



Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Hearing

Witness: The Chief Minister

Friday, 7th March 2025

Panel:

Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade (Chair)

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter (Vice-Chair)

Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement

Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North

Connétable D. Johnson of St. Mary

Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade

Witnesses:

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

Deputy M.R. Ferey of St. Saviour, Assistant Chief Minister

Dr. A. McLaughlin, Chief Executive Officer

Mr. P. Wylie, Group Director, Policy

Ms. L. Darwin, Chief People Officer

Mr. N. Stocks, Senior Policy Officer

[10:05]

Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade (Chair):

Welcome to this public hearing of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel. Today is 7th March 2025, and this is our quarterly hearing with the Chief Minister. I would like to draw everybody's attention to the following. The hearing is being filmed and streamed live. The recording and the transcript will be published afterwards on the States Assembly website. All electronic devices, including mobile phones, should be switched to silent. For the purposes of the recording and the transcript, I

would be grateful if everyone who speaks could ensure that you state your name and role. If we can begin with introductions. I am Deputy Helen Miles, chair of the panel.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter (Vice-Chair):

Deputy Lucy Stephenson, vice-chair.

Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

Deputy Alex Curtis, panel member.

Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North:

My name is Max Andrews.

Connétable D. Johnson of St. Mary:

Constable David Johnson.

Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade:

Deputy Jonathan Renouf, panel member.

The Chief Minister:

Good morning. Deputy Lyndon Farnham, Chief Minister.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Deputy Malcolm Ferey, Assistant Chief Minister.

Chief People Officer:

Lesley Darwin, chief people officer.

Chief Executive Officer:

Andrew McLaughlin, chief executive officer.

Group Director, Policy:

Paul Wylie, director of Policy.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Lovely, thank you. I know we have got some officers in the room that may be required to speak, so if you do need to come to the microphone, for the benefit of the transcripts, if you can introduce yourself. Thank you. I would like to draw your attention that we have got 2 hours scheduled for this hearing. We have a number of questions today. We are a big panel, so we will be chopping and

changing but I will try to maintain order as best I can. Firstly, I am going to ask some questions about government restructure. Chief Minister, can you update us on the recent restructuring changes across government departments and the rationale for those changes and also the consultation and the decision process that was undertaken?

The Chief Minister:

The main changes are not - we keep pushing back - it is not a restructure as such but a change more or less in reporting lines and a continued, what we call, responsible oversight and maintenance of the public sector and how that is managed to make sure it is right-sized. That is largely because we have seen exponential growth in recent years. One of our key policy areas is to curb that growth to make sure it remains sustainable. Because if we projected that growth to continue, it would soon become financially unviable. The chief executive has been leading on that and felt it is in our best interest to look at keeping that as manageable as possible in light of the current policy. I think we are looking to make sure that we divert the resources towards our common strategic policies, our priorities, and also front line services.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

You talked to us about the rationale for the changes, but the question was about any consultation and how the decisions were made about this restructuring.

Chief Executive Officer:

I think since we were last here, the main one was the change in reporting lines for People's Services and Digital Services, if that is what you are referring to. Again, there is a change in reporting line. We did not restructure any of the individual teams as such or place people at risk as a result of those changes. We felt it was a change in the structure to help us better deliver the essential functions of Government. There was a lot of consultation and discussion, of course, within the E.L.T. (Executive Leadership Team) and with the respective leadership teams in those 3 areas. Then, with advice from Lesley, who is over there at the side, we then explained those changes and the rationale to colleagues in those 3 teams but, as you will understand, if you are making a change in reporting lines as opposed to a restructure where you might be putting people at risk, it is a different consultation process and colleagues of course approach it in a different way.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

In practice, will anything actually change?

Chief Executive Officer:

We are hoping so. The rationale for the changes were a couple of things. Firstly, we felt that the decision, which was only 2 or 3 years old, to dismantle the chief operating office and put the

operational functions of the chief operating office alongside essentially the policy and political functions of what was the office of the Chief Minister and create a Cabinet Office, we felt a couple of things. Particularly when working through all the workshops for the C.S.P. (Common Strategic Policy), we as an executive team felt that the running of Government, the Corporate Services of Government, around a lot of the work of the Treasury teams, a lot of the work of People's Services and a lot of work of Digital Services, we felt they were better together. Also, trying to have a smaller, more focused Cabinet Office on policy research and some of its statutory functions, we felt that focus would help both those teams and would help us to deliver the essential services of government. That was the rationale. The secondary rationale was a view that it would really help us to run the Government and lead the Government corporately if we had a really strong Corporate Services leadership team. I believe bringing the chief people officer and chief digital officer in alongside the Treasurer gives us that strength and depth in what is a vital area of government, so that was the rationale.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Can you tell us then, what is the function of the Cabinet Office now; primary functions?

Chief Executive Officer:

Do you want us to literally list it?

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I do not want you to list it, but obviously you said there has been a change but what is the Cabinet Office for?

Chief Executive Officer:

I would describe it as policy. Policy, that is obviously where the director of Policy is, and those policy functions which the Government wants to hold centrally in centres of excellence as opposed to dispersed; so policy. Research, you will get Statistics Jersey in there, among other things. Ministerial support, so the team that has always been there in some way shape or form. And the Communication Services. That is what is in the Cabinet Office. There is also of course oversight of various statutory bodies in there as well, which Paul can ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

So you have not got all policy there in Cabinet Office, have you?

Chief Executive Officer:

Never have had.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Is there any plan to either devolve some of that policy out to departments or the other way round to bring it in?

Group Director, Policy:

I can answer that, if you like. No, there are no plans to do so and, in my experience, to date it has not been necessary. What you have in Jersey is a very small group of people who, providing they can work together well, can produce the Common Strategic Policy, can support the Council of Ministers and provide the whole ambit of policy considerations, be it social, public policy, environmental or economic.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

When there are crossovers there, so if you have environmental policy that may impact on economic policy, but economic policy is outside the Cabinet Office, what mechanisms and structures have you got in place to make sure that you are working in a complementary fashion?

Group Director, Policy:

I am happy to talk about it.

The Chief Minister:

You can, I am happy to come in at any stage.

Group Director, Policy:

Perhaps if I talk about the official level working and the Chief Minister can describe how this is taken forward at Ministerial level. At official level, I chair a monthly meeting covering our policy profession, of which several colleagues in the Economic Department, for example, are policy officers. I am head of policy responsibility in terms of setting out what competencies are required, the devising of an apprenticeship scheme, how people could progress through and all of the training that we provide centrally. We also have a grip through our legislative programme. Again a monthly grip on legislation that covers all aspects of policy, including economic and where it is overlying. Then in addition, we have regular catchups and make sure that we are at an official level working collaboratively and there is a single piece of advice going to Council of Ministers that balances these issues.

The Chief Minister:

From a political perspective, we find that the more policy-making that is centralised, the better the collaboration between policy-makers and departments. Of course, it is enormously helpful now the new building has put many more people in the same place, which has provided a tangible benefit to

that. Of course, there are times when different departmental policies and regulation bump into each other's interest, and that is always debated politically and appropriate instructions passed down from there.

Deputy J. Renouf:

One particular area of restructuring, of course, is Health. Chief Minister, can you tell me what involvement you have had in respect of the development of decisions regarding the new Health Department model?

[10:15]

The Chief Minister:

I think the involvement the Council of Ministers have had is the presentations from the Health team and the Minister for Health and Social Services, which have come to the Council of Ministers I think ... I cannot remember, at least 2 or 3 times we have been updated. Towards last year when the concept was presented, the Council of Ministers agreed with the principle of the idea and charged the Minister for Health and Social Services and his team with working that up. Following that there was a period of quite detailed stakeholder consultation and they are still, I believe, finalising the structures and the type of system they want to move to. I am not sure if any of the officers can add to that.

Deputy J. Renouf:

I am interested in your involvement.

The Chief Minister:

Well, my involvement is basically one of high-level oversight. The Minister for Health and Social Services is leading on it. We have been kept informed of the direction of travel. The Council of Ministers supports the principle. We wait to see the final detail and the final approval to make that decision at the right time.

Deputy J. Renouf:

At a Scrutiny Panel hearing this week, the Minister for Health and Social Services told the Scrutiny Panel that he had not considered how the reorganisation would affect patients. There were no indicators that would measure whether his reforms were successful and there was no single document that summarised what he is proposing to do. Why do you think the public should have confidence in that kind of policy making?

