



## Migration and Population Review Panel

### Common Population Policy Review

#### **Witness: Mr. J. Hopley**

Friday, 21st January 2022

**Panel:**

Senator S.W. Pallett (Chair)

Deputy G.J. Truscott of St. Brelade

Deputy S.M. Ahier of St. Helier

**Witness:**

Mr. J. Hopley, Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership

[13:01]

**Senator S.W. Pallett (Chair):**

Good afternoon, everyone, anybody who is listening in. We have the public hearing with Jim Hopley of the Jersey Disability Partnership. This is a meeting of the Migration and Population Review Panel. Jim, I am sure you are aware of how this works but we will be obviously recording it and we are live streaming and will be transcribing it but we will give you opportunity to clearly review any of the minutes, any of the recordings before we print anything publicly. I am quite keen to crack on because, as you know, it is quite a lengthy policy and something, I am sure, that has taken some time to digest from your point of view, and I am sure from the public's point of view. So, maybe if I start with the first question.

**Deputy G.J. Truscott of St. Brelade:**

Chair, can I say before we do, could we just introduce ourselves as panel members?

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

Yes, you are quite right. I forgot this a formal meeting rather than the informal ones we have had this morning. I will start. I am the panel Chair, Senator Steve Pallett. I will hand over to my 2 colleagues.

**Deputy G.J. Truscott of St. Brelade:**

Deputy Graham Truscott, panel member.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier of St. Helier:**

Deputy Steve Ahier.

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

Do you want me to introduce myself, Chair?

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

Yes, please.

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

I am Jim Hopley. I am the Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership, but I do carry a variety of other community roles. I suppose in this context, most important is that I chair both Genuine Jersey and Farm Jersey and I also chair something that I might want to touch on during the conversation called the Community Action Group, which is a body sponsored by the States of Jersey Police that attempts to reach the harder to reach communities across the Island, including religious communities, ethnic communities, among others.

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

Thank you. I am glad you have reminded us of all your roles because we do realise you have got a number that spread across a wide part of the community, which is why we really wanted to speak to you today. I will start off with the first question. Do you believe that the organisations you are a part of, such as the Jersey Disability Partnership, have had sufficient opportunity to take part in the formation of the policy that is being proposed?

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

I think, Chair, that this policy has been in the making for so long now that people have become incredibly confused on what their opportunity for contributing to it and influencing what is being brought forward is. The policy has been kicked down the road for decades now and I think everybody is thoroughly bemused by exactly what is being proposed anyhow, so consultation is very, very difficult in the context of that situation even when it does impact quite dramatically on quite a few parts of the broader Island community.

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

Could you give us any indication, maybe over the last 6, 7, 8 months, about any engagement you have had with Government over the policy?

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

With the hats that I am wearing this afternoon, somewhat limited. We have not been specifically approached. Obviously like the rest of the public we have had an opportunity to make observations in a number of manners if we saw fit but, no, nobody has actually sat me down and said: "What is your view?" in this area. With a different hat on, I still sit on the council of the Chamber of Commerce and obviously the Chamber of Commerce has engaged quite vociferously on this. So I am fairly familiar with the breadth of what has been discussed and proposed but, no, they have not come specifically to any of the organisations I represent and asked for an opinion from us.

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

Are you disappointed by that with any specific organisations?

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

I am a little surprised in one or 2 areas but obviously everybody hides behind COVID and virtual meetings and how difficult it is, but then again there is an onus on organisations to put the effort into responding to consultations when they are made available. So I think it would be a bit unjust just to put the blame on Government. As I said, people are, at the moment, bemused by how long this has taken, exactly what is intended and consulting against a document that says: "We are not really sure; we have not got the data; things are moving; we are consider this probably in the next round of electoral discussion following the general election in June." It is very, very difficult to know what sort of response to put into the consultation in that context.

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

Since the consultation, are you satisfied with the level and the form of the consultation that has taken place with Government?

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

As I said, I think the onus is on organisations and individuals to seek out involvement if they so choose. As I said, I am in a very peculiar situation, as you are aware. I carry so many responsibilities and each one of those responsibilities would come up with a slightly different observation in terms of what needs to be done relative to policy. With my Genuine Jersey, Farm Jersey hat on it, obviously I am aware of the discussion that has been taking place with the farming community, for instance. I am not aware of significant discussions in the health and community services arena that

have taken place in detail. That worries me because if one analyses where employment growth is coming from - let us not say population growth at the moment - the big net gainer in terms of the number of employees over the last few years without any doubt at all has been health and community services and the care industry. That is going to continue within the ageing population and so forth. One would have thought that perhaps key players in that arena might have been called to some sort of meeting to have a thorough discussion on it because certainly the view from my side of the fence, from the voluntary sector and the organisations supplementing the statutory services in those fields, we have all got problems and the problems to a degree are not going to go away. They are going to get worse and maybe an adult and thorough discussion in that area might have been beneficial.

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

Okay, thank you. Can you outline for the panel the concerns, and hopes as well, that organisations such as the Jersey Disability Partnership have in relation to population management and whether you think they are addressed within this policy, within this Common Population Policy?

