



Education and Home Affairs

Quarterly Meeting with Minister for Education, Sport and Culture

MONDAY, 8th JULY 2013

Panel:

Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour (Chairman)
Connétable M.P.S. Le Troquer of St. Martin (Vice Chairman)
Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade (Panel Member)

Witnesses:

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture
Director Education, Sport and Culture

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Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour (Chairman):

Good afternoon, gentlemen. Thank you very much for coming today to this hearing of the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel. Can I express the apologies of Deputy Southern

today who, unfortunately, is otherwise booked? I wonder if we can jump straight in and begin with the apprenticeship scheme. This has seen perhaps greater success than expected with many people joining the scheme. Can you just give us an update on how it is performing?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Not an unexpected success as far as I am concerned, Chairman. We fully expected it to be successful and ...

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I beg your pardon. I mean a higher uptake than was anticipated.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Okay. We are very pleased with it and I think if I was going to really pick up on one thing it would be the retention rate, which is 100 per cent for the first year that we have been running even though we have had 2 or 3 apprentices that have been made redundant during the year, they have continued with their studies and, in fact, have got employment very quickly with an alternative employer. So we are very happy. It is still early days and we are still developing and we are looking to develop a scheme with a wider range of opportunities and we are actively talking to industry on that and also obviously to the college itself to assess the implications of widening the scheme, so it is looking good.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Are these local lads or girls or people who come to the Island?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

What is the criteria for joining the scheme?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

The criteria of the scheme are many: application, right attitude, all sorts of things as well as the opportunity of the particular study course that they want. I could not categorically say to you that there were no young people on the scheme that had not been here 5 years, but my understanding is that the vast majority of them are and, in fact, Highlands has a policy with regards that. Mario, you could probably tell me what the Highlands policy is with regards ...

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

Residency is one of the criteria; you have to have been here for a specified length of time. There are other criteria as well, and we can provide you with a list of the criteria so that you know who can access the scheme and who cannot.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

How long are you on the apprenticeship? I did a 5-year apprenticeship; what are the youngsters doing now?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

It ranges depending upon what they are studying, and there is also the opportunity for continuing their study longer. At the moment, we have set it up to be a 2, in some cases 3-year apprenticeship scheme.

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes. It depends very much on whatever it is that the apprentice is enrolled for but, quite clearly, it goes hand-in-hand with the training courses that we provide at Highlands and, of course, we usually do those around 2 years.

Deputy M. Tadier:

You talked, Minister, about the redundancy rate earlier. What is the cause ...

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Could I just finish that question? That is one of the things we are looking at is extending the time of the apprenticeship to be longer than a 2-year course. We have started the 2-year because that is what we offer, but what we need to bear in mind is that this is linked closely to the new 14 to 16 curriculum that we are going to be developing and, in fact, what that will do is it will mean that the young people that join Highlands at 16, if they have been on the 14 to 16 vocational courses, they are likely to be at a higher level vocationally than our current crop of young people are. That is what we are looking to do, so that they do not have to repeat in their first year at Highlands what they will have been doing. So, effectively, the 14 to 16 vocational training in the main schools will enhance in time the levels that the students that arrive at Highlands will be and so they will end up going to a higher level at Highlands. That is the thinking and that is certainly what I would like to achieve.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes. Can I ask a related question: what is the age range that is allowed to apply for the apprenticeship schemes?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Operational again. Sorry, Mario?

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, we are looking at 16 plus but mostly young people around about 18, 19 years of age who have applied for it; that is really the area that we were targeting. Because we have got the other schemes running hand-in-hand obviously with this, because you have got your Advance to work and then you have got Advance Plus for the older young people, and what we are trying to make sure of is that they are not overlapping, they are delivering for a different cohort, each one. So these are the older youngsters.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Is there an upper age limit? If a 27 year-old wanted to join an apprenticeship course ...

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

I am not sure what the upper age limit is, or if there is an upper age limit. It has been targeted and marketed towards, sort of, the 19 year-olds and the school leavers, but I can check on that and let you know.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Is there provision for these individuals to also receive income support or any other mechanism for funding while on that course?

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

I am not sure, because it depends on the individual circumstances of the young people. But, of course, the thing that we are doing here is providing the tuition for them so that they are accessing the tuition free and then they have got the mentoring support on top of that. So it is not costing them to do the scheme. Those, of course, who are in a work placement (and most of them are) are receiving an income as well so it would depend on the level of that income, I guess, as to whether or not they would access income support.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

On the work placements, they are working out in the industry or in the trade, or whatever, and then there is Highlands training at the same time?

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

So how many days would they do at Highlands?