The Chief Minister:

Before the move or the transition, or any proposed transition, can take place, the Government are going to need to be fully confident that what we are moving to will provide an improved service for Islanders. The stakeholder engagement is important because we are talking about more the structure, how it is going to be managed, rather than the services that are going to be delivered. A lot of that work has been done as part of the new hospital and healthcare facilities, and there are business cases that sit alongside that work. I am confident that we are moving in the right direction. We need to be confident when the detail comes in front of the Government again with all of the detail of the restructure, that is when we make the decision based on the information we have to hand there.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Do you not find it surprising that it was a Scrutiny Panel that discovered that there were no indicators that would measure whether this reform was successful? It has not come out to you.

The Chief Minister:

Could you just elaborate a little bit, because when you say there are no indicators, there are ... I think you are probably underestimating the officials in the Health Department. They have done a huge amount of work. They do not just write this down on the back of a cigarette packet. I think you might be missing something.

Deputy J. Renouf:

I can quote from the hearing. I pushed the Minister on whether there were indicators and he said: "Perhaps I have not given sufficient thought to how we might analyse the success of this or otherwise."

The Chief Minister:

The Minister is expressing his political position, but I would assure Members that the officials behind that, that operate and plan and structure our health service, will work to put all of that information together so a properly informed decision can ultimately be made before we go in that direction.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Can I push you there? My question, we started with the level of oversight with this. I think what is concerning is that there does not seem to be independent challenge within the Council of Ministers of what the Minister for Health and Social Services is doing, and you have not suggested there is.

The Chief Minister:

I would disagree with that. The Minister for Health and Social Services has kept Council of Ministers informed all the way through, taken many questions on the direction of travel, but of course we are

waiting for the final detail and the final forecasts to come through financial and how the structure might look from largely a staffing perspective. Whether we are going to agree to move that into a more autonomous part of the Government. Those are decisions yet to be made and those decisions will have to be based on information. I am confident that information will be forthcoming.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Do you think it would be a good idea for there to be indicators of success?

The Chief Minister:

Indicators of success?

Deputy J. Renouf:

Around this reform. That there will be some baseline information about where we are now, where we are trying to get to, and some measurements that say whether we have achieved what we were trying to, the goals.

The Chief Minister:

Yes, well I am fully aligned with the Minister for Health and Social Services. We are focused across Government, especially with the health service, on delivering sensible, practical solutions. The idea of this restructure is to improve the structure, to make it more productive, more efficient, more effective, and more aligned with our new healthcare facilities that are being planned.

Deputy J. Renouf:

I think no Minister for Health and Social Services or Government sets out to do a bad reform of health service, obviously. The question is how do we measure whether it is successful or not, and the Minister made clear that there were currently no measurements in place, and there had not been an analysis of that. I am asking you whether you think it would be a good idea to put that in place.

The Chief Minister:

The way we measure it and the way we predict outcome will be an essential part of the decision-making progress. That is going to have to happen. I believe that the Minister for Health and Social Services is aligned with that. The fact that he personally has not given enough thought to it at this stage is an indication that, in line with the work the officials are doing behind the scenes, he is going to have to turn ... him and his Assistant Ministers will be turning their work to that imminently. Because, as I said, we are going to need to know that before we can agree as a Government to move forward ultimately as an Assembly. If there is any information lacking now it will be forthcoming.

Deputy J. Renouf:

It looks as if the reform is driven more by instinct and vibe at the moment in terms of the lack of data, lack of arguments ...

The Chief Minister:

I think that is unfair.

Deputy J. Renouf:

... lack of real argument being put towards us.

The Chief Minister:

Fortunately we are supported ably by a structure of public sector that will ensure we are always guided by the correct process and the correct ... but do not forget in politics there has to be an element of that. We understand our Island, our constituencies, what we want. We charge the officials in these and in other cases in turning that vibe, as you refer to it, into a policy, into a reality that improves things for Islanders.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Do you think there are any other changes needed within the civil service to deliver the reforms the Minister for Health and Social Services requires or wants to do?

The Chief Minister:

Across the broader public sector, possibly. It is a bit early to tell. The conversations I have had with senior health officials indicate the direction we are going. Do not forget the hospital now, we have gone from a previous single site proposal to a multi-site proposition. What we will end up with - a 3 or 4-site solution - is still significantly much more consolidated than what we have now. What we have is a very disparate health estate, which touches on a number of different departments, not least Property Holdings, for example, so there will be collaboration and involvement. But it is hard to say exactly what that is at this stage.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Moving beyond Health, what further restructuring or reorganisation, however you want to call it, plans do you have for this year and next year, if any others, for the remaining term of Government?

The Chief Minister:

There is no planned restructuring, we are not going to go into a restructuring process. For example, I refer back to the OneGov type. In fact we are, I think, almost trying to row back a little bit from that because I believe that set us off in the wrong direction and was responsible for the exponential

growth we have seen over the last few years. What we have to do is make sure we are right-sized in all the departments, we prioritise. I do not want to see departments that are over-resourced and being left to be over-resourced while there are other departments and other areas under-resourced. That is part of the work we are doing, which when you look at our workforce numbers, and there was a slight decrease in headcount at the end of the year but it is running stable, we have been largely successful so far in curbing the growth. But rather than bringing new people in, we are focusing on redeployment to fill those gaps and make sure everything has been evened out so we can deliver.

Deputy J. Renouf:

When it comes to the Health plans for restructure, there is no public consultation planned. What procedures are being followed based on policy and guidelines to decide when public engagement would be appropriate?

The Chief Minister:

I might have to have help from the officers. Can you just elaborate on that?

Group Director, Policy:

Yes, so under the last Council of Ministers we developed public engagement guidance and that still exists, that is still live. There are varying degrees of engagement from assessing open source information through to checking whether a direction is correct, through to more general consultation and engagement, and right through to collaborative working. There is a clear 4-step process that all officers should consider when they are making that decision.

Deputy J. Renouf:

And that process led to a decision that there was no need to do a public consultation on health reform?

Group Director, Policy:

It is a decision for Ministers to determine the extent to which the public are able to engage in this information, and what you had in that scenario was what I would call the second tier, which is going out to the experts and the people who are already involved in the health service and the professions and asking them what they thought. There was very considerable real world and also written engagement on that front.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Officer advice was that it was not required to go to a public consultation?

Group Director, Policy:

You need to balance out what effort you are expending in terms of a consultation with the ability for the public to engage in this very complex organisational change.

Deputy J. Renouf:

So officer advice was ...

Group Director, Policy:

I do not know. I am not going to say yes or no because I do not know what the official advice to the Minister was on that front. But in any case, it is a safe space policy discussion to determine what are we trying to achieve here, what is our policy intent and what is the best mechanism for engagement to get us to that place.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

I was just going to say that the policy inclusion framework is what I think Paul is referring to there. Is that something Ministers are aware of?

The Chief Minister:

Broadly yes, in relation to ... I could not recall it off the top of my head without having to cast my mind over it again. But can I just go back to the public consultation versus stakeholder consultation. We do not often see public consultation when you are looking at reorganisation or restructure as they are doing in the health service. They are looking at a restructure of their service. We went out to huge public consultation on the new hospital and healthcare facilities about delivering the services and delivering the structures. Now that is well worthy, that has to go to public consultation. When you are looking at specialist structures of how the medics are going to structure themselves to deliver that service, the important thing, in my opinion, is you have the stakeholder consultation, and that is what has happened. The consultants and the medical staff have been consulted on that. It is them that are going to be guiding that structure. We might have a difference of opinion. I do not think really going out to public consultation on that is necessary because many members of the public will not have the knowledge or the expertise to guide on that structure. Yes, when the type of services and how the services are delivered, I think is worthy of public consultation.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Chief Minister, wherever you consult - whether it is public, whether it be specialisms - is it your view that your Council should consult knowing who those people are in advance and articulating why this could be done through a terms of reference or anything? But are you confident that when those decisions are made to scope anything or to consult on anything or to perform an action that the articulation as to who you are going for, because Mr. Wylie just said this is a complex matter and it

would seem that something complex would require you to understand who you need to speak to, why they are of importance? Is that the level of detail you would expect Ministers to be thinking about and ultimately documenting in any form before they go and ask someone what they are looking for?

The Chief Minister:

Yes, I would. If we are talking about the same thing. I believe that has been done with the stakeholder consultation in relation to the proposed change to the health service.