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

Well, I think, Chair, that one has got to accept that we need some sort of policy to control population. It cannot go on exponentially growing as it has done over the last few decades, but within the context of that one has got to be realistic. You have got to look at the numbers game, how many people we need to service that population at whatever level it is. Certainly the biggest concern that many organisations that I discuss, not only in the health and care industry but right across the piece at the moment in time, is, yes, by all means let us consider how we can limit population growth but we need to be realistic, there are still many functions that need to be performed. Everything cannot be automated. The dynamics in play with A.I. (artificial intelligence) and the likes are there but when it is people businesses - farming, retail, certainly the care industry - the options are pretty limited. In the context of that, I think one policy does not fit all, unfortunately, and setting targets is an impossible situation. I think we need to step back because the biggest issue totally, as I see it at the moment, is we have not got the data. The census has been done at a point in time. The figures are not out yet. When they are released, how valid are they going to be because we are in the middle of a pandemic and that has had significant influence on the way people are working, the numbers game, et cetera. We have not see the full impact of Brexit and what that has done in terms of population. So at the moment in time I can sympathise with Government saying: "We are not quite sure where we are at the moment; we are not even sure where we are going to go." The world has moved. We are having this meeting virtually and finance and the digital industry will never go back to the type of operations that they had prior to March 2020. So many meetings now do take place virtually, so many jobs now are not being performed perhaps in Island. They have been shifted out to other jurisdictions and that has got consequences because at the end of day we need a

sufficient working population to pay the bills. National Insurance and taxation needs to be of a level that enables us to sustain an ageing population who are going to make more demands on health and other services over the coming decades.

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

There is a phrase used in the policy quite often and that is “stable and sustainable population” and the goal this Government have got of achieving that. What is your view? What do you believe a stable and sustainable population will mean to the Island?

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

There is so many factors in play at the moment in time. I think it would be impossible today to say that we have actually got a population of 108,000 or whatever it might be. Everything has been predicated on that but the dynamics of what has happened over the last couple of years has made significant moves in certain areas. We have virtually got full employment at the moment, whichever way you look at it. There is certainly a situation whereby the number of people actively seeking work is very, very small and most of those people are probably in many ways virtually unemployable. So you cannot just freeze the situation as it is if you are going to provide the quality of service across the Island in so many ways that is required. So a stable population in my terms at the moment in time should not be fixed at 300 people net increase a year or whatever it happens to be or a target that says we should not top 110,000. We have got to be realistic in terms of how we adjust population over time to make it as bearable in the Island as it possibly can be. If it goes on rising at the rate it was maybe 3, 4 years ago, within 10 or 15 years then there will be so many of us here that the infrastructure required to service those people would create all sorts of difficulties in terms of an Island 9 by 5 with a restricted land mass with all sorts of competing demands on it. So I suppose I view population on the basis of what we actually need to deliver the services we require and if that means a small increase gradually over time and adjustment in terms of what sectors those people move into then so be it, but at the moment in time we have got skills gaps, we have got significant lack of available staff in all sorts of industries, and that in some senses is unsustainable. If tourism takes off again in 2022, which is the current proposition, god knows where the people are going to come from that are going to service that industry.

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

Accepting that data is an issue and has been an issue for other stakeholders as well and having that data provided at that same point, in terms of the organisations you are involved with, do you think it is acceptable to wait until 2024 for a meaningful population policy?

[13:15]

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

No, I do not, Chair. At the moment we are making major policy decisions based on forecasts. The new hospital has been spec'd and sized on an anticipation of what the population will be over a 30-year period. You have got the Bridging Island Plan indicating that we are going to need X thousand of additional houses and so forth. So we are making really strategic long-term decisions in the current Parliament that will hang things around successive Parliaments for quite a considerable time based on theories of population of what they are now and what they are likely to be in the future. So the Government must have a view on where population currently is and where it is currently moving. To continually kick the can down the road and say: "We will get to this, we will get to this, we will get to this when finite information is available", you will never get there because other dynamics always come into play that influence it. Population data is always actually beyond the curve. As I said, the census was done and by the time the data comes out it is 12, 15 months out of date and all sorts of dynamics have come into play that have made significant changes.

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

In your view, would it be reasonable to use some of the assumptions that are in the population policy from other areas, such as the Bridging Island Plan for example, to at least give us some interim population policies?

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

Yes. Obviously the dynamics change. People, through Brexit, have been given a new set of circumstances about securing permanent residence in the Island and so forth. We are making ad hoc decisions along the way, which influence and impact on quite significant parts of our population but it is not joined up. In the context of that, where is the overarching intention that people work within? If you are a business person - and I have got a commercial background, as you all know - you are taking a medium and long-term view on things. You are not looking at what is going to happen in the next 6 months. If you are investing significantly in a substantial business you want to know where you are going to be 5 or 10 years down the road in terms of people, not only in terms of population but in terms of available labour and available skills. All of these things are interrelated and at the moment in time there is so many unknowns that I do not know how people make strategic decisions that are valid.