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

Again, the detail of that we would have to provide for you, again, dependent on the actual course that they were doing.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

It varies; in some cases it is one day a week, in other cases it is a fulltime course.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Do you know what the apprenticeship scheme is costing the States?

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

We know what we bid for for the States; we really will not know the full cost of it until we have run it for a complete year but, if I recall, it was £500,000 that we bid for to set the apprenticeship scheme up and running, but the full costs will not be known until the end of the first year. You are looking at 58 apprentices who signed on at the beginning of the year and fortunately there are still 58 apprentices there.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

We are looking at some work, some work is currently being undertaken on what the implications are of expanding the scheme, because we are finding it is quite successful and, not surprisingly, more young people are starting to look at it and we are starting to worry about the level of funding that we have and we need to start thinking about ... but we want to keep the quality; do not misunderstand me, we are not going to compromise the quality by taking all and sundry. Because they do have to have the right attitude and the selection criteria will have to remain so that it is regarded as valuable and determine that it stays valuable, both in terms of the young people that are on it and in terms of their potential employers. So we must keep the quality but at the same time we are finding even then that the demand is growing so we are starting to do some work on the implications financially and also in terms of capacity at Highlands on courses, and those things are linked to the financials because of the mentors, do we need more mentors, for example, and what will the cost implications of that be.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Do you see the government taking on more responsibility for private firms, basically, the government are funding ...?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

We do not want it to go that way particularly, what we want is to have a situation where once an apprentice is ... and preferably we would like apprentices to be in employment, so in that context,

no, government is not taking on the responsibility. Government, mind you, has always provided training opportunities for younger employees in training but what we want to do ... hang on, I have lost my track a little bit ... yes, part of the success of this apprenticeship scheme, and I think a significant part, is that you do not have to be in employment, it is not absolutely black or white when you would need to be in employment in order to access the scheme. The success of keeping 100 per cent nil drop-out rate, or 100 per cent continuance of the course, we believe, in the first year is partly because there is not this pressure to have to have a job to be on it. In the past, what would happen is typically a young person, when there were not mentors, because the mentoring side is extremely important because the mentor liaises with both employee and their family and also with the employer, so that is very important. But the ability, or rather the safety net of if you lose your job, for whatever reason (and in a difficult economic climate sometimes young people are made redundant) but you can continue with your studies even though you have been made redundant, and that is essential and part of the success.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

So of the 58, they are all employed as well or would some of those just be doing the apprenticeship?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Hang on, let me just look at my numbers.

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

Most are employed somewhere on a work placement; even if you are not employed you have to have a work placement but if I recollect I think they were all, bar one.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Everybody is in employment other than one that is, as we speak, on placement.

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

But we can bring these figures up to date for you and give you up to date ...

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I have a thing here which will bring that right up to date.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

So given then that this scheme has been running for about 6 months then, I wonder initially if you can tell us what type of feedback you have had from (a) those on the scheme and (b) the employers.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

We are going to have a report in the autumn. It is a bit early yet to definitively answer that question. Anecdotally, the signs are all good from both sides but, of course, we will review it in the autumn when we have had something like 9 or 10 months' experience, and then I will get to find out, warts and all, if there are little things that need to be ironed out, but anecdotally, I can tell you, I think with some degree of confidence, that the signs are all good on both sides.

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

We know that it is popular because we have had 69 applications for the next cohort already and 57 of them have passed the second stage of the registration criteria, so it is certainly popular. It will be a good indicator when we see how many of the existing employers take up places again, offer places, and whether or not there will be many new employers. One of the big challenges at the moment is because of the schemes that we are running; they all require employment placements, whether it is Advance to Work or Advance Plus, et cetera. We are looking for a lot of placements, really, with a lot of very small to medium-size businesses and it can be quite a challenge for them, so there is a bit of overlap, getting placements is becoming a challenge.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Is there any cost to the employer who provides the work placement? How does that work?

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, the scheme does not work the way the previous scheme worked where an employer received a subsidy, in effect, the employer is not getting a subsidy this time round, but the trainee is being trained, obviously, at no cost to the employer, so the money is coming through Highlands College.

Deputy M. Tadier:

What is the rate that the work placement would be paying to the student?

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

I guess it would depend very much on what the employer was prepared to offer for the student, but I mean, it is going to be above the minimum wage or at the minimum wage. We would expect that, there is not a special allowance that we are aware of that employers are offering, so it is down to the student, the apprentice, to get the job effectively and if they cannot get the job to get a work placement. If it is a work placement then clearly they are not going to be paid. The employer may choose to give them something but it is not a formal contract between the employer and the employee.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

What is the role of the mentor?