Chief Executive Officer:

I think in this instance, if I understand the question correctly, in every policy area there is a policy community of specialists who are in that policy area all of the time. If you look at the stakeholder consultation in Health, the Minister would have been informed by officials about who is in that policy community, which groups are active, which groups have particular areas of expertise to contribute. If you look at the list of consultees and the meetings that they had, they covered that policy community pretty comprehensively. I accept that that is not a public consultation but, in the confines of what you are asking, I think officials would have advised who the policy community was.

[10:30]

Of course, the Health Ministerial team, none of that would be a surprise to them, I suggest. But in any policy area we will always look to say this is a policy community of interested people. Because, bear in mind, when they started that at the beginning of last autumn, they were effectively in the Green Paper stage on the concept of a unitary health system and beginning to be informed by that consultation of how it might be structured. As we move much more into the advanced stages of that before getting to the Assembly, some of the additional information I think you are looking for, you would rightly expect officials to build into. We always ensure, before going to the Council of Ministers and before the Assembly, what do you have to believe in to believe in this policy, i.e. what are the benefits, what are the big risks and how are you mitigating them, were there any other alternatives considered and why were they discounted? Those 3 questions will always be asked by officials and that will happen in this case.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

I guess my question is, it is more when you go out on these, are you really targeting ... is it clear who you are asking before you are asking and do Ministers know how they are approaching a consultation, whoever it is with? So when a Scrutiny Panel or Member in the Assembly asks one of your Ministers: "Who have you spoken to?" that the answers are forthcoming, going: "Well, yes, because I knew I would need to speak to senior leadership. I knew I would need to speak to a

number of G.P.s (general practitioners) and this is how we decided who I would speak to.” Do you think Ministers are able to provide those answers at the moment?

The Chief Minister:

I would think they are. The process starts with advice from officials. I am not sure Ministers just ...

Deputy J. Renouf:

It is interesting you mentioned a Green Paper stage, because there was not a Green Paper, of course.

Chief Executive Officer:

It is a different style I was using.

Group Director, Policy:

We do not have Green Papers.

Deputy J. Renouf:

But the point I would make, it comes back to this point I raised right at the beginning, which is this is about patient outcomes ultimately. One assumes that there is an ambition that this will lead to better patient outcomes somewhere along the line. Therefore, one would assume that you would have some need to involve the public. The Isle of Man embarked on a reorganisation of its health services a few years ago, creating a centralised department, bringing G.P.s in and so on. It is now in crisis, major review by their Parliament, the G.P.s are on strike for the first time in the history, and the Minister for Health and Social Care has just resigned. These reorganisations do affect patient outcomes. I am not sure I accept this argument that it is too high level for the public to be involved. Surely if it is affecting patient outcomes, the public might want to have a say.

The Chief Minister:

Just to be clear, I do not disagree with you but, in relation to this, this first part of this reorganisation is about the structuring of the department based upon the staffing and the specialist aspect of that. We have carried out significant public consultation in relation to the hospital and new healthcare facilities, which is a vehicle that would deliver those services. Before we make the final decision, the Government makes a final decision, we may decide then that some public consultation might be necessary, depending on what the new structure looks like.

Deputy J. Renouf:

On the reforms?

The Chief Minister:

On the overall reforms, but this is more focused on the work that has been done. States Members have had a presentation on 5th December and I wrote to Members on 7th February.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Can I just go back to something that the chief executive said? You mentioned 3 aspects there and one aspect was about considering alternatives. You would expect a good policy official to present the alternatives to the Minister. The Minister was quite clear in answer to an oral question that none of the alternatives to the structure had been considered. So can you just square that?

Chief Executive Officer:

Forgive me, I have not seen the Minister's evidence but by definition the status quo is an alternative to what is proposed. So there will be at least one. But always the policy advice is to be clear about what your options are so that you can evaluate the option you have chosen. That is true of every policy.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you. I am going to hand you over to Connétable Johnson now to change the subject.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

This is on policy and legislative workstreams for this year. Departmental business plans for the year were set to be published in January for each department. However, the panel notes that a bulk upload, if I can call it that, these were published only yesterday afternoon, with that for the Treasury and Exchequer being the only one published some time before. Could you explain, please, the reason for the delay in publication?

The Chief Minister:

Well, the target for publishing was 28th February, and we missed that by a few days. I will take responsibility for that. We were waiting for my final sign-off, which happened on Monday, I think.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

We have a response to a question previously, the Ministerial response, departmental business plans will be published as usual in January 2025, so obviously that date has shifted.

The Chief Minister:

Okay, well I do apologise, we were aiming for 28th February.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

So there was a bulk publication yesterday, are there any still outstanding from any department?

The Chief Minister:

No, as far as I understand they are all completed now. Ministers have signed off all of the relevant plans.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Moving on to the Cabinet Office business plan 2025. To your key objectives as they are outlined, what challenges or concerns, if any, have become known in respect of the delivery of these?

Group Director, Policy:

The departmental plan, in part, replicates what the Chief Minister wrote to the European Commission and this panel back in November, which annex A is the legislative programme. We already announced that back in November, and there has been no substantial change in this programme from then to now. What the Cabinet Office departmental plan does is just try to describe the other work that we have already discussed and taken in the Cabinet Office.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

The general question really is, we have the key objectives here curbing the growth of the public service, advising and supporting Ministers. Are there any concerns which have come up during the course of general work on that?

Group Director, Policy:

No, we are on track to meet those savings targets. They were published again in the Budget, which was approved in November, so we are on track to meet those savings. 1st January 2025 has already happened, 1st January 2026 is on track.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Moving on to some of the actual specific legislation. We note that in the published legislative programme under your remit, this includes Powers of Attorney Law, Comptroller and Auditor General Law and Control of Housing and Work Law, for the benefit of the public, could you please provide a brief scope and progress report on each of these matters?

Group Director, Policy:

I would be happy to do that if you want to.

The Chief Minister:

Okay, if you like.

Chief Executive Officer:

Fighting to answer.

The Chief Minister:

Yes, we are all queuing up to answer. Paul, you go ahead.

Group Director, Policy:

The Powers of Attorney work continues with the Legislative Advisory Panel and others, so that is on track. The Comptroller and Auditor General, we are just working through the policy implications of a corporation sole as it is recommended, so we are just doing a bit more work on that. Then the Control of Housing and Work Law, we have already lodged the enabling power, which is what is described there; the actual policy completer in secondary legislation in our regulations.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Yes, we have had a briefing on that and we will come on to that later, I think. Thank you for that. Again, are there any particular challenges you come up with on any of these matters?

Group Director, Policy:

On those 3 no, not yet.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

The final one of these, in a letter the panel requested an update on the legislative programme in January,. Reference was made to the post-mortem examination and marriage and civil status workstream under that programme ... sorry, it was omitted. It is also omitted from the published legislative programme. Has a decision been taken as to whether or not to take this forward in some way and what is the present position?

Group Director, Policy:

Sorry, I did not quite hear, but I think we were referring to when a person goes missing and there is no certificate of death. I think it is that issue.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

It is more to do with post-mortems, in particular.

Group Director, Policy:

Yes, so we have explored that and we found that primary legislation is not needed. There is good case law that allows in those frankly, and thankfully, rare occurrences to be dealt with that way.

Deputy J. Renouf:

I am interested, Chief Minister, in terms of the responsibilities that you have ... the policy areas that you have responsibilities for, which ones do you think are the most significant and the most problematic?

The Chief Minister:

In terms of legislation?

Deputy J. Renouf:

In terms of your work areas, which are listed here: housing controls, population policy, complaints handling, legacy of Jersey Care Inquiry. There is a list of things for which you are responsible, which ones do you regard ...

The Chief Minister:

The workstream is geared about focusing on the C.S.P. priorities. From my political perspective, the most important piece of work that we are going to be focused on is housing, in the broader subject - do not mix it up with the Control and Housing and Work Law, that plays a part of it - and how we develop access to much more affordable housing moving forward. That is a key area for the Government.

Deputy J. Renouf:

I understand that. That is great to hear. But you have various specific areas which, as Chief Minister, you are responsible for.

The Chief Minister:

Can you show me the list you are referring to?

Deputy J. Renouf:

It is in the business plan for the Cabinet Office: house and work controls, population policy, management of death process, complaints handling, legacy of Independent Jersey Care Inquiry, International Cultural Centre.

Chief Executive Officer:

I think the question is are any of them particular vexing to you.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Which ones do you think are the most important of those?