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

You make an interesting point around planning. What, in your view, are the short, medium and even long-term needs of the organisations that you are part of? Does this policy take sufficient account of those needs?

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

Probably not. Probably the big one as far as I am concerned, which is people hungry, is helping community services. We have a situation at the moment where we have taken a decision, subject to review of course, on how big the new hospital needs to be. We have got a care model which is based on that model and what services will be delivered in the new hospital in 7 or 8 years' time, a policy that says we are going to back the majority of other services into the community. Where is the resources and where is the people to deliver that? I know there is policies in place for more nurse training in Highlands and more care assistants to come out of the system there. There is recruitment campaigns being launched right, left and centre to win staff, but the reality on the ground at the moment is very, very, very difficult. We are short of nurses, we are short of O.T.s (occupational therapists) and physios. We are very short in the care sector, particularly in the private and charitable areas. Yes, people will come out of the pipeline from Highlands but the reality on the ground is that in a high cost economy like Jersey, can they afford to stay here? Can they afford to live here? To buy a property, if you are healthcare assistant just qualified out of Highlands, is way out of your court and if we cannot offer significantly subsidised social housing to those sort of people, what do they do? They either move on into other higher paid employment or they take the skills that they have been trained for and leave the Island. I will not engage in a slanging match with the Health Department on the numbers but how many people within the statutory services at the moment are on short-term contracts being brought in from the U.K. (United Kingdom). The voluntary and the private sector cannot afford to do that. We just do not have the cash to achieve it.

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

Do you think there is enough within this Common Population Policy in terms of education and skills to keep our young people here, to attract young people back to the Island and work in some of the sectors that are clearly going to need staff moving forward, the care sector for example?

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

Well, there is lots of aspirations about the training aspect and whatever. Unfortunately, over the last 20 years this has all been about a high income strategy. People have been influenced to go into particularly finance but into digital and other areas because of the financial rewards they can gain as a result of that. Now, that is not for everybody. Certainly it is not for everybody and quite a lot of people who go into there leave that area because it is not just for them. The financial reward is there but they do not get the job satisfaction that they are seeking. But really we are trapped into this scenario at the moment in time where to make a start in the Island, unless you are earning a very, very good salary, is so difficult. We send 1,000 students away to university each year. How many of them come back? I would guess probably a half maybe. That is the sort of problem that the Island faces. I know certain policies and certain areas have got the right sort of aspirations. Are they really joined up and are they going to generate what is going to be needed not today but 10, 15 years down the road?

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

Okay. I will hand over to Deputy Ahier for the next questions.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

Thank you, Chair. Is the proposed inaugural Common Population Policy fit for purpose?

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

That is a very difficult question to answer. There are aspects of it which probably are valid and whatever but, as I said, I do not honestly believe that in totality it has faced up to the real realities on the ground at the moment in time. I have just explained to your Chair many of the issues that are inherent in the health and community area but when you look at farming and associated industries, where are they going to get the staff? They are coping at the moment but there has got to be light footwork to bring people in from whatever jurisdiction it is. There are a lot of latent issues which nobody is facing up to at the moment. Brexit was a big problem. There was a lot of people who were forced out of the Island as a result of Brexit who were filling in many of the gaps in the sectors where at the moment in time we are very, very, very short of people. Certainly when I put my Community Action Group hat on, the observations I get from a lot of the ethnic communities is: "We are now regarded as totally second class citizens. We live on short-term visas. We do not get the full opportunity to really engage with the Island." I understand the tactic of trying to limit population through some of these mechanisms, but the reality on the ground is that we are building up a powder keg if we are not careful because if these people disappear, who is going to do the jobs?

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

Thank you and that leads me into the next question. In your view, does the policy give sufficient consideration to diversity and inclusion of all sectors of the Jersey community?

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

Bearing in mind my background is very strong in that area, I think that Government has belatedly recognised that with a workforce of 7,000 people or whatever it is, they need to be doing something about it. They are coming from way beyond the 8 ball. I believe they contracted a single officer for 6 months to draw up a strategy. She has now left the Island, as far as I am aware. She has been replaced but I think there is one officer in Government at the moment in time trying to influence all government departments to improve dramatically the recognition of what needs to be done to ensure that States departments are balanced in terms of the areas you have just suggested. It is not only about gender. It is about lots of other factors and certainly there is a tremendous amount of work to be done but the appetite to do it ... as I said, there is a policy I believe has been developed. I have not seen it in detail at the moment in time, but my understanding is there is a newly appointed officer



but it is one officer that is going to try to lead that forward. I believe there has been buy-in from the top in that people are being told that they need to be tackling this. The chief officers of each department, or directors general or whatever we call them today, have been informed that this is a policy Government wants to drive through. There is so much work to do at the moment in time and I really lack confidence that it is going to be delivered in a timely manner, but it is something that the Government and the Government employment role should be taking the absolute lead on. There has been a lot of work put in by private industry and voluntary sector organisations to improve their performance in this area but Government are sadly lacking at the moment in time, in my opinion.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

Thank you. The proposed policy highlights the need to improve skills and education. Do you believe the policy will help do this in relation to organisations such as the Jersey Disability Partnership?