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

The role of the mentor is to work with the apprentice and to maintain good communication between the college, the apprentice and the employer. One of the problems with apprenticeship schemes in recent years, particularly where you have young people who maybe have other needs, is trying to ensure that the employer feels supported in working with the young person and to ensure that if the young person maybe is not meeting their commitment in terms of study or in terms of attending work, the mentor is there to make sure that those issues are tackled early on. The mentoring aspect of the scheme really came out of the successful mentoring that was part and parcel of Advance to Work. So if you have got people there who will work with the student or with the apprentice in this case, with the college and with the employer, the likelihood is that there is good communication between the 3, it is all tied together and if there are any issues you can iron them out before they end up either with the apprentice giving up or the employer.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

How do you become a mentor?

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, you just apply for it. I mean, we advertise the posts and the posts attract people from different walks of life.

Sports Strategy

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Okay. Can we move on? So moving on to the sports strategy now, we welcome the publication of the summary of responses to that and then if I can ask: what initial conclusions have been reached by the department?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

We have not reached any initial conclusions yet, we are going to be taking more time to consider that. We are looking at the kind of templates on an independent organising body, Sport England, to a lesser extent Guernsey. We have to take into account Jersey's particular circumstances and sporting heritage and then we need to consider really what, if any, structural changes those aspects are likely to bring and then we will bring it to the States, having issued a White Paper, I think. The aim is to have a strategy document ready by the end of the year.

Deputy J.M. Maçon: Are there any further questions? Can we just ask, with this particular tranche of work it has stuck to your timetable very well in being produced. I believe that the White Paper should be ready for September; can you confirm that that is the timetable that the department is working to?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I would say that that is a bit early, Deputy, and I do not want to promise something that is not going to happen. Bearing in mind the summer holidays and what-have-you, I think it is more likely to be in the middle of the fourth quarter that that will surface.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Thank you. Also, can I ask whether, during that White Paper thought and discussion, that Scrutiny has been factored into your timetable as well?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes, it has.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Thank you. Within the document, what were the major reservations expressed despite a lot of positive sounds for change?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

A summary of the responses was published last Thursday, that is in the public domain. Do you want to go into it in more detail?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Well, what stood out for you, Minister?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think what stood out for me is the level to which people are very interested in and concerned about what happens to sport in Jersey, the level of general interest, I think. That is one aspect that stood out to me. I think another one that stood out to me is that generally people are very happy with the way the department is running sports facilities at the moment and there is a general consensus that they would not like to see them privatised. I mean, we know and we can look at examples from other jurisdictions where sports facilities have been privatised and when they are run on much more of a commercial basis. If you want the optional extras that we currently offer, I mean, things like health-based fitness things, if you want certain other things which are perhaps

not as commercial as others, you end up as a government having to pay the private operator to do them and by the time you do that it is questionable as to whether you save any money.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Did you have any specific historical examples in mind?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I do not have any in mind, I am generalising. I would not want to go into that.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can I ask a more general question, if that is all right, about moving away temporarily from the actual document towards the area of funding for sports? Can you tell us the direction in which funding has gone in the last 3 years in terms of the amounts that you are able to allocate to sports? Put simply, is it going up or down?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I do not think it is going up or down at the moment, to be honest. I think we would have to wait to see what the White Paper will say about sport funding generally. It has gone up in terms of staff inflation that goes with it, so in that respect it has gone up in actual terms.

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, there were some small cuts made, as you are aware, and they were publicised, but I think if there was any message that comes from the sports community out of this, it is that the sports community itself does not feel that there is enough funding going into sport.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

But it would be surprising if they did not say that, to be honest. I think every sector of what the government spends money on, the people that are directly involved are always going to say that they need more money. I mean, it would be quite surprising if they did not, but we do have to keep it in the context of what we can overall afford as an Island.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes. Can I ask about the cuts, because we know that there have been cuts, albeit maybe not of the magnitude ...

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, I did reinstate some of the cuts. When I came into office there was a cut brought forward from the previous Minister as part of the C.S.R. (Comprehensive Spending Review) saving. I

reversed that. So the impact was not as severe as it had previously felt that it might be, that is the first point. The second point is that with the Island games coming up and the Commonwealth Games coming up next year we have, in fact, found some extra monies with the help of the Treasury, for which I am very grateful. So sport funding overall, I do not think has reduced that much in the last, you said 3 years. By the time you take those extra funds that have been found for travel to the NatWest Island Games in Bermuda, for example, for the extra costs of running the Island games in 2015, there is a lot of investment there. In fact, the Island continues to invest in sports facilities ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

That includes the private sector, of course, with sponsorship, et cetera, which is ...