The Chief Minister:

Can I see the list you are referring to? I do not seem to have it in front of me. Thank you. The question is, out of this list here, how would I rank them.

Deputy J. Renouf:

These are the areas that you are apparently responsible, for according to your own business plan.

The Chief Minister:

You want me to rank these, do you?

Deputy J. Renouf:

Well, I want to know which one you perhaps think is the most important.

The Chief Minister:

They have all been prioritised. That is how they have got on to the schedule to get done. If you want me to prioritise them, I would probably say housing and work controls, housing controls, population policy because they all relate to the big challenge we have.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Sorry, going back to the legislative programme, one other matter is the management of death processes and the International Cultural Centre, which is among the priorities within your department. Again, could you update us please on the scope and progress of that?

Group Director, Policy:

So death management is in our development pool, as we call it. One of the things I discussed at a previous panel was that there were far too many attempts to legislate in this period, at 129 different bids for activity. Council of Ministers whittled that down and prioritised that down to 59. So the 59 are in the annex A legislative programme, but death management, for example, is in our development pool. We are working on it in the background and it might be ready for a future Council of Ministers to consider. The answer to that question: the International Cultural Centre, yes, Deputy Alves is leading that and there will be more announcements coming forward shortly.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Okay, thank you for that. My final question in this area is the delegation responsibilities to your Assistant Chief Ministers. Have there been any further recent delegations in that respect?

The Chief Minister:

A review of the Freedom of Information Law has been delegated to the Assistant Minister, Deputy Ferey.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Any others?

The Chief Minister:

Not that I am aware of.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

You talked a bit about control of housing work and the draft regulations have been launched for debate. This panel have had a private briefing on the proposals and we did make some suggestions about the amendments to the report. But, for the benefit of the public, can you outline what exactly will change in practice should those draft regulations be approved by the States Assembly?

The Chief Minister:

The updated law basically aims to maintain the existing migration controls. The law will provide increased flexibility in making future changes, allow for digital solutions in supplying and demonstrating a control of the housing and work status are easier to understand, some of the language has been changed using a simpler language and a simpler structure. I think, importantly, they modernise considerations of relationships and family units. Those are the key changes, but basically it sets up a structure that I think we are going to need to revisit that when we look at our population policies and workforce requirements in the future, so that just sets out the storm.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I think interestingly, the communications around the draft regulations landed a bit oddly and some of the public ... certainly some of the feedback that we have had.

[10:45]

So what steps are you going to take to make sure that the public are properly informed about the fact that nothing is changing as a result of these regulations?

The Chief Minister:

We actually took the right steps. Regrettably, the BBC misreported and we had to correct that. I believe we have asked the BBC to correct it. I think they corrected it on the website piece, but it was a news item broadcast and it would be helpful if they broadcast the correct lines, but Comms are working on that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

You talked about, as we know, that these draft regulations are a foundation and the basis for change. Can you tell us anything about the changes that you anticipate bringing forward once the amended legislation is enacted?

The Chief Minister:

So in relation to the draft regulations?

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Not the draft regulations, the fact that this is a platform for making further changes, what other changes are you considering?

The Chief Minister:

I understand Deputy Alves has been in conversation with Deputy Curtis, for example, to look at reducing the length of time for permanent residents from 30 to 25 years. I think we are open to that. So those conversations ... that is one example. But I think looking ahead, the falling birth rate, immigration versus emigration. Yesterday I received a presentation on how that impacts on schools. We are soon going to have 25 per cent capacity at these current rates in the next 5 to 10 years in our schools. When we look at those challenges that are facing us that is going to ... I think we might have to significantly continue to refine these to ensure we can bring in the right skills, we can provide the right standard of housing at the right cost. Those are the sort of things.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Have you got any timeline in mind for these changes?

The Chief Minister:

Looking at the demographic forecasting, I think we have probably a window of up to 5 years to set out how we want to plan for the future, because the challenges really start to hit us in approximately 10 years from now.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

In terms of Scrutiny's role in that, will we be involved during the planning and the thinking stages, or will we be presented with a policy to scrutinise at the end of the process?

The Chief Minister:

I think our policy is always to involve Scrutiny. I know the Assistant Chief Minister, who is dealing with it, is collaborative in approach and will undertake to make sure on this issue Scrutiny is involved and regularly briefed.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

You have talked about how making the changes will support the common population policy objectives, but how are you gathering accurate and timely statistics on the trends of our population to support this work?

The Chief Minister:

Neil, would you like to assist in that and come and introduce yourself? Do you want to sit in my place?

Senior Policy Officer:

I am Neil Stocks, policy principal for Control and Housing Work Law. Sorry, could you repeat the question that you would like me to ...?

Deputy H.M. Miles:

The Chief Minister has talked about how changes will support the Common Population Policy. My questions are around how accurate and timely statistics are being gathered, and the broader question is whether Statistics Jersey are adequately resourced to provide the necessary information to properly evidence the changes that are likely to be made?

Senior Policy Officer:

I can speak in relation to the data that we are getting at the moment. We are getting significantly better data than we had even 2 or 3 years ago from Statistics Jersey. Previously, census data was the only really reliable data that we had that was coming every 10 years. Statistics Jersey did projections moving forwards but, as we saw from the last census, those projections can be out for reasons that were ... changing economic and global ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

COVID and Brexit.

Senior Policy Officer:

COVID and Brexit, leaving us with a population that was somewhat different to that that was being projected and planned for. We are getting now instead of 10 years historically, we are looking at 12 months backwards. Statistics Jersey are moving to gather much more live data of who is on the

Island. That is giving us a much better idea who is here now as opposed to who was here 10 years ago.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

The 2025 business plan for Employment, Social Security and Housing notes that it will deliver on your behalf aspects of the Control of Housing and Work Regulations workstream, developing and introducing updated housing controls to support the needs of today's workforce. What oversight will you and the Assistant Chief Minister have regarding that workstream and what considerations are already in place to free up the housing market for people who have been here less than 5 years?

The Chief Minister:

Perhaps Neil can explain how that will work from an officer perspective.

Senior Policy Officer:

Yes, certainly. The Control of Housing and Work Regulations, presuming they are approved in the debate, are one part of the supporting legislation from the Control of Housing and Work Law that gives that flexibility to the Ministers to be able to adapt more quickly. The main driver is there was lots of detail in the primary legislation that was difficult to change in a timely manner. By moving that into the secondary legislation that gives the Minister the flexibility to make those changes much more quickly and to adapt to the conditions. As you talked about, during COVID and Brexit that was a challenge for Ministers. The Chief Minister and the Assistant Chief Minister sit on the H.A.W.A.G.+ (Housing and Work Advisory Group Plus) panel who discuss matters related to population skills and housing controls on a regular basis.

The Chief Minister:

That is alongside all of the relevant Ministers.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you. We know that there will be some guidance and some orders drafted to accompany the regulations. Can you give us an idea of the timeline of that?

Senior Policy Officer:

Yes. There will be 2 orders; the exemption order and the fees order. They are being drafted now. Our expectation is after the debate there will be an Appointed Day Act at a later date. I would expect that to be maybe quarter 3, quarter 4 of this year; to be this year.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, so quite soon.

Senior Policy Officer:

Relatively soon.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, and enough time would be provided to Scrutiny to be able to scrutinise that guidance before it goes through?

Senior Policy Officer:

Absolutely. The intention is that the orders will pretty much be a carbon copy of what exists now. We just have to do that because when the new law comes into place the existing orders are wiped out.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Chief Minister, you talked about there will be a need for a more radical change to population policy. Is the intention to do that within your term of Government or have you settled on the idea that that will take 4 or 5 years?

The Chief Minister:

I did not use the word "radical".

Deputy J. Renouf:

All right. A bigger change, then.

The Chief Minister:

I do not think it will because some of it we are looking at starting that process with what we know, but I think that will be probably the next Government that will be dealing with the bulk of that.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Again keeping with the Control of Housing and Work Law, we understand that this will allow appeals through a tribunal for which the membership will be allocated by yourself, Minister. Can you confirm that is correct?

The Chief Minister:

That is correct, as I understand it. That gives more freedom as there were prescribed Ministers who had to be on that group at the moment. The new regulations allow basically not for Ministers but for any States Member to be on that panel.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

That you are responsible for the appointment of?