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

Well, as I said, the aspiration is there and the training courses and there has been a lot of work put in to recognise where the skills gaps are and to make efforts to put people through those courses in Highlands and bring them on to the labour market, but it does take time. If you are training a care assistant - I am very familiar with that and my involvement with the Cheshire Home - they do a 2-year course at Highlands. They then come into employment wherever it might be and then they actually start learning the skills they are going to need to deliver quality care going forward. So it is a sausage machine that probably takes 5 years to produce the results, but when you put these people through it and they come on to the job market, then they want to start a family or they want to buy a house, et cetera, with the economic circumstances that young families and younger people are facing at the moment in time, it totally bemuses me how they are going to hang on in there and deliver what they have been trained to do. At the end of the day, I think you are going to see ... I will not say mass exportation of skills but a fair number of people will benefit from the training put in by the Island but then will not be able to afford to live here and they will move to other jurisdictions and use the skills that the Island has endowed them with to make a reasonable living in a different context, and that is the big fear. I have not got the answer to that. It is very, very easy to criticise and say we have got these huge issues; solutions are a much, much, much more difficult thing to come up with. I just feel that at the moment we have not had a mature enough discussion around all the aspects of this. We kind of put it into little pockets and look at it in a very narrow context rather than stepping back and saying: "What does the Island need in a population to service whatever number of us are here in a decade's time? How do we get to that? How do we adjust the economic realities on the ground so that if we are training people they do stay and they also stay in the roles we have trained them for?" At the moment, my observation has been that people do the course at Highlands and it gives them transferable skills in some ways. So they go into the care

sector but they do not stay there because they cannot afford to, and that is the dilemma that is out there at the moment in time.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

Thank you. Are there areas that the proposed policy does not provide guidance on that you would like to have seen addressed directly?

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

Yes. I think you have touched on diversity and equality and, as I said, Government are coming at that now but they are coming at it from way beyond the 8 ball. But there is a lack of consideration of a whole heap of people out there who have been in the Island for relatively short periods of time, who are filling vital gaps at the moment and who really feel hard done by because they are not sure that they are going to have any status: "Do we have to leave after 9 months? Are we ever going to be able to really contribute to the Island like we would want to do in a more generic sense?"

[13:30]

I do not think we have really had this mature discussion around that. We have tended to bring these regulations in, for understandable reasons - and I do appreciate why certain controls have had to be brought in - but it does not really address long term the problem of what the manpower need is in the Island and where those people are going to come from. I think hospitality at the moment is existing on people coming in from Kenya or whatever it is. It really is a problem situation at the moment.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

In the farming community we have a lot of people coming in from the Philippines, I understand.

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

Yes, absolutely, and that is going to have to continue, is it not? If Europe has become much more of a closed shop to us, then certain sectors are being forced to look much further afield for their staff but those staff, as I have said, are coming on 9-month contracts and there is no continuity in that to some degree. They are economic migrants in a total sense and they will come here one year but they will go somewhere else the next year if the inducement is of a level. We have seen that with lots of the eastern Europeans. Brexit is a more complicated situation, the fact that they have not been able to get home to see their families. Even if they have got qualifications, if we put it that way, in the Island, a lot of them are gone because the economic attractiveness of the Island, because of the cost here, has evaporated. But we do not ever seem to have those discussions in a sensible, balanced way. If there is something lacking in the consultation, then I think there has not been too

much engagement in those harder to reach areas, those more difficult areas. We have looked at the high-level philosophies behind it without digging into the detail that perhaps we should have done.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

Is it the right course of action to commit future Council of Ministers to include its policy on population within the Government Plan from 2023 onwards? What impact do you think this will have, if any?

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

Well, now I am going to go down a difficult route. Without party politics in the Island and parties with manifestos who have committed to long-term strategies, I do not see in the current regime how you can commit the next Parliament to anything. If you are in this Parliament it depends so much on what the electorate decide in June in terms of the mix of people that are going to be brought forward. So, you can have an aspiration for an argument that by 2023 or whatever it is, the detail will be a little bit more obvious so the next Government should then be able to bring forward a policy. It is a nice aspiration but I do not see that you can force the next Administration to do that if they choose not to. Who is to say that in 2023 there will be another pandemic hitting us, God help us, or something else which distorts all the figures so it is just as difficult then as it is at the moment in time to come up with realistic policies based on accurate data, which we are sadly lacking at the moment. I am not criticising Government about that. There are lots of factors in play, totally beyond their control, which have influenced that.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

Thank you, Jim. I will pass on to Deputy Truscott now. Thanks.

**Deputy G.J. Truscott:**

I believe the Chair wants to say something.

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

No, it was just a very brief question. You touched on attracting people to the Island. It is slightly moving away from population policy but it is still connected to it. We have had new amendments to the Control of Housing and Work Law lodged yesterday. Do you think there is a risk that at the current time, especially after the effects of Brexit and COVID, that bringing in new restrictions at the current time is going to make matters worse, not better, and it is going to make it even more difficult for businesses to get through this period?

