
STATES OF JERSEY



GOVERNMENT PLAN 2022-25 SCRUTINY REVIEW (GOVERNMENT PLAN REVIEW PANEL) (S.R.21/2021): JOINT RESPONSE OF THE CHIEF MINISTER AND THE MINISTER FOR TREASURY AND RESOURCES

**Presented to the States on 2nd February 2022
by the Chief Minister**

STATES GREFFE

GOVERNMENT PLAN 2022-25 SCRUTINY REVIEW (GOVERNMENT PLAN REVIEW PANEL). (S.R.21/2021): RESPONSE OF THE CHIEF MINISTER AND THE MINISTER FOR TREASURY AND RESOURCES

Ministerial Response to:	S.R.21/2021
Ministerial Response required by:	21st January 2022
Review title:	Government Plan 2022-25 Scrutiny Review
Scrutiny Panel:	Government Plan Review Panel

INTRODUCTION

The Chief Minister and Treasury Minister welcome the Panel's opportunity to allow an official Ministerial Response to be presented in respect of their findings and recommendations, following the Government Plan debate in December 2021.

FINDINGS

	Findings	Comments
1	The general purpose of the Government Plan is understood by those who engage with the Government of Jersey.	The Council of Ministers welcomes this finding.
2	The length of the Government Plan 2022-2025 and the associated Annex makes it difficult for the public to engage with and there is no abridged version or summary.	The Council of Ministers accepts that a summary version of the Government Plan would be helpful.
3	Printed copies of the Government Plan were not readily available and the locations in which they were available were not well promoted.	The Council of Ministers accepts that copies should be more easily available at Parish Halls and the Jersey Library and will make sure this is more widely promoted. As with any other Proposition, the States Assembly Information Centre is responsible for providing printed copies of the Government Plan Proposition. The Government provided the Plan in PDF format so that copies could be easily

	Findings	Comments
		printed. Each bound copy of the Government Plan costs £32.63 each and so a balance of printing vs online access needs to be achieved to make sure there is good use of public resources.
4	The online version of the Government Plan does not contain adequate hyperlinks to assist in navigating the document and cross-referencing between different sections of the plan or the associated annex and accessibility options do not appear to have been promoted.	The Council of Ministers accepts that hyperlinks across the various sections of the plan and of the associated annex would be helpful.
5	'Citizen's space' and 'Have your say' platform remain under-utilised and underpromoted as platforms and were not used to engage or canvas opinion from Islanders on any aspects of the Government Plan 2022-2025.	<p>A series of live-streamed events, known as 'Ask the Ministers: Government Plan Specials', discussed the different aspects of the Plan and invited Islander's feedback. They were promoted on social media, through the radio, and in the Jersey Evening Post. For the next Plan, platforms like 'Citizen's space' and 'Have your say' will be investigated for their potential use.</p> <p>It should be noted that the two 'Ask the Ministers' Government Plan Specials attracted more than 150 <i>Slido</i> questions across the two evenings and had 7,300 views on Facebook alone. It was decided to utilise 'Ask the Ministers' for the Government Plan, following its previous success. This platform should be used again to encourage public engagement.</p>
6	There were significant delays in supplying information requested by Scrutiny as part of their reviews of the Government Plan 2022-2025.	Ministers rely on operational departments to produce responses for scrutiny requests. As such, given the wide and extensive volume of questions from Panels, we cannot increase resource in every department, and we try to prioritise requests accordingly.
7	Delays in providing information to Scrutiny Panels have a direct impact on the provision of robust scrutiny and on the production of amendments, reports and comments.	Ministers rely on operational departments to produce responses for scrutiny requests. As such, given the wide and extensive volume of questions from Panels, we cannot increase resource in every department, and we try to prioritise requests accordingly.

	Findings	Comments
8	The refusal of Ministers to provide information requested by Scrutiny calls the transparency of the Government Plan process and the willingness to engage with scrutiny into question.	The CEHA Panel repeatedly requested sight of the school funding formula despite being advised on 1st November 2020, during a public hearing, that the work would not be completed until the end of December. The Minister for Children and Education cannot provide information that does not exist and has now written to the Panel offering a briefing on the formula as this part of the work is complete.
9	Delays to reviews in some areas, such as the school sites review, has led to priority items slipping down the Council of Ministers' agenda.	Delays cannot always be avoided. Where this is the case, items are prioritised according to their need and alongside the competing demands of other items.
10	It is difficult to track projects which have been approved in previous plans but which have subsequently been removed or altered and funding reallocated. Further transparency would be achieved if such projects were clearly marked.	The progress of delivery of the Government Plan programmes and projects is reported on online mid-year as part of the Mid-Year Review and annually alongside the Annual Report and Accounts. This provides significant, transparent information for the public, Scrutiny, PAC and others to hold the Government of Jersey, Ministers and Directors General to account for the delivery of the Government Plan programmes and projects approved by the States Assembly each year.
11	There are eight projects contained in the Government Plan 2022-2025 which are denoted as "Fund as Required" for which business cases have not been included in the Government Plan as the potential cost of each project remains uncertain.	As discussed at Scrutiny hearings and subsequent correspondence, business cases were produced for these projects, and suitable provisions for expenditure included in the General Reserve.
12	The efficiencies and rebalancing programme continues to use one off savings, both in preidentified items and as back-up measures. It is unclear what will be done to ensure £120 million of recurring efficiencies across 2020 to 2024 and what impact on public services these have had.	The delivery of efficiencies and rebalancing in the context of a pandemic remains challenging, but £31.8m of the £35m target for FY 2021 has been delivered. Efficiencies achieved to date (2020 and 2021) total some £56.8m of the target £60m over the 2 years. Of the savings achieved to date 97.7% are recurring. The non-recurring savings (£1.3m) and the shortfall (£3.7m) namely £5m will be carried forward and added to the target in 2022. (Numbers remain subject to external audit review and may change)

