

2025.06.24

3.18 Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North of the Chief Minister regarding streamlining government services and reducing unsustainable running costs (OQ.141/2025)

Will the Chief Minister advise whether it is his assessment that there remains a need to streamline government services and, further to the response to Written Question 257/2025, will he explain how the Government is addressing the unsustainable level of running costs?

Deputy L.J. Farnham of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter (The Chief Minister):

Yes, I do believe there is still a need to perhaps streamline and reprioritise public services and certain aspects of the civil service, while ensuring we fully protect our front line provision, which is what we have been doing. We have seen a 2,000 increase in roles since 2018 and almost a 50 per cent increase in the cost of running the public sector. Spending on arm's length bodies and grant supporting doubled to £71 million in the same period. If we had not introduced the recruitment freeze in August last year and growth had continued as it was before it would be likely that there would be an additional probably of 325 staff, which officials estimate would cost an additional £23 million a year. Members will also remember that we removed 1,000 vacancies from the system. In the past 6 months we have seen total roles beginning to stable up. We have only 44 F.T. (full-time) total rise, despite 76 F.T.s, more posts in Healthcare Jersey which indicates that the back office departments are starting to reduce. Consultancy and temporary staffing spend has dropped by £29 million in 2024 over 2023 and we are expecting this to continue. There is a Rolling Stones song, the words: "You can't always get what you want", I will not sing it, "but if you try sometimes, well, you might get what you need" and that is what this Government is trying to do and trying to make sure we have what we need and what we want, because what this Assembly wants and what Government wants is not always what we need. Having said that, I want to pay a tribute to the public sector. We have a very professional and robust public sector and with reprioritisation we want to keep it that way, working in the best interests of Islanders.

3.18.1 Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Is the Chief Minister of the view that there is a need to maintain the current level of headcount or is he of the view that headcount ought to be reduced and, if so, by how much?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

It is a piece of work we are carrying out now. We are examining our services right across the board. I certainly would draw a line in the sand and say we do not need to increase headcount. I think we can reprioritise and reduce headcount in certain areas, by how much it is hard to say. But I think we can make ourselves a little more streamlined and more productive and we need to try and hold that position in the years ahead.