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

Yes, I think the biggest problem, Senator, at the moment is it is not one situation fits all. If you look at the dynamics in play at the moment, you have certain sectors who are really struggling to find staff. They are fairly obvious: hospitality in totality is the crunch one at the moment. When restaurants and cafés are not opening their doors for 2 or 3 days a week because they do not have any staff, is that situation going to improve 6 months down the road? Who knows? If tourism recovers, and hopefully it does, I think the Island hopes it does, certainly where the heck are the staff going to come from to service the people who are here? We have touched on farming. Farming really is seasonal in terms of its labour requirement and if the potato boys have found enough staff to do the job for the next 3 or 4 months they will probably filter through. But my ex-colleagues in retail all tell me the same thing: they are struggling to find staff, they do not have enough staff, whatever. So you have many of the legacy volume sectors, tourism, retail or whatever it might be, really struggling at the moment. If you look at construction, we have a booming construction industry at the moment. Where do we find the people to build the houses and do the developments or whatever? It is probably an advantage that the planning are a bit slow in turning out permissions at the moment in time because there are not enough people to do the jobs even if the permissions are granted. But there are other dynamics in play in other industries. If you look at finance, they have gone through a situation with COVID where the culture has changed, the working from home culture. Do we need face to face meetings? Can we deal with it virtually? Do we need people on seats in offices in St. Helier? Because they can just as easily be people on seats anywhere else in the world at the moment in time. Of course, that has ramifications because where do those people pay their National Insurance? Where do they pay their tax? So, there is different dynamics in play in different areas and the problem when you bring forward policies which are catch-all, they are not tailored to the demands of the various sectors. Certainly, my experience in the health and community services field is there really is a difficulty at the moment. Trying to get people to come into the Island and then to keep them in the Island when they work out how expensive it is, even if they have been given a licence to work here, is essentially very, very difficult. So people come, they do their 6-month contract, they go again. That is not good for anybody. It is not good for the organisation, the departments. It certainly is not good for the recipients of services. So, I think you need to micromanage this. You cannot have a situation where it is one situation fits all because it is not going to work.

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

Thank you. That is appreciated.

**Deputy G.J. Truscott:**

I think I am next. I just want to agree and get your view on it as well that generally going forward it is the cost of housing locally, the cost of living locally, that is increasingly becoming the big negative to draw people to Jersey. I think we do offer very good salaries but when people then look at the

cost of renting and the cost of buying I think then they are just put off, period. So that is going to have to be addressed through housing, do you agree, Jim?

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

Yes, I do indeed, Deputy. Certainly, as was said, I carry so many hats it is crazy, but one organisation I do touch against briefly - and there was a little bit of publicity in the media the other day - is the Living Wage Foundation. Now, a living wage in the Island at the moment in time is set at around about £11, which is a London-type rate if you take my meaning. But if we were absolutely honest and we dig deep enough into it, £11 an hour is not really a living wage for anybody. It might be for a single person who is flat sharing or whatever it might be, but if you are trying to bring a family up in the Island on that sort of thing and find reasonable housing, even if it is subsidised state-provided housing, it is very, very, very difficult. This is a huge problem but it is probably more important than population further down the road. It is an issue that as a society we are going to have to deal with somewhere at some point in time. Because otherwise, as I said, we will not have enough bodies in the Island to service the needs of whatever population we have.

**Deputy G.J. Truscott:**

Yes, I agree.

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

You have to keep this balance between the people who are working and paying the tax and the people who are not working, either younger people at the bottom end coming into the system or particularly people like me, a bit grey and getting on a bit, who are going to be a big, big draw on the Island in terms of the requirement for provision of healthcare services in the coming decades. So, that is a huge problem. What is a sensible level of a working population? How do we secure sustainability and, to a degree, stability within that population with the people flexed to be in the roles that they need to be in? There is no point in us having thousands of highly trained finance people if we do not have any roles for them anymore.

**Deputy G.J. Truscott:**

I agree. What are your views on the proposed overall aim to progressively reduce Jersey's reliance on net inward migration within the currently agreed Common Strategic Policy? Do you feel that this is an achievable goal?

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

I think as a general statement of fact anybody with any common sense realises there is a finite maximum of people that we can sensibly cope with in the Island. We can become a Singapore or a Hong Kong or whatever it is and an Island full of high rises, this, that and the other, but that is not

what makes Jersey special. With another hat on, the national park, obviously I am there trying to protect all these sensitive areas to ensure that development is balanced and sensible. I think it is a reasonable aspiration that there is a finite number that we ought to attempt to cap the population at. To set that in the current world is very, very difficult. I would much prefer to see a situation where we do say that we allow a small net increase in people on an annualised basis going forward, but that is not good enough per se because what you have to do is ensure that those people are coming in to work in the sectors where we actually need them. So it is all about trying to achieve this balance and, as I said, it is easy to pontificate and challenge Government to do it, put me on the spot and say: "How are you going to achieve that, Jim?" and I would struggle to come up with the answers. But I think together that is the sort of discussion we ought to be having.