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

It does, but government money has increased as well.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can I just ask one more area that we are interested in: we had the Minister for Home Affairs in and I think I, and I presume the rest of the panel, are also interested in the link between promoting sports, particularly for the youth element in our Island, and the knock-on effect it seems to have on reducing criminality. Is that something that you also believe to be true?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I do believe it to be true, yes, but it is not the only thing that I believe to contribute towards it. There are many things that we do, many initiatives that have taken place over the last 3 to 5 years that could equally have had an effect, and the work that the youth service do and the work that we do in schools: the inclusion, the alternative curriculum. There are many things that we do, all of which made a contribution, so I would not say that it is just sport, but of course sport is important, yes.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Is there not an argument there to keep the money in order to have more funding to prevent, extra cost ...

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

The Community and Sports Development team are right at the heart of this, this is the team that goes out into the community and tries to engage young people and then uses those young people in a leadership role going into support sport, for example in primary schools. We are scoping out at the moment whether or not we can expand that activity, because it has been so successful.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Will the funding be there for that?

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

That is what we are looking at, we are looking inside first.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Like music, you pay for extra music in schools; would you be doing the same for sports?

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

You have got sport as an integral part of the school curriculum in any case and the Community and School Development team supplement that so in a sense there are already 2 layers in the schools and what we want to do is to make sure that the Development team focus, target the schools where perhaps they do not have the same facilities or the same opportunities to make sure that they get the advantages.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Sorry, can I just follow up: how likely are you to find that internal funding?

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

It is difficult to say that at this time. We will probably know before the end of the year, obviously, because it depends how we shape the budget for next year, but if it is possible to do that, then we will try to do it.

Deputy M. Tadier:

If not, is there anything that States Members can do to help?

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

I think if not, if there was to be an expansion of the facility, then what we would do is, if that was what we needed, we would make sure that that was included in the preparation for the next medium-term financial plan.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

The sports strategy will have an impact, the White Paper will refer to that as well.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

If I can refer you to the document at page 15, which I thought was an interesting submission, was the response from the Health Department or the Health section in particular, the particular line

where it was talking about how a culture of inactivity is becoming more inherent within society, from their response, and in particular it talks about the responses from those who have been referred to Exercise Referral; so presumably a growing demographic anyway. They highlight that many of their clients expressed that they had had a bad experience at P.E. (physical education) lessons; in fact, a lot of the documentation talks about trying to improve that experience. Do you have any reason or explanation why we are in that situation to begin with?

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

I think there is a sort of cultural difference over the years that the sport curriculum has developed in schools and I think if you were to go back quite some time, it was more a competitive environment where it catered for the most able sports people within the school and maybe youngsters who were not ever going to make the first team for football or cricket did not feel that they could be as engaged, or did not have the same interest. I think the P.E. curriculum has broadened significantly since then and there are much more opportunities in schools for young people who perhaps are never going to excel at an individual sport, to get involved in physical activity. Because what we are looking at here is a P.E. curriculum that is more than just being about games. So in modern days you have dance in the curriculum, you have outdoor pursuits, et cetera. So there is a broader range of activities being offered for young people but at the same time I think you will always have people who will feel that maybe they did not get as much out of the school offer for P.E. as they would have wished.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think there are 2 elements to be said here: the Exercise Referral, the average age of someone on Exercise Referral is, I am guessing and I have nothing to back these numbers up, but my understanding is that it is likely to be in the 40s or 50s age group, possibly even older. So that is the first point, so their experiences of P.E. at school are 30 years ago. The second point is that we are all now, but there is still a long way to go, more health conscious of what we eat. How many of us have a cooked breakfast every morning nowadays? Not so many, I would suggest, than used to be 20 years ago, so the health consciousness is there and growing. I think that we need to move with the times and P.E. as part of the curriculum was always important but it is the growing cultural change that is driving further enhancement to that, and that is what we need to do.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Yet, despite even the change in the curriculum, the statistics from Health that have been reported in the paper show that childhood obesity within the Island is on the rise, so how effective has that policy been?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think that again is part of the cultural change, although I do detect a slight change. How many young children are in front of the television playing on their X-Boxes nowadays, for example? That is one of the cultural changes that we need to cope with and we need to encourage children to be more active and, as I say, health consciousness is one way to try. It is difficult with young children, they are not always as receptive to persuasion on what is good for their health in the long term, but that is a challenge that we have to take on.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Do you make a link between relative poverty levels in Jersey and the increase in childhood obesity?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think there are studies that might certainly show that. I do not have a view on it but I am sure that there is evidence to suggest that, yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I know it is slightly tangential but do schools have a way of ensuring that students are eating relatively healthily when home provision is perhaps not being made?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, teachers have enough trouble with carrying out all of the various responsibilities they have and one of them at certain schools, I know, is to try to check that children are eating healthily during the day, drinking water rather than Coca-Cola and things like that, but it is difficult. It is up to the parents, at the end of the day.