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Looking at the situation more generally you will recall that the Law Commission report on access to administrative redress, and this is the one before the public ombudsman report, recommended the establishment of a new Jersey Administrative Appeals Tribunal, I will call it J.A.A.T., which would effectively replace 8 separate tribunals presently in place. What consideration has been given to that recommendation being implemented, having particular regard to costs and the fact that that could incorporate the responsibilities of any new tribunal?

The Chief Minister:

I am not sure.

Senior Policy Officer:

Specifically for the Control of Housing and Work Law, so at the moment there is a Housing and Work Advisory Group which was set up within the legislation, which, as the Chief Minister has said, is a statutory group of individuals being Ministers that need to be part of that. The Housing and Work panel that is set up within the new legislation that was agreed by the Assembly in March 2022, I think, sets up a similar panel but it removes that requirement for it to be a specific person or Minister on that panel. The Chief Minister still has the ability, as he does now, to appoint other people to that panel but it opens up the potential membership of that group, as the Chief Minister wishes, to do the same role as the Housing and Work Advisory Group does now.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Thank you for that. What I am really getting at is that there was a recommendation that we have one appeals tribunal some time ago and if that had been in place whether that could have been the vehicle to take on responsibilities under the new proposals. That is what I am getting at. Would it not be a sensible thing to do, to look at the general point of tribunals in the context of any new tribunal?

Senior Policy Officer:

The panel also has a role of, as cases come to them, they can make recommendations to the Chief Minister to amend policy and potentially legislation if that is felt appropriate. It does not just have a review responsibility. It also has ability to give guidance to the Chief Minister on other matters.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

I hear that but again I would have thought that the general powers of the J.A.A.T. could be sufficiently wide to embrace what you are talking about but let us leave it at that for now. Going on to the other point regarding the J.A.A.T., one of the intentions in the recommendation was that apart from the question of applying resources more efficiently it would hear appeals against departmental decisions which currently are often made to the Minister whose department it is, which effectively is equivalent to the Minister marking his own homework. That would, to many, appear to be contrary to the rules of natural justice. Do you agree with that basic philosophy, that it is wrong for a Minister to hear appeals against decisions of his department?

The Chief Minister:

I am not sure. I think it depends on the circumstances. The principle of not marking your own homework is fine, but marking the homework of your officials as a Minister is okay, I think.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

In the context of the tribunal, would you be prepared to commit yourself to relooking at the whole idea of a J.A.A.T. again before the next Budget, possibly?

The Chief Minister:

We can certainly have a look at it.

Group Director, Policy:

Just to be clear, we have no current plans to do that and, if we look at the prioritisation process that we went through, that was one of the things that was considered but there are more pressing matters that were chosen.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

You have answered the question on that. Thank you for that. Going back to another more general point, in respect of delivering the wider Government ambitions for legislation and strategic policy across departments, as shown in the Cabinet Office business plan, I am sure you will say all due steps have been taken to facilitate your objectives. But to what extent do you regard Scrutiny as being an important element in pursuing those objectives and do you agree that it would be appropriate to co-opt Scrutiny at an early stage in many of these?

The Chief Minister:

I have always believed in that and I have always tried to do it and we continue to move in that.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

To develop policy itself possibly rather than just being presented with a draft proposition?

The Chief Minister:

Scrutiny involved developing policy? That might be a broader discussion. Do you do that with recommendations when we are presenting? Do you make recommendations? I think that is the process that exists. If you want to go further back, right to the very spark or the bang that created the direction, I am not sure. There is a difference between Government and ...

The Connétable of St. Mary:

I think Scrutiny generally would welcome early engagement on matters so we could input to some of the policies.

The Chief Minister:

Understood. I would hope that we are giving engagement where possible but we will certainly take that on board.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Thank you for that. Chair, I am finished now.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

There are still your questions, Connétable.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Sorry, I am handing over to myself. We touched on the ombudsman situation and we are aware that Deputy Scott, the Assistant Minister, has been given some authority in that respect. Could you please provide an update on the review underway with the status of the development of the proposals for a final stage complaint handling system?

[11:00]

The Chief Minister:

Sure. The Deputy has got plans to launch a public consultation imminently, starting Monday, 10th March, and running for 8 weeks. The aim of that consultation is to understand people's experiences when submitting a complaint with a public service attached and their views on how an external reviewing body should operate on the Island. The consultation will provide much-needed data to assist in the decision-making and will inform the development of the final proposals. The panel has

received, I think, a draft version of the consultation document and the questions. While the project is still at the development phase, Deputy Scott is going to provide you with an update.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

We are due to receive Deputy Scott at some stage. You referred to consultation. Can you outline the level of engagement and consultation undertaken to date and any further consultation?

The Chief Minister:

You would have to ask Deputy Scott. I would imagine there has been some internal stakeholder consultation, this public consultation, which I think is relevant because this is a service for the public in relation to making it ...

The Connétable of St. Mary:

We will have to ask the Deputy.

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Going back to the agreed original terms of reference for the review, can you outline is there scope to develop these further during the review process, and are there other areas that have been identified for inclusion?

The Chief Minister:

The aim of the project is to identify perhaps a blend, where considered in the best interests of the public, to land somewhere between what we have now with the complaints panel and a fully functional ombudsperson. The aim is to find a solution to that, probably a blend of the 2, I suspect, and we want to make sure that the important thing is we provide proper recourse for individuals with complaints. The whole idea of this is to have something that will improve the public service that will focus on responding to complaints and taking action especially.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

I am sure we all share that ambition. What I am really getting at though is, is there scope within the terms of reference to extend and, from what you say there, is additional activities such as driving improvement, own initiative investigations, even a whistleblowing role? Those could all be incorporated within the present review, probably.

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Group Director, Policy:

As the Chief Minister said, what you will end up with - and we discussed this earlier in terms of a number of options, there is a status quo option - there are at least 2 or 3 that get you on the way to a fully-fledged ombudsperson. Those could be a consultation and a review in the Council of Ministers and seeking advice and resourcing, frankly, and you could end up with scenarios where a body takes on those responsibilities, but it is a bit too early to say.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Is the project on track for the final proposals to be delivered by July 2025 as originally anticipated?

The Chief Minister:

I cannot remember the timescales. I know from conversations with Deputy Scott that the project appears to be on schedule but I cannot remember what the guarantee was for the report.

Group Director, Policy:

Yes, it is scheduled for this year, again depending on what the view of the consultation is.

Chief Executive Officer:

I think it is on schedule but I think you have to accept that it is a dynamic situation. If you are doing a public consultation and you absorb that it may change your schedule, depending on what comes up, but at the moment they are on plan. In terms of the next big thing happening, other than Deputy Scott coming, there is the public consultation.

The Chief Minister:

I did not think that the proposal was to report by July. I thought it was by the end of the year.

Group Director, Policy:

Yes, I thought so myself.

The Chief Minister:

But it is on schedule, whenever that is, yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I think we asked to have it brought forward to July in order that any changes could be put into the Budget for next year because originally I think you had said it was going to be November or December. I think that at a previous hearing we did say that was far too far because ...

The Chief Minister:

Okay. Can I check with Deputy Scott on that and let you know?

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Regarding your point, the reference, the chief executive mentioned the public consultation. Once the proposals are out is it the intention to go out for public consultation on them?

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes, it starts on Monday for 8 weeks, 10th March.

The Chief Minister:

We have shaped the final proposals around that public consultation.

Group Director, Polic:

Providing, as we have discussed, those timescales work out and there is not something surprising. We will still be providing a report to the Chief Minister by July so it is certainly possible.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

The final question I have on this is once we have got to the end of the process will the proposals come as a standalone proposition or are they part of the Budget debate?

The Chief Minister:

I would think that given a States decision has been made about the public service ombudsman it would possibly be wise to bring it as a standalone proposition, but in the past we have not always done that. We have often used the Budget.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

If it is a policy that deserves its own court case, yes.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Just before we move on from that section, can you confirm there has previously been a public consultation on the same subject matter?

The Chief Minister:

Ombudsperson.

Group Director, Policy:

Yes, absolutely.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Okay, and when was that?

Group Director, Policy:

Was it November 2022? I cannot remember.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Can I ask the Chief Minister then, there is sometimes a feeling among the public that they are often asked for their views but then nothing follows from it and then they worry or perhaps do not want to engage again in the future because they feel they are not listened to. What is different this time that means you will listen to the views of the public?