	Findings	Comments
		The principle of the programme is to deliver efficiencies, namely doing more or the same with less funding or increasing revenue return (excluding tax measures), rather than making cuts to services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

	Recommendations	To	Accept/ Reject	Comments	Target date of action/ completion
1	The Council of Ministers should commit to producing a summary version of future Government Plans, which should be available as both a printed and online document once the Government Plan is lodged.	CoM	Accept	It is accepted that a summary version of the Government Plan would be helpful.	October 2022
2	The Council of Ministers should review its policy on the provision of printed versions of the Government Plan. Printed versions (or a printable version) of future and previous Government Plans should be made available at all Parish Halls, at the Jersey Library and at the States Assembly Information Centre.	CoM	Partially accept	<p>Officers were not made aware of any unmet demand for copies of the Government Plan during the lodging period.</p> <p>As with any other Proposition, the States Assembly Information Centre is responsible for providing printed copies (i.e. not bound) of the Government Plan Proposition which has appended to it the proposed Government Plan on request to members of the public.</p> <p>Each bound copy of the Government Plan costs £32.63 each. As such it does not appear to be a good use of public resource to print many bound copies when demand is unclear.</p> <p>However, it is accepted that copies should be more easily available at Parish Halls and the Jersey Library. This should</p>	October 2022

	Recommendations	To	Accept/ Reject	Comments	Target date of action/ completion
				be considered alongside the recommendation that a summary version of the Government Plan be available.	
3	Future versions of the Government Plan must be formatted to include hyperlinks across the various sections of the plan and of the associated annex.	CM	Accept	It is accepted that this would be a helpful addition to the Government Plan.	October 2022
4	Consideration should be given to increased promotion and use of existing platforms to canvas the views of engaged members of the public during development and post lodging of future Government Plans.	CM	Neither accept nor reject	<p>This recommendation will be considered, however it cannot be accepted or rejected at this time for the following reasons.</p> <p>It is assumed that by ‘canvas the views’ the Panel mean to ‘consult’.</p> <p>Consultation on the ‘whole’ Government Plan has not taken place over the last 3 Government Plans as it is simply not reasonable or practical to do so for the reasons set out below. Instead, consultation has taken place on a case-by-case basis on key aspects of the Government Plan over the preceding year.</p> <p>This recommendation raises the following practical issues which will need to be considered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When/How should such consultation take place? The next Council of Ministers will have approximately 11 weeks to develop and agree its Common Strategic Policy and Government Plan. There will therefore be a particular challenge in seeking public views. Further, much of the Government Plan process takes place over the summer break when it is not, for obvious reasons, ideal to consult with the public. 	October 2022

	Recommendations	To	Accept/ Reject	Comments	Target date of action/ completion
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What the purpose of the consultation would be? The general position is that consultation should only take place where it has a reasonable prospect of having an impact on the final decision to be made. We are not aware of any other Government that seeks, annually, to consult on the totality of its income and expenditure plans for the next year. - What should the scale of such consultation be? With the time and resources available, is it possible or reasonable to consult on every aspect of the Government Plan? It may be possible to improve the process of consultation across the preceding year on the key aspects of the Government Plan. 	
5	Ministers and officers must ensure that the presentation period for policy provides sufficient time for meaningful and effective interaction with Scrutiny and must urgently review its processes for approval of responses in order to comply with the Code of Practice for Engagement between Scrutiny Panels and the Public Accounts Committee and the Executive.	CoM	Neither accept nor reject	<p>The Government Plan was lodged on 21 September 2021, adhering to the normal statutory lodging period, and therefore available to all States Members and the Public for almost three months.</p> <p>As stated previously, Ministers rely on operational departments to produce responses for scrutiny requests. We cannot increase resource in every department, and we try to prioritise requests accordingly.</p>	
6	Projects which have been approved in previous plans, but which have subsequently been removed or altered and funding reallocated should be clearly marked.	CM	Reject	The Government Plan is a forward-looking document, it is not reflective. The approach has been to focus on what is in the Plan rather than a detailed dissection of changes from the estimates in previous plans.	

	Recommendations	To	Accept/ Reject	Comments	Target date of action/ completion
				Any further analysis should be incorporated within the Mid-Year Review, which could, as the Panel states, include projects which have been removed, altered and funding reallocated.	
7	Quarterly reporting including updated budgets should be introduced for the duration of each of the projects to ensure accountability.	Min T&R	Accept	Changes to budgets are reported to the States as part of six-monthly reporting by the Treasury Minister. Corporate Reporting (available to Scrutiny) also includes information on Capital Projects, and the level of information will be reviewed in line with this recommendation.	
8	The Council of Ministers should, prior to May 2022, identify and communicate publicly a final figure of recurring efficiencies and impact of those, and one-off measures, on public services across its term of office.	CoM	Neither Accept nor reject (already in place)	The Government already provides an update on rebalancing as part of the Annual Accounts and six-monthly reporting cycle, which meets this requirement.	

CONCLUSION

The Chief Minister and Treasury Minister welcome the Panel's findings and recommendations following the Government Plan debate in December 2021, many of which will be accepted. It is only through the close working of Government and Scrutiny, as well as input from States Members, that a Government Plan can be delivered to meet the needs of all Islanders.