**Deputy G.J. Truscott:**

Back to diversity, Jim, do you feel that this goal has implications for diversity in the local community and how could this be addressed at a policy level?

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

Yes, I think what we have tended to do at the moment, and it is less obvious at the moment in time than it has been historically, we have always talked about high net worth jobs. It has always been about ensuring that the key sectors where people are earning the big bucks are the ones that we are looking after and ensuring that they have the resources they need. Do not get me wrong, I understand how important finance is to the Island. I understand the huge opportunity the Island has in the new generations of digital economy. They are sectors that cannot be ignored, but they tend to distort things because the people being brought in and the people working in those sectors tend to be the ones who are facing less problems to live here in a reasonable way because they are earning the money to do it. The big dilemma at the moment in time is we are looking after 40 per cent of the working population who are in those sectors and doing okay but we are ignoring the other 60 per cent who are struggling to make ends meet in all sorts of ways. So, there needs to be, to use a term which has certainly been thrown around in the U.K. on a geographical basis now, there needs to be a levelling up. What you have to do is get the sectors which are economically squeezed at the moment in time to move their reward systems into reasonable levels. I know every time we talk about the minimum wage going up, let alone a living wage, the farming community and hospitality scream that they cannot afford it, et cetera, but we have to look at mechanisms that enable them to be able to afford it. Certainly, in organisations I have been involved with, we have increased significantly our reward package to our staff by upskilling them. We give them significant training so that they can perform better. That gives us a payback in terms of productivity but the employee shares the benefit of it. That is a culture which I do not see too evident across many sectors in the Island at the moment in time. There is people that talk about it. Dominic Jones is a

great proponent of that type of philosophy but there are very, very few voices out there trying to move down that route at this moment in time.

[13:45]

**Deputy G.J. Truscott:**

Yes, thank you. In your view, what will the overall impact of this common population policy be?

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

Well, with no certainty about what the policy will be in 2 or 3 years' time, it is very, very difficult to make that judgment. As I said at the very beginning of the discussion, I think, there has been this tendency historically ... it is a very difficult area. It is a very unpopular area in some ways. Whatever decision you make you are wrong and I do appreciate and understand that. So there has been this tendency literally to kick the can down the road. To a degree, that is what is happening again. We are hiding behind the fact that the data is not there. There are so many uncertainties so let us not do it quite now. Let us create a scenario where the next Administration are obliged by the current Administration to do it, but there is no guarantee they actually will. I think the time has come where we have to have the discussion and we have to make the decisions. Some of those decisions will be unpopular. There will certainly be decisions I find hard to live with, but at the end of the day at some point in time we have to make up a policy which is long term and is sensible and is balanced and does achieve to a degree what the aspiration is, growth but limited growth, and stability going forward. Because, as I said, otherwise we could be facing a situation down the road which perhaps Guernsey is facing at the moment in time, where the population is static, it suddenly starts falling, all these problems go away but the economy collapses. So, it really is time for us to come up with something as an Island and to do it on the basis that it is flexible. Because what you must not do is come forward with something which is totally rigid and say: "That is it and that is it for the next 10 years." I never understand that. As a commercial operator, we had a plan for the next 5 years but that plan moved every 6 months, whatever it might happen to be. I think that is the only way you can run the Island, just like you would run a business.

**Deputy G.J. Truscott:**

The proposed policy makes it clear that all sectors of the community have a part to play in making the policy work for Jersey. Do you understand from the policy what the role of the organisations you represent would be?

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

Well, it does not come out of policy decisions around population. What tends to happen - Health and Community Services is the classic one - there is an overarching policy that says: "We will build

a hospital of X size. It will deal with these services and everything else will be basically backed into the community.” Now, the 2 big issues with that is to achieve that you are going to need a workforce that is capable of achieving it and you are going to need sufficient operators in each field to be there to deliver it. If they are going to deliver it, how many people do they need to fulfil the task? That could conflict with what we were talking about just now, a stable population. If we have nth thousand people being cared for in their own house, which is what the population is fundamentally driving for, how many people are we going to need to supply the support to those people that they require? We, for god’s sake, do not need a U.K. situation where very disadvantaged, disabled people get somebody pop in for 15 minutes twice a week and that is all they get, because it is next to useless. So it is thrown back then on families and it is thrown back on friends. Of course, one of the big problems in the Island is that the family networks are not as strong as they are in other communities because less than half the population of Jersey are born there. Quite a lot of them come from jurisdictions where their families are, so they are quite isolated here in many ways. There are all sorts of issues that come out of this because it is not joined up in the broader context.

**Deputy G.J. Truscott:**

So what actions do you believe Islanders, businesses and the Government of Jersey need to take to meet the proposed policy?