The Chief Minister:

I cannot answer that because I am not running the project, but the principle of that is I suspect that Deputy Scott, who will have gone into great detail on this, considers it as probably a different set of questions that need to be asked of the public in relation to what the consultation referred to last time to what she is doing now. But that is my assumption. I would have to check with her. I can come back to you on that, if you like.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Moving on then to the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry, can you update us on the delivery progress of the recommendations relating to the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry and whether this remains an active priority for you and if not, why not?

Group Director, Policy:

I am happy to update on that. Of the key principles, 7 of them have been delivered or as delivered as much as ever can be and the final one, recommendation 8, which is around legacy, is on track. So we had the unveiling in December of the garden area and then in hopefully July we will be unveiling the plaque with a permanent apology. The planning has been submitted for that, and that is the final condition. You will be well aware from States Assembly debates about Aviemore. That is progressing as well.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

In terms of the approach to youth justice, we still have not seen a published youth justice roadmap, I think they are calling it now, rather than a strategy. This has been hanging around for an awfully long time and it was a key recommendation of the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry. Can maybe the Chief Minister give us an update about what the holdup is there?

The Chief Minister:

I cannot do that right now, I am afraid. I cannot see that on the recommendations. Is it related to the Children and Young People Law?

Assistant Chief Minister:

It sits with the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs and the ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I think it sits with the Minister for Children and Families.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Exactly, so the Minister for Children and Families is taking that as his delegated responsibility as Assistant Minister for Justice and Home Affairs. It is with Connétable Vibert at the moment and he is progressing it.

Group Director, Policy:

In the main, though, we have taken the view that we are trying not to produce strategies or even roadmaps for their sake, so it is more about what in practice we need to change.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I understand that but the Jersey Independent Care Inquiry was a real moment in time and I think those recommendations need to be taken seriously. I think those are times when you need a strategy, hence my concern that we still have not seen it.

The Chief Minister:

Okay.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Can I ask a question regarding the Care Inquiry? Mr. Wylie, you have talked very technically about the fact that the recommendations have all been met apart from the last one. Does that mean that as a Government you are happy that we have in place all the things that we need to do to protect young children, the children in our care, or children in care or children more generally?

The Chief Minister:

It means that we are approaching the recommendations, completing the recommendations, of the Independent Care Inquiry but we all know you can never relax. We had a discussion this morning about V.A.W.G. (Violence Against Women and Children) and how the easy part quite often is doing the recommendations. It is then making sure that those recommendations remain in line with society. We may have more recommendations coming forward. We might need to change some of those. I think the key aspect of the work that this Government, future Governments, future Ministers, do is ... you get the gist.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Am I right in thinking as well that an ombudsman was part of the Care Inquiry recommendations?

Group Director, Policy:

Yes, there was an element of the Jersey Way recommendation, so recommendation 7 had discretion around the dual role of the Bailiff, the ability to make complaints and those sorts of things. Yes, it was.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

It did cite the public sector ombudsman, hence the proposition to the States, which approved the creation of an ombudsman. Thank you.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Chief Minister, I know you have been discussing at the Council of Ministers Project Breakwater. Can you update us on the workstream please? What can you tell us about the scope of the work and the scope of what it will cover, first of all?

The Chief Minister:

Project Breakwater refers to what is an Island regeneration programme, which was what Deputy Binet originally came to the Council of Ministers with, with some ideas that he wanted to work up around that, which he has done primarily based around health estate and public realm. That concept has been built up and evolved into more of an Island regeneration programme, which focuses on addressing the vast underinvestment in our public realm infrastructure. One of the reasons that public consultation was slightly delayed on Fort Regent was because we wanted to bring the Fort into that fold, to consider it as part of the bigger picture. That is where it is at the moment. That concept is progressing into something more solid and as soon as we get to that stage, which I hope will be soon - Cabinet Office and Treasury have been working on it - because when we do bring it we want to present something that is not just an idea but something accompanied by business plans

and financial modelling and then we will come to the consultation stage, but we want to get to that stage before we share it.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Is the Minister for Treasury and Resources now involved? When we last spoke she was not.

The Chief Minister:

The Minister for Treasury and Resources is briefed and received the latest brief I think the day before yesterday, so all Ministers now are starting to become more involved. I have met with a number of Ministers and the Deputy Chief Minister over the last week, and we are extending the detail of that now to a broader section.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Can you share anything with the public about what, other than Fort Regent, is in scope?

The Chief Minister:

What is in scope is putting in place a long-term capital plan that I do not think has existed in a proper structured capacity ever. There have been some rough ideas. For example, we tend to wait for things to break and then fix them, rather than have a plan in place. One of the most important things is doing that. Paul, you can just add anything to that point.

Group Director, Policy:

Yes, so what you have got is here we are trying to marry that long-term capital plan to refresh the essential infrastructure, and that is the schools, sewage, the shoreline. Those are the things we know about already and the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister have been developing ideas to effectively have a surge of activity for a shorter period at the start to refresh public realm, sports facilities. Fort Regent is part of that consideration, some health prevention activities and screening to get us up to scratch. Again a surge of activity maybe around economic drivers, the ability to bring people in and out of the Island with subsidised air travel, where they are going to live for the future, working age population, those sorts of areas.

[11:15]

The Chief Minister:

So basically very quickly there are 4 key aspects. Affordable housing is a first priority. Then health, health estate, which looks at preventative medicine, the completion of the rest of the healthcare facilities and digitisation of the health service among some other things. Then investment in public realm; leisure, recreation and economy. The fourth part is the long-term capital plan.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Yourself and Mr. Wylie have just listed a broad range of areas, which one would think would be part of business as usual for a Government trying to improve and transform. What is it about the existing structure of the public service that meant that these areas from public realm to delivery of sports to delivery of health, people coming and going, affordable housing, what is it about the Government at the moment that meant this could not be accomplished within the more traditional cycles of refining the budget or using departments, or is this just business as usual?

The Chief Minister:

I am pleased you asked that because the reason we are addressing this now is because we have, and I say “we”, this Government, previous Governments, States Assembly, for decades have not invested. They have not prioritised to invest and maintain our health estate, our public realm generally speaking, our roads, for example. So the business as usual as we do it now simply is not working in our opinion, and this is probably where we all agree about processes and strategies and structures to address that. That is what the Island regeneration plan aims to begin to address.

Deputy J. Renouf:

These things sound, in principle, brilliant. It sounds like things that any Government would want to do but we are also told that there is a funding problem. How on earth are we going to afford to do all these very nice things?

The Chief Minister:

We tend to focus on the cost, to use the old analogy, and not the value. From a Treasury perspective, this is basically a long-term cashflow exercise. Over the next 20 years we will budget to spend probably somewhere in the region of £2 billion on capital investment but we do not know right now where we are going to spend that. We agree every year as part of the Budget process and it just does not work. It makes no long-term plan, it makes no commitment, and we have ended up where we are now with severe underinvestment in the infrastructure of our Island. From a Treasury perspective, the paper when we do launch it will present financial solutions and how we can finance on a sustainable basis. For example, some of the aspects of that, the provision of affordable housing, can present a strong financial model, as Andium Homes have proved in the past. That is all the work that we are starting to look at now, but rest assured, myself and the Deputy Chief Minister and other Ministers are keen to get this finalised and are keen to share it because we think it is potentially very productive and beneficial.

Deputy J. Renouf:

In terms of funding, is this going to be within the existing funding envelope of Government, in other words within the existing income that you have, or are there novel exercises being undertaken to leverage more money, borrowing against assets, selling? I do not know. Is it within business funding as usual?

The Chief Minister:

Ultimately in the long term this will be part of an annual budgeting process, but whether we legislate for it or not we need to make sure that we have something in place that we can commit to in the long term without changing our minds, as we do, and reprioritising. Those are the things that we are working on at the moment. I do not want to say too much more about it at this stage because it is still a work in progress and I am nervous that if we start saying things it starts going off in all different directions.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Would you accept that for something to have longevity it is a good idea to get as wide a buy in as possible?

Chief Executive Officer:

That is right but let us be fair here. It is effectively a 2-year Government with 13 things on the C.S.P., which we are recognising that there are longer-term issues that have to be addressed by the Island. We are at the conceptual stage of exactly what is in the mix, as you have heard, and I think it is important when you are being strategic and ambitious to spend your time thinking about what you think really needs done and then moving on to how you might go about doing it. I do not think we are yet at the stage of the how, to be at the point to go out to fuller consultation, but I think there is a commitment to go out to consultation particularly with Members later this year when the concept is in a shape where it can be shared.

