

Submission – Response to COVID-19 – Parish of St. Helier – 22 October 2021

Dear Deputy Gardiner,

Thank you for your letter regarding the PAC review of the Government's response to Covid-19. The Constable has asked me to respond on behalf of the Parish of St Helier.

As you'll remember from the Parish briefings during the height of the pandemic, it was a particularly challenging time for the Parish just as it was for government and the island as a whole. Your letter poses a series of questions which I think I can best address with some general and specific observations and reflections; all of which are, of course, with the benefit of hindsight.

As you'll appreciate the Parish provides a wide range of services and the pandemic affected our services in different ways, so our response, escalation and 'return to normal' recovery plans were different for each of our services. In general, the government's approach of having a documented, staged and phased escalation and reconnection plan was helpful, allowing us to prepare for the next steps and consider the risks and plan our response service by service as the island moved into and through each stage.

In general communication between the government and parish and vice versa was very good. We were asked to join the Community Task Force from the beginning and were able to contribute positively to this work and I believe the positive outcomes of this work were all the better for our engagement and participation, the insight, knowledge and experience that we were able to contribute. We also supported government on a number of specific initiatives, bringing relevant knowledge and experience.

Indeed, I believe that the approach to joint working generally, across all parts of the public sector, private sector and voluntary sector was exemplary and I am sure made a real and positive difference to many members of our community who needed our help, support and advice in a very difficult time.

With regards to financial support schemes. As you'll know, the Parish was not eligible to participate in government financial support schemes. In fact, as a parish we offered support ourselves to some individuals and businesses through the waiving of various fees over the period of the pandemic.

In terms of lessons learned, I would share one particular reflection about the management of limited, scarce critical resources, specifically care staff and PPE. We obviously operate within the care sector so experienced these issues first hand. In this area, with the benefit of hindsight, I think earlier government intervention to pro-actively liaise with all involved and co-ordinate the management of these scarce staff and equipment resources across the island could have helped addressed some specific challenges faced within the care sector more effectively and earlier.

Finally, I think it worth noting that our staff, and I'm sure those of other parishes, government and public, private and voluntary organisations across the island, were incredibly flexible and often went above and beyond to support our organisations and community throughout the pandemic. I think as a community we need to be

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conscious that they may now need our support, particularly around mental health issues, as we hopefully emerge from the worst of the pandemic.

I hope this helps your review, should you require any further clarification or detail please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind Regards

Jason

Jason Turner
Chief Executive Officer
Parish of St Helier