevant. I hear what you are saying, you want more detail around the business-as-usual work. We picked up on that, so we want to get that to you as soon as possible.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

And the long term. We understand that this is a very short-term focus, you said achievable plan. I think we would like to know, and Islanders would like to know, how it links in with the long-term vision of your Government and how that will be achieved.

The Chief Minister:

Again, I think that is down to the relevant Ministers to plug that in to the programme. But this Government has not got a plan to produce a new long-term strategy encompassing everything.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

But do you agree that you, as Chief Minister, would be guiding that long -term vision and bringing your Ministers together? How are you doing that?

The Chief Minister:

All the work we are doing, the direction of travel has been guided by the long-term vision.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Which is Future Jersey?

The Chief Minister:

Future Jersey.

Deputy H. Miles:

I just have a question on public finances. Again, conscious of time. Again, your Common Strategic Policy asserts that you have got a steadfast plan to maintain sound public finances, preventing unnecessary expenditure. I think I want to explore where the consensus is around the Council of Ministers' table around unnecessary. Define do all your Ministers agree what is necessary and what is unnecessary?

The Chief Minister:

It is funny you should mention that because we picked up on that very word yesterday. "Unnecessary" can be quite ambiguous. What is unnecessary to one Minister could be completely necessary. So we are under no illusion that is not going to ... that is going to be a challenging piece of work.

[13:00]

Deputy H. Miles:

How are you going to tackle that piece of work? Do you have a framework in mind? Do you have an evidence base in mind?

The Chief Minister:

Yes, we do. Officials have put in place the process we are going to, which we approved yesterday at a meeting, which we are going to operate to as we run through.

Deputy H. Miles:

What is that going to look like?

The Chief Minister:

I am sure we can share that with you. We have agreed all the principles of that.

Deputy H. Miles:

So the principles are agreed around the table?

The Chief Minister:

Yes. You might remember them.

Group Director of Policy, Cabinet Office:

So this is in relation to the Government Plan, and it is a combination of things that can be delivered to deliver the C.S.P. but also that are level one risks. If you fail to achieve them that is a serious risk to the Island.

Deputy H. Miles:

I think I am heartened to hear you use the word "risk". Because there is clearly risk around for what is considered by some to be necessary and some to be unnecessary.

Group Director of Policy, Cabinet Office:

Yes.

Deputy H. Miles:

Okay. I will look forward to hearing more about that at our next hearing in June. Thank you.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

If, as we go on through this public hearing, obviously we completely recognise that you are in the process and you are going through reprioritisation. There are areas that you consider business as usual which each individual Minister would deliver. When do you think you can share with us how

this prioritisation would work? What I have in mind, especially that the Government ... sorry the annual reports and accounts for 2023 were just published like an hour ago. It is very clearly stated in this annual report and accounts that they are healthy. They met the objectives of the Government Plan that was approved by the Assembly for 2023. Currently, we have a Government Plan above £1 billion that was approved by the Assembly for 2024. It is clear from this public hearing that it will be reprioritisation and according to different priorities of different Ministers, their funds will be spent differently, not as the Assembly agreed in December 2023. What would be helpful to understand as early as possible, what the Assembly agreed for 2024 is not going to be delivered, and what will be delivered, what was not included in the Government Plan, according to the new Council of Ministers priorities, which is completely relevant, but the clarity about how £1 billion would be spent differently compared to the States Assembly decision is really needed to help to us and to the Islanders to understand.

The Chief Minister:

We are very mindful of where any new decisions on spending may be conflicted with the previous States decision. So the intention would be to seek States approval. I cannot think of any examples of that at the moment.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

My example is £3.5 million therapeutic children's homes that was due to go to the planning and it is stopped and it is cancelled. It is a substantial number of mine how these funds will be spent within the capitals within the ...

The Chief Minister:

Capital expenditure is a good point because we have had a tendency to put, I think, too much capital. We often put capital expenditure in the budgets that we cannot deliver. There is not the resource to deliver all the time. That has not been very efficient because it ends up ... you can end up with money that was put aside for capital projects just sat there and not working. What we are planning to do is put a capital budget in place in the next Government Plan that is realistic. So if we put it in, it can be delivered and not ...

Deputy I. Gardiner:

It is interesting because your Minister for Infrastructure last week mentioned there is not enough funds for the capitals to maintain estate. We know that the estate is far off. Actually, his statement was that we do not have enough funds put in to maintain our estate. But let us leave capital aside. Let us go back to the Government Plan for 2024 that has been approved according to the priorities that Assembly agreed to. When will we see updated spending, that the Assembly will understand how the money will be spent?

Deputy H. Miles:

And potentially approve how that money is being spent, because it has already been approved last year.

The Chief Minister:

Yes, we understand that for 2024. Anything we are not going to spend this year ...

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Or spend differently.

The Chief Minister:

... that has been approved, we will have to come back and get Assembly permission. Yes., understood.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

It was just going into a different area that I just wanted to come back to the Chief Minister on. You mentioned right at the end of our discussion about infrastructure, about planning, and that is in the C.S.P.

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

It mentions about the relaxation of planning control. I would like to understand how you intend to relax planning. Do you believe that this will resolve the current issues of construction, delivering affordable homes, waste and infrastructure; all those elements that we have talked about that are a concern? Do you believe that the relaxation of planning will actually deliver all those things, and what kind of methods and what will the relaxation be?

The Chief Minister:

The thinking behind that was to free up resources in the Planning Department so they can focus on key areas of affordable homes was basically around small works - very, very small works - where the thinking is perhaps Islanders should not need to obtain permission for very small works; fencing small conservatories, and so forth. Producing guidelines that Islanders could just go, if they want to build a small conservatory, as long as it is within the criteria, they can do it. There are probably hundreds and hundreds of applications every year. That is the thinking behind that. Not big reforms and environmental ...

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Apologies. I have been thinking about it since you linked the infrastructure and the waste issue with relaxation of planning. I wanted to just clarify that that is something different.

The Chief Minister:

That is something that we have looked at other jurisdictions in the U.K. and Europe, and some London boroughs have introduced it very, very successfully. It has freed up a lot of resources so they can focus on more beneficial planning work.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

As we promised, we will finish. I will not open the new areas. We will follow up with several written questions.

The Chief Minister:

Sure. If you want me to come back, very happy to come back.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

No, it was really helpful. I think we got the information and we will be looking forward that you will bring clarity to the Assembly for the reprioritisation for the budget for 2024, that our accounts also would look healthy as we published today for 2023. Obviously for the department delivery and Ministerial plans together. I completely agree that we do not need to have several plans, but we would like to have a clarity about business as usual and growth speeds.

The Chief Minister:

Loud and clear.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Thank you very much, everyone, and the hearing is closed. Thank you.

[13:08]