The Chief Minister:

We really want to go out as soon as we can but we do not want to make the mistake of going off half-cocked. I am sorry, that is probably not parliamentary, but you know what I mean.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

We understand.

Deputy J. Renouf:

We understand. Shall I move on then?

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Please, yes.

Deputy J. Renouf:

You have a role advising and supporting Ministers and in particular regarding the C.S.P. What do you do to co-ordinate and support Ministers?

The Chief Minister:

Spin lots of plates on a regular basis. The management of Ministers; as you know Ministers are largely autonomous, a corporation. The process for management of Ministers is run through the structure of the Council of Ministers and, in simple terms, that is how we do it.

Deputy J. Renouf:

How do you do co-ordination to make sure that Ministers are working together where there are overlaps?

The Chief Minister:

The first thing we have done, and I will start at a high level and work down from there, is include all Ministers and Assistant Ministers at the Council of Ministers' meetings, so all Ministers are involved in the Council of Ministers' discussions. That has been very helpful because having served as an Assistant Minister in the past I know sometimes Assistant Ministers can be left out and not kept informed. I think that has been beneficial because it means the whole of the Government is generally up to date. We generally get very good attendances. Out of the 21 Ministers and Assistant Ministers we always get 18 or 19, that sort of figure at C.O.M. (Council of Ministers) meetings, so it is good. Moving back from the Ministers, we will often set up groups, working groups, although we have not got too many at the moment. I am just trying to think of one off the top of my head.

Group Director, Policy:

We have a Housing and Working Advisory Group, we have got the Cost-of-Living Working Group as examples.

The Chief Minister:

Yes, those are 2.

Chief Executive Officer:

Is this in relation specifically to the tracking and co-ordination of the C.S.P.?

Deputy J. Renouf:

Yes, the tracking and co-ordination of the C.S.P.

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes, I understand. I think an important point of context here is that it took 10 Council of Ministers' workshops to craft that programme. We then had a lot of follow-up workshops, as you have heard before, on the legislative programme, on the availability of resources within the organisation, both people, money and technical resources. I think to some extent we broke the back of not only having a plan but having a plan that could be resourced in those workshops. I suspect that is why now we are able to have fewer workshops on the plan, but we do need to invoke the Chief Minister where we have hinge points where things look as if, as we are tracking them, they might not be on track. It is much more now about those one or 2 areas where potentially we could go off track for a resource for another reason but there are not many of them, it is fair to say, at the moment.

Deputy J. Renouf:

One of the priorities is to start to build a new hospital. What oversight function do you play in regard to that particular C.S.P.?

The Chief Minister:

As chair of the Council of Ministers.

Deputy J. Renouf:

So you keep an eye on it? You do not just agree everything that comes before you in that respect?

The Chief Minister:

No, not all the time. I receive regular updates from the new Healthcare Facilities Working Group. The Council of Ministers receive updates from the group. There is not much I do not know about the project.

Deputy J. Renouf:

The Scrutiny Panel responsible for overseeing that, which I chair, produced a report that among many other things said that there was a lack of evidence of independent challenge within the Government of that team. Are you confident that the facilities are affordable to run in the future?

The Chief Minister:

I am confident. I am very confident. The land is supported by a business plan, which confirms that. I think that the Treasury ... I mean, when I was doing it we used Green Book guidance with all the planning, so that has all been done.

Deputy J. Renouf:

One of the central conclusions of the report.

The Chief Minister:

And they are still the case, yes.

Deputy J. Renouf:

But one of the central conclusions of this report was that the Green Book guidance was not followed, and that was by an independent adviser to the panel, not us. What evidence would you produce to say that it will be affordable to run 4 hospitals in the future?

The Chief Minister:

Well, we are not going to be running 4 hospitals. We are going to be running an acute hospital, a mental health facility at St. Saviour at the Enid Quenault Health and Wellbeing Centre and potentially at Kensington Place or part of Kensington Place, and the thinking is changing. We have been discussing this with the Minister for Health and Social Services, where the focus will be on a preventative medicine centre that has some commercial aspects to it as well. All of the financials and the forecasting are part of the business plan that accompanied the proposal all the way through. In all of the work that I did on the previous project we followed strict procedure and we got generally quite a positive view on that. That is where there is confusion.

Chief Executive Officer:

I realise where there might be confusion. Phase one of the acute hospital has been green booked. The later phases have not been green booked, and there is a good reason for that, because they are not yet in full scope of the budget and so forth of the Treasurer, so just to reassure you. If you were referring to later phases or the whole thing ...

Deputy J. Renouf:

No, I was referring very much to the acute facility, where we produced a Scrutiny report that said very clearly that in the view of our independent advisers it did not meet Green Book standards. It was well below Green Book standards.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

We will move on.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

One of the other priorities of the C.S.P. is implementing the recommendations from the Violence against Women and Girls Taskforce report. Part of that is dependent upon improvements to data

collection. Can you set out what progress there has been in that area to deliver on the priority and have you got any concerns or have there been any setbacks?

Group Director, Policy:

On data collection, part of the small team that we established to implement the Violence against Women and Girls' recommendations is a data processor, and so that is well underway. As a piece we are not concerned about the recommendations. There is good project management in all areas.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

So what more data are we getting now that we were not before? What are they focusing on?

Group Director, Policy:

If you want more detail I suggest we might need to either write to you or I am sure we would be happy to give a brief, if it is purely on data or if it is wider.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

But you are happy that that is progressing as it should be?

Group Director, Policy:

Yes.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Okay. Fine. We will leave it there for now as I am sure we have got other things to look at. A further commitment needed for implementing the report recommendations talked about instigating reviews of key services and some law changes. Can you set out what is being reviewed and the timeline going forward?

Group Director, Policy:

We are procuring the reviews right now, and again I am happy to write to you with more detail. The drafting instructions for all of them, I think there are 6 items that we have got included within there, so stalking legislation and others, domestic violence protection agencies, have all been submitted from the policy officer to the drafting instructors, and now we are in that tennis match of back and forth to develop them. We are very confident that all of them will be lodged before the election.

[11:30]

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Great, and they sit under the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, but do you have a role, Chief Minister, given that it is one of the 13 C.S.P. priorities? Do you have a role in all of this?

The Chief Minister:

Not directly.

Chief Executive Officer:

There was a role at the start to make sure within the C.S.P. and then within the 59. Those 6 are in the 59 prioritised. We may need legislative time but unless we get flagged a problem from the team or from the Minister or a logjam we let people get on with their jobs.

The Chief Minister:

I think the role that we played at the start was saying we accept the 58 Government recommendations and then it went over to Mary, the Minister, to pick up on from there.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Okay.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you, Chief Minister, for being in attendance today. I just wanted to start off by asking you a question in relation to the transition to a living wage and just the level of oversight that you have with your fellow Ministers.

The Chief Minister:

Yes, so what is the question?

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

I have just asked the question, Deputy Farnham. So I am asking you as the Chief Minister what level of oversight do you have in regard to your Ministers who have responsibility for transitioning baseline wage workers to a living wage?

Deputy J. Renouf:

It is a similar question we have been asking about other things.

The Chief Minister:

Yes, and it is a similar answer to every other question I am asked on oversight. So we have ... I am not quite sure. I think I am struggling with "oversight" apart from what I said. We work in a democratic way with Council of Ministers' meetings and presentations and we have further meetings.

I have separate meetings with Ministers on the subject. I am not quite sure. Am I missing something here or I can add to that?

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Are you quite content that we are moving towards a living wage economy and if not, what concerns are there that you would like to see rectified?

The Chief Minister:

No, I am content we are on schedule to do that with the first part of the step to a living wage in 2026 happening from the beginning of April this year.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Also the panel notes that there have been discussions politically I think with the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development and the Minister for Social Security regarding the trainee minimum wage potentially being reintroduced. I just want to know whether you would be in support of this or do you think the living wage transition should be for the living wage to be the baseline wage and for there not to be a training minimum wage rate?

The Chief Minister:

We did have a debate at the Council of Ministers' table when we were looking at student rates and training rates, and the Council of Ministers agreed - not quite unanimously but it was very firmly in favour - to maintain the status quo to prevent age discrimination on pay. So we are all aligned on that. I would have supported initially a trainee rate with strict conditions, so trainees were not called a trainee and not being trained, and we have some aspects of the business support that would subsidise that, subject to trainees and apprenticeships being tangible, but C.O.M. were not persuaded that the living wage should start from 18 for those in full-time. We had a debate about whether we extend it to 18 for those in full-time education on the back of representations from the business sector about holiday staff and C.O.M. were not persuaded on the grounds of age discrimination. It is that sort of oversight.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you very much for that confirmation. Minister, we also acknowledge that you have made it quite clear that you do not want the Government to increase its fees. You want to try to limit the increases in line with inflation. Do you believe that you are still on course to do this or do you believe there are potentially going to be difficulties for some of your Ministers who might be in a difficult position who have got no choice but to increase?