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

We have the Healthy Schools initiative, and most of our primary schools are there or thereabouts in terms of achieving accreditation in that, and then at secondary level, of course, we tried to bring together new guidelines for food for the people who are operating the food services in our schools to ensure that youngsters have got a choice and can have a balanced diet. So we have done a lot of work with the Health Department in this area over the last 5 years. You say that the obesity levels are on the rise, which may well be the case, but it does not necessarily mean that these strategies are not having an effect. They may be slowing the rise, it is all relative; unless you have got the hard data in front of you to really explore the trends, it is difficult to make a judgement. But what we do know is that they are very effective with the actual young people that we are engaging with.

Deputy J.M. Maçon: You might have the natural disposition to go into these things anyway and presumably part of the whole sports strategy is trying to reach out to those people who do not have that natural inclination, who do not have that disposition.

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes. That is where the Exercise Referral is a big factor because, of course, the people who are on Exercise Referral are coming because of a health issue so not all of them will have maintained healthy lifestyles up to that point, although many will and obviously have just had an illness of some sort and are recovering from that illness. But certainly everybody who comes into Exercise Referral is coming having been referred either from a G.P. (general practitioner) or from the hospital, because that is perceived to be the best way to help them get back to fitness. I think the reassuring figure is the number who, once they have engaged with Exercise Referral, go on to take up an Active Card and continue. I have not got the number with me, but we are aware they have gone on.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Under the new strategy and with the possible setting up of effectively Sports Jersey as it might be, or the new Sports Council, whatever it is going to be called, I know this is not going to be an easy question to answer, but presumably at that stage it has gone too far and the sports strategy should presumably want to catch people for that, people who have not been engaged in these sorts of things or tried to, but how will the sports strategy be able to do that? I appreciate I am jumping the gun a little bit as the White Paper has not been produced, but I make the point.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, I think the point is taken, as you are making the point, and that is one of the areas that we will need to look at, yes, in the sports strategy; which is I think what you are saying, could we look at that. But, I mean, the sports strategy is primarily there to look at sport right across the piece. The curriculum for sports and for P.E. is not specifically something that the sports strategy was looking at, other than in the round.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

That is right, this is sports for anyone in the Island to start taking part in and getting that buy-in.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes. But we do keep the P.E. side of the curriculum constantly under review. The sports development offices are an area that overlaps probably the most with schools. Mario, sorry, I cut you off.

Director Education, Sport and Culture: The essence of what you are talking about is in the objective to make sport a habit for life for young people and if we can build our tactics around that then hopefully that will influence them early.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

I think you said before, Mr. Lundy, was it, as an outsider you look in and you have got a pot of money. Who decides who gets the various amounts in the sporting groups, whether it is for TOL(?) players or the Dodds(?) group last week that went to Brighton or Bournemouth or a cricketer ...

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

We decide as a department how much we can justify in the overall budget. A grant is made to the Sports Council, correct me if I am wrong, and the Sports Council decides independently of us who is most in need of those funds for whatever travelling.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

The Sports Council is ...

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Is made up of the sporting bodies.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Elected?

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

The Sports Advisory Group would be the group that would determine; people will bid to the group for ...

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes, the Sports Advisory Council. It is a bit confusing because they have similar names. There is Sports Council, there is Sports Advisory Council, but it is the Sports Advisory Council that decides the grants.

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

They will decide where the grants go on the basis of applications that are made from individuals and from clubs.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

They decide what sport is and what sport is not. Because there must be somebody who will think: "My hobby is a sport."

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

That is one of the policies that we are reviewing as part of the sports strategy as to where the overlap between sport and leisure activity lies which is, I think, what you are referring to. This comes from the old day, the current policy is to do with sport and leisure, so that is where the kind of semi sporting activities that are getting small amounts of grant have come from in the past, because that policy was inherited by Education, Sport and Culture from previous days when in fact there was a separate sport and leisure department within the States of Jersey and it was called Sport and Leisure at that time.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Yes, we had better move on.

Review of core subjects

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Yes, okay. So moving on now to the review of the core subjects. We understand there was a maths review started before Christmas and should be concluded by now. Are you able to tell us what progress has been made?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

It turned out to be a slightly more complex study than the person who is doing it thought it would be. The result of that is it has taken a bit longer and it was a bigger task than she had anticipated, basically.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can we ask who is doing that review, who is heading that?

