WQ.238/2018

WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CHIEF MINISTER
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 6th NOVEMBER 2018

Question

Further to the response to Written Question 201/2018, which indicated that savings of approximately £24 million would be achieved if 639 currently vacant posts were not filled, and further to the response to Written Question 212/2018, in which the Minister for Health and Social Services stated that 123 of 335.6 vacancies in front-line services were currently subject to active recruitment, and in light of his statement to the Chamber of Commerce regarding sustainable savings of £30 million, will the Chief Minister undertake to provide members with information on where savings arising in respect of staffing will be achieved before a vote is taken on the 2019 Budget?

Answer

As outlined by Connétable Taylor on the 23rd October 2018, the overall spending limit established in the MTFP, as approved by the Assembly, will remain in place for 2019.

However, over the remainder of this year and next, £30 million of savings within this overall spending limit will be identified and delivered in 2019. This will help us to tackle a £30 million structural deficit in 2020, as explained in the draft Budget.

Other corporate and public sector organisations have done this, and the due diligence work undertaken as part of the 'One Government' programme shows that the States of Jersey can do this too.

As such, instead of detailed departmental allocations before the budget debate, work will continue on assessing and calibrating savings in areas such as contract management, asset consolidation, automation and online services, back office rationalisation, and reducing layers of management. This will include responsible headcount management – of which vacancy rates is a part. This will deliver better value for money, while continuing to recruit to essential positions, such as health professionals.

At the same time, invest to save initiatives, pressing public service needs, and investments to support the Corporate Strategic Policy, will also be examined as part of a new, streamlined and States-wide approach to investment decisions, targeting budget to where it is needed most in the public service.

These new arrangements will be brought together for consideration by the Council of Ministers, as explained by Connétable Taylor, later this year, in a new Transition Report which will be presented to the Assembly before the end of the year, including a savings allocation criteria and assessment process.

All reallocations of budget between departments in the Transition Report will be governed by the new procedures established in P1/2018, providing the required flexibility as well as the necessary oversight, as part of ongoing improvements to our public sector.

Then, in June 2019, the four-year Government Plan will be lodged, including the fine detail of government activities planned for 2020, and the priorities for 2021-23.

This approach is far preferable to the savings programmes of the past – which have been based on departmental savings and growth, and have been deficient in corporate working, measurable and controlled savings initiatives, or the fundamental restructuring of our public services that is needed. This has restricted our ability to deliver improvements in service delivery and value for money.