

**3.13 Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North of the Chief Minister regarding actions taken in 2025 to implement the Third Amendment to the Common Strategic Policy 2024-2026 (OQ.124/2025):**

Further to the adoption of the Third Amendment to the Common Strategic Policy 2024-2026, will the Chief Minister advise what steps, if any, the Government has taken, and is taking in 2025, to ensure the sustainability of our health provisions and to protect the Island's economic prosperity in light of projected demographic changes?

**Deputy L.J. Farnham of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter (The Chief Minister):**

The Council of Ministers took these issues into consideration during the development of the Common Strategic Policy. The Ageing Well Roadmap was published at the end of 2024 as part of the annual Common Population Policy report that sets a range of short, medium and long-term actions and show how Ministers are working together to make sure that the older population in Jersey have access to the services and opportunities they need now and long into the future. Health is a key issue in relation to projected demographic issues, of course. We are about to start building the new hospital and the Minister for Health and Social Services is refocusing on the whole service and how it interacts with the wider health community and community in Jersey into the future. These proposals include a move to more investment in preventative healthcare and tech-based solutions. A new dementia strategy has already been published. These and other issues have been raised in the Future Economy Programme which includes measures to improve economic growth, productivity and right-sizing the public sector. In terms of lifelong learning, the 2025 Budget has provided for enhanced grants for distance learning to help older people to reskill and balance retraining with other family responsibilities. Also, we have the International Competitiveness Review being led by Deputy Gorst, investing in Jersey plans, which Members will learn about very shortly, that specifically covers, among other things, the provision of much-needed affordable family homes, the work on curbing the growth in the public service, that work will materialise in this next Budget and future Budgets, and the forthcoming Population Policy report. Of course, can I remind Members that the first of our States Members' workshops last month was an opportunity to discuss the long-term challenges in detail and question expert officers alongside the changing world order and the ageing demographic, the major overarching theme that guides our approach and to prioritisation on a whole range of tactical and longer-term decision-making, which I hope the whole Assembly will continue to be involved in.

**3.13.1 Deputy I. Gardiner:**

I am grateful to the Chief Minister for giving us an insight into general Government work; it is helpful. Would the Chief Minister give an example specifically on new policies or actions that have been introduced in 2024 and planned for 2025 as a direct response for future demographic projections? The Chief Minister mentioned the ageing population, I would add also low birth rate as well; we have those coming at the same time. I would be grateful for 3, 4 or 5 specific policies that have been introduced where actions have been taken.

**Deputy L.J. Farnham:**

I believe I did give a number of examples in my previous answer but short-term actions include data and planning, improving data collection, especially in relation to the older population, to inform future service planning, awareness and inclusion, promoting age-friendly practices, and reduce ageism, health access, begin enhancing access to primary care and preventative services



for the community, financial security, review pension adequacy and employment support for the community, the older sectors of the community. Will that do, Sir? I could keep going.

**The Bailiff:**

It is not for me to say if that would do but I am sure there will be a final supplementary at some point, Chief Minister.

**3.13.2 Deputy R.S. Kovacs of St. Saviour:**

Can the Chief Minister confirm clearly that in addressing demographic pressures on our health system, his Government will not resort to introducing new charges for core health services that are currently free at the point of use?

**Deputy L.J. Farnham:**

I think that is probably ultimately a matter for the Assembly, and I have not discussed this in detail with the Minister for Health and Social Services. He has mentioned that that could be an option. I am not sure it is an option that we can discuss without the full details of what is proposed. I am very much of the belief that our key services should be funded from general taxation, which is why work on right-sizing and reprioritising expenditure is important. Whatever happens in relation to taxes and charges will ultimately be a matter for this Assembly.

**3.13.3 Deputy R.S. Kovacs:**

Will the Chief Minister rule out any increase in general personal taxation as a means of funding demographic-related health and economic measures during the Common Strategic Policy period?

**Deputy L.J. Farnham:**

Well there are certainly no plans to increase personal taxation at the moment.

**3.13.4 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier Central:**

The Chief Minister's use of the word "right-sizing"; to what extent does it involve privatisation of services which are currently public?

**Deputy L.J. Farnham:**

Right now I am not aware of any plans to privatise any existing services.

**3.13.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Has the Chief Minister had any discussions with his Ministers on the subject of privatisation of health services currently given free at source?

**Deputy L.J. Farnham:**

No, I do not believe we have.

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

Is the Chief Minister supportive of the proportion of spending on digital in the Health Department that the Minister for Health and Social Services is planning? Does he think that that is reasonable?

**Deputy L.J. Farnham:**

There is still a lot of detail to be agreed but I certainly agree with the Minister for Health and Social Services that to improve our health service we need to embrace tech-based solutions. We are way behind in our digital offering for Islanders when it comes to health, so I am fully supportive of the proposals to develop that aspect. In relation to the cost, well I think if we



manage to do this effectively and proportionately, the original investment - that is what I call it - will pay back many times over. That will help us to embrace more preventative types of approach.

**3.13.7 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Is the Chief Minister maintaining oversight of that project to ensure that it does produce value for money?

**Deputy L.J. Farnham:**

That is the remit of the Minister for Health and Social Services at this stage but of course it will ultimately come to Council of Ministers, Treasury and to the Budget for approval by the Assembly. What I will say is that I am pleased of the collaboration around the Council of Ministers' table. Generally speaking, we are working together on almost every single project, which I think has been important to the progress we have been making, and I hope that continues long into the future.

**3.13.8 Deputy I. Gardiner:**

Would the Chief Minister advise what matrix or indicators his Government is using to track the success of actions and policies introduced to manage demographic challenges into the future?

[11:30]

**Deputy L.J. Farnham:**

I think all Members received a copy of the presentation slides which came before the States Members' workshop on Jersey's long-term challenges, which laid out a lot of these facts and figures. I will come back with a written response to the specific question about the types of matrix and indices we are using.