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

I have not got the name with me, she is an independent inspector from England that we have commissioned to do it, and the work that the review has done in the sense that she has been to all the schools, observed lessons, looked at all the schemes at work, and we have received an early draft of the report and the final draft is being written at the moment, so hopefully for the beginning of the new term.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Then, given that, are you able to tell us any of the initial findings of that review?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture: No not yet, no, because I have not seen it, I am afraid. Not yet; it is pointless me seeing it until the review is completed and the report has been written, and I have not seen that yet. I should see it immediately in the new term.

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

Once the report is available, obviously, it will go out to head teachers, because they have got to check the facts to make sure that their schools have been properly represented and it can go to the ministerial team before publication.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

So to do a contract, you get somebody in to do a review; they are on a limitless budget, if you like.

Director Education, Sport and Culture: No.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

They could suddenly say, well like they have done in this case: "It was a bit bigger than I thought."

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

No. It does not work like that because what we would normally do is agree a price for the review at the outset. The price would only change if, during the course of the review, we asked them to do additional work that was not in the original terms of reference.

Deputy M. Tadier: What was the original, if you do not mind, for ...?

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

We expected the work to be completed by Easter and the report to come out shortly after Easter, but the work did not begin just before Christmas, we commissioned the reviewer before Christmas and the work began in the springtime.

Deputy M. Tadier:

So the review itself is not taking longer then, it is just the process for initiating ...

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

It is the report; it is a heftier report than we were anticipating.

Deputy J.M. Maçon: Then can I just ask, with that which has been learnt, that these reviews might not be everything when they start off, what advice or communication has been given to those who are doing the English and the science review so that this type of thing is not repeated?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

None, because we have not commissioned anybody to do those yet. We will commission for English in the autumn term with a view to it beginning in January.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

So a 3-year project, in effect, if you do the 3 subjects?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Effectively.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Are there any other questions.

Deputy M. Tadier:

No. It is obviously something which is in progress.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think it should be said that the reason, Connétable, that it is over that extended timeframe is that these reviews do put pressure on schools.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

So you cannot do them together.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

You certainly cannot do them at the same time, no.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Are there any early indications that there is something that we may need to rethink radically in terms of English and maths teaching in particular?

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

I think simply that the early indications pretty much confirm what we already knew, that where maths teaching is very good, you know, there are very well-qualified teachers, teachers who have considerable skills, usually maths specialists, and perhaps where it is not so strong, you do not

have the specialists in the field and, quite clearly, primary schools is the obvious example because not every primary school is going to have a maths specialist as teacher.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Do you think that is an area which maybe needs to be given more specialist input?

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

Can I answer that? The issue for us, given that you have restrictions on recruitment from outside the Island, is how we upscale and keep teachers upscaled in the Island to deliver the highest quality teaching and learning that you can get. So that is a constant challenge. If you are a school in England looking to recruit a maths teacher, you would probably have a much wider field of applicants than you are likely to have in Jersey, unless, of course, we go over.

Future of Education

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

If we can move on then to the future of education, primarily looking at the structure of secondary education. We understand now that a ministerial group, or oversight group or commission, is being set up to look at this matter. Can I begin by just asking who sits on that?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

It is chaired by the Chief Minister, I sit on it, the 3 members of the Skills Board sit on it: so that is myself, the Minister for Social Security, the Minister for Economic Development and the Chief Minister chairs it and the other person is the Minister for Treasury and Resources.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Thank you. Can you tell us, first of all, how many meetings that group has had?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

3 or 4. 3; I think one might have gone on to a second thing.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Then what progress has been made?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

So far, what we have done is that we have ... you have to bear in mind that most of those Ministers have not had the chance to look at our education system in detail in the same way that I have had the opportunity as the Minister for Education to do. So one of the problems when you are

considering education is that it is quite complex, particularly our system is even more complex, shall we say, than an average system in another country with its high levels of selectivity, both in terms of the ability to pay and on educational ability, and combinations of both of those 2 in certain schools, both the ability to pay and educational ability. It has been very important, and I think extremely valuable for those other 4 Ministers to really get to grips with the structures that we currently have and all of the implications and the subtleties around the complexities. That has taken these 3 to 4 meetings, and these meetings have been quite long. We are getting to the stage now where I believe that those 4 Ministers really do now probably ... I hesitate to say too much, because one would expect every politician to know our education system intimately, particularly if you are a Minister, but the fact of the matter is that that is quite difficult because most of those Ministers have their own portfolios to worry about. Getting them to put that to one side to fully understand the education portfolio and all of the implications, as I say, and complexities, has been one of the challenges that every Minister for Education faces, since time immemorial. We have done that now, I believe that the other 4 Ministers now are pretty much up to speed on understanding our current system, now we have to start thinking about where we go and we are going to start by going to visit probably 3 or 4 schools in the U.K. (United Kingdom), all 5 of us, all of the different academies, free schools, faith schools in the U.K., sixth form colleges. The U.K. system is made up of a number of different elements now and we want to go and look at what those different kinds of U.K. schools mean and the differences between them. So that will be the next stage and that will take us through to the end of this year, I think.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can I ask, if we cut to the chase slightly, I mean, I think it is worthwhile to go on any fact-finding missions but ultimately in the Jersey context there are political realities and there seem to be certain taboo areas, one of which is the fact that we have a disproportionately high amount of parents who send their children to private schools, which is not the case in the U.K., and I think also we have a very entrenched parochial system, that is just an example, where we have primary schools which would not necessarily be an efficient use, in purely economic terms.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, we are not looking at primary education as such, we are looking at secondary education.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Okay, but the same can be said for the secondary system, which is a very separate element which would not necessarily exist were the Island a small town of 100,000 in the U.K.; we may only have one comprehensive school, et cetera, so ...

