

STATES OF JERSEY



H1N1 INFLUENZA PANDEMIC FUNDING: EXPENDITURE APPROVAL (P.174/2009) – COMMENTS

**Presented to the States on 1st December 2009
by the Minister for Health and Social Services**

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

The Minister for Health and Social Services has noted that the Public Accounts Committee has concerns regarding the use of pandemic funding. The suggestion that such funding will ultimately be used to cover budget overruns in the Health and Social Services Department (H&SS) that have little to do with actual pandemic spending requirements is unfounded.

The Minister for Treasury and Resources has put in place robust procedures to ensure that monies are only reallocated in order to fund costs associated with managing the consequences of a wave of illness caused by H1N1 influenza. The funding will only be made available to the department via a public Ministerial Decision of the Minister for Treasury and Resources based on evidence of the need to incur costs to manage the consequences of an H1N1 pandemic influenza.

Furthermore, the Minister for Health and Social Services supports the PAC's amendment –

“(c) to request the Minister for Treasury and Resources to forward a detailed and comprehensive breakdown to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) as soon as practicable detailing exactly how the funds were spent in order to confirm that funds were used only for pandemic-specific costs, and to provide written confirmation to the PAC that the States Treasurer will monitor and verify all spending;”.

The Minister expects complete transparency regarding expenditure related to the management of the current Swine Flu outbreak.

The Minister for Health and Social Services **does not** support the further amendment –

“(d) to agree that the ability to withdraw funds under paragraph (b) will expire on 31st December 2009 and shall not be carried forward.”.

The reason for not supporting this amendment is as follows:

The escalation of confirmed swine flu cases in Jersey during the month of November 2009 mean that the Island is now in an outbreak. With a successful vaccination program underway and a target of 50% vaccination coverage by year-end, it is anticipated that this outbreak will peak in Jersey in 2009. Whilst the UK are likely to experience a second wave in early 2010, past experience of pandemic effects upon Jersey combined with the unprecedented use of vaccine, means that Jersey may escape a second wave. This being the case, expenditure related to swine flu in 2010 may be insignificant. However, pandemics are unpredictable and experts are not in a position to predict with such accuracy the future behaviour of such viruses or their spread across a population. The strategy to date has been to “hope for the best and plan for the worst”. Such plans include potential spending in 2010 and it is therefore unwise to exclude such an option by this amendment.

Should spending related to Swine Flu not be required in 2010, then these funds will not be allocated. Any spending in 2010 will be subject to the same level of scrutiny to ensure they are allocated in a prudent manner.