

2024.11.25

Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North of the Chief Minister regarding goals for diversity, equity and inclusion in 2025: (OQ.222/2024)

Will the Chief Minister outline the Government's 2025 plans and goals for diversity, equity and inclusion?

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

One of the Government's goals for 2025 is to deliver greater diversity, equity and inclusion for the Government both as an organisation and as a public service. The Government has the real benefit of Deputy Alves, as our diversity, equity and inclusion political lead, and the Deputy is overseeing several projects, engages with key stakeholders, the community, and ensures interested parties are convened to promote the D.E.I. (diversity, equity and inclusion) agenda. That includes such projects as including diversity, equity and inclusion in all policy decisions. Policy officers use a policy template that requires diversity, equity and inclusion considerations to be clearly articulated when policy is being developed. We will enhance gender equity by implementing the Violence against Women and Girls Taskforce recommendations, which are currently being worked on; enhance greater gender equality by working with the private sector on the gender pay gap reporting; we will redevelop the International Cultural Centre, something the Deputy is and has been close to through the political lead of Deputy Alves. The International Cultural Centre will be redeveloped during 2025. Those are just some of the projects in motion.

2.10.1 Deputy I. Gardiner:

Thank you for raising all workstreams and actioning the International Cultural Centre that was promised back in February and I hope we will see it in 2025. What is the budget allocation for diversity and inclusion or several projects that the budget was allocated to diversity?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I think I would need notice of that question because those projects crosscut a number of departments. I do not think there was one particular budget for the whole process but it is part of a number of other budgets. If the Deputy would like to put that in a written question, I would be prepared to provide the detailed information.

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

In answering my Written Question on what timeline has the Government put in place to deliver a voluntary reporting framework to support businesses on gender pay gap reporting, the response was there was not one. Is the Chief Minister concerned that not having a timeline for action means that there will be no action, and could the Chief Minister put a timeline on delivery before the end of term of Government?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

No, I am not concerned about not having a timeline because the commitment there is to make progress with gender pay gap reporting, working with the private sector, with the organisation that the Deputy is *au fait* with, and I have great confidence in the work they are doing. I can reassure Members that the Government will be a responsible partner and will support the private sector to introduce the pay gap reporting that we need. It is impossible to put an accurate timeline on it but I will say we want to do this as soon as possible and as soon as practicable.

2.10.3 Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I believe the commitment from the Government in the last discussion was to deliver a voluntary reporting framework, which of course is needed ahead of the businesses being able to actually do some voluntary reporting. This is what I was asking for, for a timeline to help those businesses. But could the Chief Minister as well confirm how many businesses does he feel should be consulted as part of the gender pay gap review, and does he think this consultation needs to include senior management of businesses to engage?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I think the engagement consultation needs to be as encompassing as possible to make sure we are consulting with a good representative sample of businesses of all sizes. But specifically, in the first instance, I think it is going to be easier to get a universal reporting from the larger businesses if challenges come when we move down to the small to medium-sized businesses.

2.10.4 Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade:

Can I ask the Chief Minister, he described quite a few workstreams and so on, when was the last time diversity, equity and inclusion was discussed in the Council of Ministers?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I cannot actually remember, but it is discussed and Deputy Alves is leading on the matter. I believe she has had a number of meetings in her capacity with that political lead, but I cannot give any specific ... I cannot remember off the top of my head any specifics other than reiterating it is one of the Government's goals to make progress with this subject.

2.10.5 Deputy J. Renouf:

Can I just clarify: the Chief Minister cannot remember the particular discussions or how many, but can he clarify that it has definitely been discussed at the Council of Ministers?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Off the top of my head, I cannot. I am pretty sure it has, but I would not like to mislead the Assembly. I would have to check back in minutes and agenda items. But I just want to make it clear, and I am sure I speak for all, if not at least most of my colleagues, this is a subject that we are alive to, which is why it is one of our goals to deliver a greater diversity, equity, and inclusion. It is why we have a policy framework, which policy officers adhere to when creating policy.

2.10.6 Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée of St. Helier South:

If I may just go back and ask the Chief Minister with regards to the budget for the International Cultural Centre. Would the Chief Minister be in a position to look at the budget if it needed to be increased to further support the different cultural groups in the Islands?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I think that the Government and the Assembly are always prepared to revisit that subject. The Budget for 2025 I think has been agreed so any meaningful increase of that would have to be 2026. We would have to revisit that during next year once we have seen the progress that is being made. The short answer is that we are prepared to keep all issues under review.

2.10.7 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

Could the Chief Minister confirm that it is the general policy of his and his Government that there should not be any discrimination in Jersey on the basis of race and nationality?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Yes.

2.10.8 Deputy M. Tadier:

I am glad to hear that. The Minister will be aware of P.65/2024 that I have lodged, 'Public Elections: Extension of eligibility criteria', which would seek to remove the discrimination that non-British nationals in Jersey face to be able to stand for election. While I do not necessarily expect the Minister to commit his personal support today on the floor of the Assembly, given his previous votes on the matter, would he ensure that his Council of Ministers is at least given a free vote when it comes to this debate, as I believe it should be, and that he will not try and exert any kind of Ministerial whip in that regard?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

As colleagues will, I am sure, testify, I am not very keen on exercising the Chief Ministerial whip and do it very rarely, simply because I believe that we all reach decisions by consensus. It is made absolutely clear to Ministers where they have strong views or manifesto pledges and promises they are free to vote as they will.

[16:00]

I think that is one of the reasons why the Council of Ministers is working so well together. So, yes, I can make that.

2.10.9 Deputy I. Gardiner:

I am grateful for the Chief Minister for stating all workstreams. Would the Chief Minister advise, what are 3 specific ... for example, 3 or maybe 2 outcomes, the Assembly can expect before the Budget debate end of 2025 that we know that this Government, his Government, will make a difference in the area of diversity and inclusion? Yes, 3 specific outcomes that we can expect.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I would expect to see good progress with the gender pay gap reporting with the private sector. I would expect to see good progress with the work on violence against women and girls being led by the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs. I would expect to see some good progress with the redevelopment of the cultural centre.