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, economies of scale are going to be an issue, as they often are in the Island.

Deputy M. Tadier: Do you envisage any difficulties on that basis of going to the U.K., finding out how they work and then bringing that knowledge back and applying it to the local context?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

No, I do not. I think that what we will need to do is fully understand the system, which I think we are now at that point, we are now going to do some research which goes a stage further looking at what happens in other jurisdictions, particularly the U.K., bearing in mind that most of our students eventually, and more of them increasingly, go into higher education either in the U.K. or similar, so the U.K. system is important to us at a practical level.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can I ask the Director just one more, if that is okay, about what are the reasons that we have such a high amount of children in private education here compared to the U.K.?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, I think that is a political question.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I can ask both of you, in that case.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think it is a political question. It is relatively cheap to go to private education in the Island, unquestionably, we grant ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

Why is that?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Well, you know as well as I do that we grant-support a number of fee-paying secondary schools, and that is one of the areas, of course, we would not be able to carry out a proper review of the secondary system unless we looked at all of that and all of the implications that that has. It is a bit early for me to tell you what our conclusions will be.

Deputy M. Tadier: But if it is already known then ...

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think it is likely that we will probably want to carry out a fully independent review once we establish what the issues are very clearly in our own minds.

Deputy M. Tadier:

So in other words the private schools are essentially over-subsidised compared to the U.K.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I did not make any comment on that, I am just telling you the facts of life are that we do grant aid on a per pupil basis to a number of schools in our secondary system, that means that as an Island we save quite a lot of money because we are not paying the full cost that you would pay in the U.K. to run those schools. I do not think I am telling you anything you do not already know, the argument is from the parents' perspective: "Am I helping the budgets of the Island because I am paying for half of my child's education?", or a bit more than half, and the opposite point of view is: "Are we subsidising those families to have a private education?" Those are the 2 sides of the argument, and those arguments have been there for decades. What is important is what the effect of the total system is in the round on every sector of our community, and that is what we need to get to grips with: what are the facts, what are the issues, what are the effects that the system has and what should we do about it, if anything.

Deputy M. Tadier:

But the review is not likely to come out before the next election.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think it will be an election issue, and it is only right that it should be, that independent review is likely to come out, I do not know, in the second quarter of next year.

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

Nothing has been commissioned, so no timeline has been set and terms of reference have not been agreed.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

We have got your departure as well, so we could have the Chief Minister changed, we could have the Ministers changed from your panel and yourself, so how does it follow through, all the work that is done this year and next year?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

The States will have a lot of evidence-based information around our secondary system. It will be up to the States in the end to decide what they do with it.

The Connétable of St. Martin: You see, as a newer member and fresh, if you like, I mean, we have just seen an island plan which is 2 years old, well, every area of it being subject to review now because it is not good enough. It only got passed in 2011 but we have discussed it only last week. That is the worry with money being spent on this review now, that it is just a waste of time. I hope not, I am not saying it would be, but ...

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Clearly, I would not be doing it and going down this route if I thought it was a waste of time.

Tax Allowances for Higher Education

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I am just conscious of time. If I could ask are you able to tell us what progress has been made with regards to changes in the tax allowance for higher education in the Treasury Department?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Do you want to go into private on that?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Do tell us what they are able to tell us first in public.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

We have had some meetings with the tax policy group at the Treasury. The difficulty is that we need to decide which groupings of the community we are trying to help with these tax breaks. I mean, obviously, a tax break is a tax break, tax allowance is a tax allowance; you have got to be a tax payer before it is worth anything to you at all. What we have at the moment is, if we want to do something to help the lowest paid, they are unlikely to be large tax payers; they are likely to be receiving the greatest amount of grants for fees and for living expenses. The only way that we could help those ... I do not think tax breaks would work for that sector at all. The only way that we could assist those people would be to increase the allowances for living expenses. We know that at the moment we pay a maximum contribution to living allowances for a student of £5,400 a year whereas the real cost is about £8,400 a year on average. So there is a £3,000 a year gap there and obviously that has to be filled, either by a student working part time, working in their holidays. It will be more pressure, perhaps, on the student from a lower-paid household. Sometimes you

might find in a higher-paid household there would not be so much pressure on the student; you know, Mum and Dad subsidise it.

