

STATES OF JERSEY



ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2007 (P.92/2006): FOURTH AMENDMENT (P.92/2006 AMD.(4))– AMENDMENT

**Lodged au Greffe on 11th September 2006
by the Chief Minister**

STATES GREFFE

ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2007 (P.92/2006): FOURTH AMENDMENT (P.92/2006 AMD.(4))–
AMENDMENT

For the words “by April 2007” substitute the words “by November 2007”.

CHIEF MINISTER

REPORT

It is not practically possible to introduce a Winter Fuel Payment Scheme by April 2007 as proposed in Senator Shenton's amendment. Such a timescale quite simply does not allow sufficient time for the consideration and assessment of costed options, the scrutiny of proposals, debate by the States, law drafting and approval, information systems development, staff training and the whole host of other steps necessary to successfully implement a benefit scheme.

If the Senator's amendment is approved, the Council of Ministers will have no option other than to increase payments to those eligible for the Christmas Bonus Scheme, a scheme which is paid regardless of income not only to all pensioners resident in the Island but also pensioners living in the U.K. and to certain "passport" benefit recipients who are not pensioners. Of course even if approved in April 2007, as a *Christmas* Bonus scheme, no payments would be made until the following Christmas.

In 2005, 18,122 people received a Christmas Bonus, on this basis if an extra £50 Christmas Bonus were to be paid to each claimant it would cost in excess of an additional £900,000. If £200 were paid, which is the entry level allowance paid in the U.K., this would cost in excess of £3.6 million.

The Council of Ministers strongly believes that rather than simply throwing money at an issue to achieve an arbitrary deadline, sufficient time should be given to allow research, the full and careful consideration and assessment of options and the scrutiny and debate of proposals by States Members in possession of all the facts and with the complete understanding of the consequences of introducing a particular scheme.

This becomes all the more important when such large amounts of taxpayers' money are at stake, money which will have to be found from cuts to essential services.

However the Council of Ministers remains committed to introducing a Winter Fuel Payment scheme in time for winter 2007/8 and to demonstrate this commitment, rather than simply opposing Senator Shenton's unachievable aim, the Council is proposing to amend his deadline and the Business Plan by stating that it will introduce the scheme for November 2007.

The timetable below shows the key-milestones to achieving implementation by November 2007 as well as demonstrating why April 2007 is not achievable.

October 2006	Costed options proposed to the Council of Ministers
November 2006	Preferred option lodged with the States
January 2007	Proposition debated by the States
January 2007	Law Drafting Brief commences
March 2007	Law drafting commences
May 2007	Draft Law lodged with the States
July 2007	Draft Law debated by the States
October 2007	Law receives Royal Assent
November 2007	Regulations debated by the States
November 2007	Scheme introduced

Members will see that even achieving a deadline of November is ambitious and the project will need careful management if we are to succeed including resources being available at the right time.

The project will require dedicated resources, funding and experienced manpower, including the time of Law Draftsman and Law Officers, diverted from other services and tasks at a time when the Social Security Department will have to be completely focussed on the very significant task of introducing the crucially important Income Support Scheme.

The Council of Ministers is committed to proposing to the States a Winter Fuel Payment Scheme in time for payments to be made for winter 2007/8. Insisting that introducing such a scheme for April 2007 is simply not realistic and the Council requests that Members recognise this and support its amendment to introduce a scheme

for November 2007.