

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CHIEF MINISTER
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 10TH OCTOBER 2017**

Question

Given that the Chair of the Employment Forum, when referring to the recommended rise in the minimum wage, has stated that “*on top of this, the Minister [for Social Security] asked the Forum to recommend the highest rate that it can for April 2018*”, will the Chief Minister inform members what actions, if any, he took to promote this aim and what communications, if any, took place between his officers and the Employment Forum on this matter; and will he advise how he has ensured that any such actions or communications have not placed undue pressure on the Forum and called into question its political neutrality?

Answer

The Social Security Minister asked the Employment Forum to recommend the highest rate it can for 2018, and I fully support that aspiration. Indeed, I wish to accelerate the timetable for increasing the minimum wage, doing this carefully and in discussion with industry, in particular, seeking to support our agriculture and tourism businesses as they adapt to a higher wage economy.

This is what I am focusing on for the minimum wage consultation process in 2018 and beyond.

As to the latest recommendation, the Employment Forum undertook an evidence-gathering process before making its minimum wage recommendation and that process included inviting officers to update the Forum on the wider economic and strategic context, including the latest statistics, as it does each year. This process also includes consultation with employers, employees and their representatives.

This evidence-gathering process does not undermine or call into question the political neutrality of the Employment Forum, and nor should it be seen to do so. On the contrary, the Employment Forum is scrupulous in gathering all the available evidence, including economic and statistical information, and then making an impartial and independent recommendation.