Deputy M. Tadier: So just to take this back to the question ...

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

The question was: what were we doing with the tax allowances, and I will come back to the tax allowances in a minute, but we have come to the conclusion that tax allowances are not going to help the lowest-paid areas.

Deputy M. Tadier: So what are the tax allowances that were envisaged, that were discussed?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

The current situation is that families receive a tax allowance of £6,000 per child at the moment in higher education, but that tends to help only the middle and higher earners because it is a tax allowance.

Deputy M. Tadier: That means that £6,000 would not be taxed, is that correct?

Director Education, Sport and Culture: £800, it would mean to the family.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes, that is right, you get a 20 per cent. If you were to increase that to £10,000 for example ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

Well, presumably it should be whatever the cost is, whatever they spend on their child's education up to a reasonable limit.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes. We would have to base it on the tuition fees, you are right. We would have to look at that. But increases to tax allowances are going to help possibly a sector of the community at the high end even more than they might those middle income earners. The question is: should you still do it because you need to help the middle income earners, and if you as a consequence help some of the higher earners as well, then so be it, that is a kind of decision that we need to make politically. But when it comes to the lower-paid families, lower household income families, my view is that the only way to help them would be to increase the amounts of money per annum that we pay for maintenance of students. Now, we did put that as a growth bid into the into medium-term financial plan; it was rejected this time round. We will, if we want to, and the next Minister will have to

consider whether he wants to put that in again into the next medium-term financial plan as a growth bid.

Deputy M. Tadier: Would there be any way to ring-fence money that would have been paid in tax allowances so that the Tax Department could collect that money, so that high earners who would be getting the benefit would put that into a centralised pot which could get redistributed among all students?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

That is something that we considered. I know that the Tax Department do not like ring-fencing per se in general.

Deputy M. Tadier: Collect it on your behalf ...

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

Essentially, that would be a hypothecation of tax, yes. It is not something that we have ever discussed with the Treasury and it is not our field of expertise, what we do know is that in theory it would be possible to, for example, raise the level of the current childcare tax allowance to offer more benefit. It depends, as the Minister said, on the range of parents that you want to help, but the main means by which we have supported parents to date has been through means-tested grant awards for tuition fees and an amount for maintenance. That is predominantly the big factor here.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think my own view is starting to be around the area, I am not fully there yet, but I am starting to be round the area that this may not be the right way to go about it; the right way to go about it might be to look at increasing the amounts that we ... fiscal drag has reduced the amount of the worth of not so much the fees now, because fees are fixed, but certainly fees as well as the living allowances have been reduced in value.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I do not mean to interrupt again, but I am conscious of time. We are aware of that particular issue.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

Yes. I am thinking that it is not so much tax allowances that we should be looking at ...

Deputy M. Tadier: Can we just establish, are you in a particular rush to get out of here?

Deputy J.M. Maçon: This room is soon to be occupied by someone else.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture: Is this the right way to go about it, tax allowances, or should we be concentrating on bringing the levels for the thresholds for both fees and living expenses more in line with the way that inflation has degraded them over the last decade or so.

Income support for mature students on Access courses

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Just before we finish, one thing which we do want to ask you: the issue of further education income support for mature students on Access courses, for example, what progress has been made for finding a long-term solution to this issue, if any?

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

I think the answer is that the question of income support is with the Minister for Social Security and I know that he has been looking at it. I am not sure where he currently is and that is a question. The question of income support and fulltime education is an area which is in the domain of the Minister for Social Security.

Director Education, Sport and Culture:

What we can say is that we have asked Highlands College and they are quite agreeable to look at making the Access courses more flexible, building in perhaps a bigger level of online learning so that they can be more easily accessible to people who would wish to work and study at the same time, and they are looking at that.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Final questions from members? No. Just to give you the opportunity, as I always do when we come to the end of our sessions, if you feel that we have missed anything or if there is anything which you would like to stress or emphasise, we would like to give you the opportunity to do so now.

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

When I get a Trackers update, the apprenticeship scheme, in September/October, I will ask your Scrutiny Panel, if you would like, to attend that presentation at that time, and that will bring you right up-to-date with apprenticeships.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Okay. Thank you very much on behalf of the panel then, gentlemen. Thank you very much for attending here today. End of hearing.