

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR TREASURY AND RESOURCES
BY THE CONNÉTABLE OF ST. MARTIN
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 14th MARCH 2022
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 21st MARCH 2022**

Question

“Is it the Government’s intention to use additional funds arising from the underspends in 2021 to provide additional funding to sponsored charities who have seen a decrease in funding, including the Jersey Women’s Refuge?”

Answer

As set out in both the End of Year Flexibility report (MD-TR-2022-0083), and subsequent answers to States Questions, the unspent amounts arising in 2021 are not “additional funding”.

Nearly £80m related to Projects, and the bulk of these approvals are being transferred to 2022 to allow them to be spent for the purposes approved by this assembly. A further £85 million was an amount held in the Reserve that was not required in 2021. The Reserve is not in general intended to be spent – it is held to meet unforeseen cost pressures. Throughout the pandemic we have been holding the Reserve at a higher level, due to the obvious increase in levels of uncertainty.

The Assembly already agreed that unspent amounts in 2021 were to be prioritised to reduce the level of borrowing to meet the financial impacts of Covid-19, and the decisions made are in line with that decision.

Any additional funding allocation in year must be supported by a robust business case in line with my published reserves policy (prepared by the sponsoring department), and no such business cases have been received. Where there is an ongoing funding requirement this is more properly considered in the Government Plan by the next Assembly.

In addition, under the Public Finances Manual, “Grants should not be issued to the recipients before the funds are required”. This includes a consideration of the existing cash reserves of the organisations and their ability to raise funding (e.g. through fund-raising). Sponsoring departments would need to consider this in the preparation of any business cases.

There are over 400 charities in the Island, so whilst there is no doubt that the Jersey Women’s refuge provide an excellent service, I am not clear why the Government would choose to single out one in particular, without a robust business case in place. Officers are already engaging with the organisation to review their current service specification with a view to co-producing a longer term arrangement that is sustainable from a funding and staffing perspective

For context - the Jersey Women’s refuge will receive £215k this year from government – around 40% of their base budget. In addition they will receive £41k for the IRIS Service (Identification and Referral to Improve Safety Service).

Good financial management dictates that one-off underspends should not be used to fund ongoing expenditure, and the suggestion that we should be making short-term financial decisions this close to an election is disappointing.