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

Well, as I said, at one level there has been discussion. I am aware that the Institute of Directors, the Construction Council, the big hitters, the Chamber of Commerce and that, have all had an opportunity to have serious discussion over a period of time on this. It has not been an easy discussion because the meetings have been influenced by what has happened with COVID, which as I said is beyond control, but it has been a limited consultation. The truth of the matter is that those organisations tend to represent only a proportion of the Island and the community. I am the nominal representative for Chamber of Commerce to talk to the third sector. That is an impossible task. I am not saying that the Chamber of Commerce does not take cognisance of what is happening in other sectors, but it is very, very, very difficult, particularly in a pandemic with limited communication opportunities, to have meaningful discussion around these issues. That has been the case with a whole variety of things. It was the case with the consultation around the bridging Island Plan. It is the case with other major strategies which are being brought forward at this moment in time. That is not to say they do not need to be brought forward, but I think we have to recognise the limitations of what has been available in terms of true consultation on it. Yes, people have been invited occasionally to parish halls in the gaps between lockdowns and whatever it might happen to be, but the level of engagement as far as I can see it has been somewhat limited, to be frank, in this field.



**Deputy G.J. Truscott:**

Thank you, Jim. Back to Deputy Ahier, I believe.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

Thank you, Graham. Yes, we have touched on this slightly before but in your view is there sufficient rationale in the proposed policy for the conclusion that it is premature to set any specific population forecast?

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

Yes, I think there is some justification for that. There really is at the moment in time because, as I said, presumably Government has some indication of what the census is going to kick out but, as I said, that information is limited in its value because of the dynamics that have been working around it. We have produced a figure based on a point in time but since then we have had all sorts of strange things happening, as I said, with working from home and changes in communications driving certain sectors to decide we do not need to do it the way we have always done it, we can change this dramatically, and that could have quite a significant impact on the number of employees they need and where they are located. Conversely, at the moment in time what level of demand is there really going to be in the hospitality industry if tourism recovers? We have seen a whole raft of hotels shut and we have this scenario where a whole range of establishments are struggling like heck to find staff at the moment, but what they are being forced to do is to be a little bit more innovative to upgrade their staff so they get better productivity out of them. Do we need to open 7 days a week, 15 hours a day and whatever? The dynamics in play at the moment are quite significant. So although each change might be small in itself, they gross up eventually to a fairly significant move in terms of what is required and so forth. So I can see some justification for saying we cannot at this point in time come out with a final definitive plan. But what you should have, as I said, is an indication of the direction of travel and then tweak that on a regular basis as more evidence and more information becomes available because that is what you would do in a commercial sense. You would not have a 5-year plan which was rigid, set in stone. You would have a general direction of travel and as more information and more reality came into play you would move it and tweak it to adjust the targets and the mechanisms for achieving the results accordingly. So, again, as I said, I think it is a cultural change for Government. Let us get away from these rigid ... it is a bit like Russian 5-year plans, is it not? That is it and that is there for ever. We have to be a damned sight more like ... and we ought to be, as a relatively small Island. We should be a damned sight more light on our feet and tweak things on an ongoing basis as we need to.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

Yes. Of course, we previously had a limit of 325 people a year and that eventually turned out to be 1,500 people in one year so it was not very effective.

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

Yes, but what drove that? I think it was driven by a particular set of developments in one or 2 narrow sectors. Because when you look at the last employment figures, which I think Duncan Gibaut before his departure from the scene ... I attended something at St. Paul's Centre a couple of years ago and one or 2 of you I think might even have been there, where he produced the latest employment figures for the Island by sector. They were quite telling because quite a few of the sectors in the Island by then ... and I know we had this great hump of people coming in 5 years or so ago, but by then there was a lot of stability across certain sectors. The number of people in retail, the number of people in hospitality, in agriculture, they had been relatively static for a period of time. Even the finance sector was not showing significant incremental growth at the moment. The working population increases there were coming from fairly narrow areas. They were certainly coming from digital because it is a new industry and a developing industry, but the big jump in people were coming from both health and community services because of the need to service this ageing population with more conditions. There was a small hump in education because there was an increase in the numbers of people below the age of 16 or whatever it might be and that was it. It is that sort of dynamic in terms of micromanaging the situation that we have to get to. Really, setting a target which says so many per year does not make any sense to me. What you really should be saying if you are going to look for stability is that what we should not see is a situation where the population goes up by more than X per cent over a period of time. You do not look at the individual years because they can be distorted by complete anomalies. If you get 2 or 3 years in the same direction, then you have a pattern and you know you have to do something about it.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

Thank you, Jim. I will now pass back to the Chair.

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

Thank you, Deputy. In your view, does the proposed common population policy take sufficient account of the rights of workers in the Island, I suppose especially those who are migrant workers in the Island?

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

Well, the feedback I am getting from lots of organisations and people I rub up against ... and as I said, I mentioned the community action group. That was set up to be a talking shop for harder to reach communities. So, it covers ethnic communities, the Romanians, the Poles, the Africans to a degree now. It covers religious communities, faith groups of all types, the Jewish community, the Muslims and whatever. It reaches disabled and disadvantaged communities, the L.B.G. (lesbian, bisexual, gay) community and so forth. Certainly, there is a very strong feeling at the moment in

time from certain of those communities that they really are now being treated as second class citizens and that there is not really a future for them in the Island in many ways and that the rules have been modified and changed, in their opinion - and I do not think it is the case, but it is their genuine opinion - to penalise that type of community because it does not fit in with the rest of the Island. So, there are serious issues there at the moment and they have human consequences. As I said, at the end of the day the big danger in that is that quite often it is elements of these communities which are doing the jobs that nobody else wants to do that we are having so much difficulty filling at this moment in time. People do not want to work in hospitality because the hours are unsocial and the pay is not fantastic. Retail is not an easy career - I ought to know, I worked in it for 40 years - at the moment in time there are so many other attractive proposals out there. Yes, there is an issue there, Senator, in the sense that there is undercurrents building up which will have consequences down the road.

[14:00]

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

Thank you, yes. I think you have mentioned our sister isle and it could be the risk of depopulation, which is something I think we really want to try to avoid. I have 2 very brief questions just to finish off. I know we are up on time. I do not know whether you have had a chance to look at the detail of the actions for 2022 within the report itself. I just wondered what your thoughts are around whether they are achievable in 2022 - there seems to be an awful lot of reviews mentioned in the actions for 2022 - and what your thoughts around that are.

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

I think it is symptomatic of where we are at the moment, Senator: let us not make any unpopular decisions before the election; let us kick the can down the road for 6 months and look at it when the new House convenes in July or whatever it happens to be. I can understand that. It is going to be a difficult election. There are new dynamics in play. It is human nature; if you can avoid doing something which might be perceived as quite unpopular at this stage of the game you do delay it. That is not the way we should really be running the Island, is it? Within the context of where we are and where we are going, I am hoping there will be longer-term culpability to policy after the next election so that you have a situation where you can hang it on people because they are still there, or at least whatever group they are representing are still there after the event. Because at the moment an individual makes a decision. It is unpopular. They pull out of politics and then there is no recourse back against that individual for getting it wrong. Again, as I said, it is easy to pontificate and criticise when you do not have the responsibility of taking the decisions in the first place, but I think you get the drift of what I am actually trying to say.

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

Absolutely, and I shall not put my party leader hat on and respond to that. My last question is really around productivity. Do you think there is enough focus on productivity within this report? It does mention in the actions around a productivity plan for 2022 - I think we have been promised that for some time - the productivity support scheme and how important they are.

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

Yes, I think there is a big opportunity to improve productivity in the Island. We have not really made the gains in any sector that we could have done because, again, I think it has all been a bit spasmodic. The fiscal stimulus thing was brought forward to rekick the economy. There was a very strong case there for monies not to be put into bricks and mortar but to be put into improving people's capacity to perform in many ways and so forth. Certainly, if you want to see what can be achieved by changing attitudes and looking at it for a different thing, I would invite you all to come down to Cheshire Home and see what my new chief executive has done. Because she has turned that operation around in a productivity sense by upskilling the staff so significantly, using quite often government-financed support schemes and whatever, and the culture is totally different. It has been done at minimal cost with minimal support financially, but it has certainly been done with mechanisms that are readily available but they are not actually sold to the majority of people. They do not know these opportunities exist. I take no credit for that. It is my new C.E.O. (chief executive officer) that has developed the philosophy. So it can be done and it will transpose. It is something that should be shared. I am sure there are other examples out there in different sectors where people have been forced by circumstances to change completely the attitude of what they are doing and so forth. I am saying that there is a huge shortfall of staff in the health and community services. Touch wood, Cheshire Home has a full establishment at the moment and we have a waiting list for people trying to join us, not in terms of residents but in terms of staff. So if you get it right, you can make a huge difference.

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

Well, it is good to finish on what is such a fantastic facility and I am sure I will have the opportunity to take you up on that offer to come and visit and maybe have that elusive coffee that we have not been able to have.

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

Yes, we have been a bit delayed with that, have we not?

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

I know, I know. I do not know if my colleagues have any other follow-up questions.

**Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

No, nothing else, thanks, Chair.

**Deputy G.J. Truscott:**

No, nothing new.

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

Jim, an opportunity, have you anything else you want to add? I think we have gone through most areas.

**Honorary Chairman, Jersey Disability Partnership:**

No, you know I can talk for the world, let alone for the Island. Yes, basically in the context of this, I suppose the only thing I would say is it is very easy to criticise, is it not? I do not have the answers. I am not facetious enough to think I have all the answers to this, but I do not think we are having as mature a discussion as an Island as we should be having at the moment in time and facing up to the realities rather than what the perceptions are at times. I will leave it at that at the moment, I think, Senator.

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

Well, thank you. We appreciate your views and we certainly appreciate you giving your time up this afternoon to come and talk to us. I am sure those that have been listening have been interested by what you have had to say. So, thank you. I wish you a relaxing weekend, because I think we probably all need to have one after this week, the week we have had. I am going to call the meeting to an end. We will, of course, be providing the record of the meeting to you before we print anything or anything goes out so you have an opportunity to review it. But I thank everybody and wish everybody else that is listening a good weekend. From my colleagues' point of view, I think we will meet up in the next meeting, I think is a sensible thing to do.

[14:04]