The Chief Minister:

I think there have been difficulties. The pressure has been on to increase charges but we have taken a different view. I think we capped any increases at 2.5 per cent for this year, just to help bear down on inflation in a small way where we can, and instead we have been saying to departments: "You have to reprioritise." It has been a culture in the past that when more money is needed we can put fees up and create new revenue streams and we have been pretty much firmly against that.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Obviously the panel is fully aware of what took place during the Health Panel meeting earlier this week where the Minister for Health and Social Services and the Deputy Chief Minister did not rule out potentially bringing in a health charge in the future if we are going to see Health going independent. I just want to know whether you would be in support of this or whether you are antithetical about this potential stance.

The Chief Minister:

Ultimately, that will have to be a decision for the States Assembly. I have made my views clear, I think we should try and stick to funding all of our services from general taxation, but that is my position at the moment. We are in an ever-changing world. I think that is perhaps a question for future Governments and future Assemblies. But right now the policy of this Government is not to introduce or increase tax or charges.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Okay, thank you, Chief Minister. How are we going to address this operational deficit that has been forecast for, I think, is it 2026 or 2027? How are we going to address it?

The Chief Minister:

As we have addressed it in the past. We found the money from general taxation through the Treasury. That means we have to focus and look right across the public sector and reprioritise or prioritise Health for perhaps more funding. But there are concerns, we are certainly not going to let Health funding grow in an unfettered way.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

No. As you mention obviously about making sure that we are curbing the growth in the public sector, Members had a presentation, I think it was a week ago on Friday, where we saw that Government expenditure had increased by about 53 per cent. What role do you have in trying to reduce that figure so we can try and right-size the public sector, as you say?

The Chief Minister:

The role of the Government is to carefully examine the spending, the expenditure in all of their departments; reprioritise that. The chief executive is in the Executive Leadership Team, lead on that work. On top of that, as you know, we have gone into a recruitment freeze to focus on redeployment of staff. We align all of that with some necessary right-sizing. Andrew, did you want to add anything?

Chief Executive Officer:

On curbing the growth?

The Chief Minister:

Curbing the growth.

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes, I think Deputy Andrews might be referring to the Member presentation last Friday.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Yes.

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes, so since 2017 there has been a 53 per cent in cash terms increase in public spending. The first thing to say is that that is not atypical for all Governments who went through COVID and its aftermath. But obviously it is a concern for us because we present ourselves as a low-tax jurisdiction. It is a particular challenge for us. I think in the context of that, the Government and the Council of Ministers really indicated to officers that they did not want to curb the growth, even if the nominal growth could be prevented to curb the rate of growth and to generate options for consideration around that. You know some of them: removing vacancies, recruitment freeze, trying to bear down on third-party consultancy in particular is another one. Of course very important, which is prioritisation. In an area you are very familiar with, moving from having 302 live digital projects down to about 100, it takes time, it will take a couple of years for that to work its way through the system. But we are just trying to arrest the growth and trying to change the behaviour around going straight out to advertising for jobs, thinking consultant first rather than: "Can I redeploy resource within the service?" We are embarking on some hard measures but also trying to get some cultural shifts in behaviour. We keep trying to generate different ways of doing that and test the political appetite.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Yes. Thank you very much. Minister, I know the Council of Ministers have prioritised preschool education to try and support parents, in particular. I just wanted to know your view currently on the

capacity issues and also the financial requirement for this workstream and whether you believe that it is legitimate that we could, potentially, see full-time funding for preschool children across the board or do you think that is not a potential to happen, say, going into next term?

The Chief Minister:

I think it is realistic. I am not sure whether we talk about full-time, the proposal is for 15 hours, I think, in the current Budget that we agreed; 15 hours.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Fifteen hours, yes.

The Chief Minister:

I firmly believe that is possible and doable, and so does the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, and we are urging that to be expedited if possible. Because it is something that will help with the affordability of living and help in families.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Is that for all children, 15 hours for all?

The Chief Minister:

Age 2 and up initially.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

But all children, not just ...

The Chief Minister:

I think that there is a stage. The plan is for stage 1, starting this year, is for children with additional needs and then moving to all 2 year-olds from the following year. But the last conversation I had with the Minister is we could bring summer 2026 forward. We are looking at funding now and spending. In relation to capacity, there was concern from the nursery sector initially but I think everyone is now looking at the demographics, and I think that is less of a concern now. We are getting far more co-operation and support from the private sector.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I am just conscious of time.

The Chief Minister:

Okay.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Do you think, Deputy Andrews, if you just go to the last question?

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Yes, indeed. I just wanted to touch on the Government and its stance on reducing red tape. Minister, it has often been mentioned obviously with the chief officer as well, who gave a talk about this. But where are we in terms of delivering on changes, to Jersey's legislation or government policies and will this be done before this term of office?

The Chief Minister:

Andrew, do you want to just start with that one?

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes, I see in that particular one, I would say there are 3 parts to this. There is the almost pre-existing work, which Deputy Morel has been overseeing around some little and some big things around barriers to business, which I am sure he has given you chapter and verse on and could again. I think in the context of that theme in the C.S.P., the particular focus has gone into Planning, which I think Deputy Luce has spoken on publicly just recently in terms of trying to improve the user and customer experience with our planning teams, in terms both of customer experience but obviously turnaround times and so forth. That is a particular focus. I think Deputy Luce shared data publicly the other week showing progress we are making there. The other area that is of particular focus from the C.S.P. is in trying to understand that better for the finance sector where I think the Chief Minister is on record as saying these 2 areas are where we get the most incoming. Deputy Gorst is certainly deep in discussions with the finance sector in how we can start to understand where the pinch points are, understand those areas where maybe there was a good reason in the past for having an initiative, but that may have changed. Those are the 2 areas where we are doing a fair bit of work. I think that Deputy Gorst, hopefully by the summer, will be in a position to say a lot more about that.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Could I very briefly check before we move on, you mentioned Planning and obviously Deputy Luce is publishing some numbers? Those numbers showed quicker turnarounds, some higher approvals but that has all happened under the existing legislation, the existing planning regime and the existing Island Plan. Chief Minister, does that give you cause to think about how you target bureaucracy in

the system, rather than necessarily regulation? It would appear from Deputy Luce's numbers he is winning, he is winning the war on the bureaucracy side and he does not need to change the regulation. Does that good news give you cause to think about the strategy?

The Chief Minister:

We tend to get regulation and bureaucracy, and regulation is a term used for like over-burdensome legislation or all of the above. The Minister and his team have done a brilliant job in that area but there is still plenty of room for manoeuvre; for example, expanding the envelope for what requires permission, for example, on planning. A lot of the very small works are so time-consuming and that is holding up a lot of the larger projects or can have a propensity to do that.

[11:45]

That is a piece of work that the Minister is looking at now, as an example.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Let us move on. Minister, touching on some of the areas from our Budget Ministerial response, what had been the consequences of closing the Delivery Unit and how are its functions now being carried out at a strategic level but not obviously necessarily, say, operationally?

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes, that was one of our early choices in terms of trying to curb the growth when we looked through the work at the Delivery Unit. Again, always good reasons why things are introduced and things are done. But we felt, for example, that we may have fallen into a position where we were producing lots of stuff that was not terribly well read, and that unbalanced it and add enough value, we felt. A lot of that activity had collected in the Delivery Unit. That included business plans, Ministerial plans and so on and so forth. One of the consequences, as we produce less stuff, that resource has been deployed elsewhere. You now, for example, do not have Ministerial plans, business plans, budget plans, you have a budget from the Government and you have a departmental business plan, which we referenced earlier. The second thing was that the Delivery Unit was a response, I think, of the previous Government. A view that you could not get things done in Government unless you had a central delivery unit which was answerable to the office of the Chief Minister or the Cabinet Office, as became. This has been tried by Governments in all sorts of places. It is an established policy mechanism. My assessment when it came in was that that was an area of discretionary expenditure on the general theme that we could live without, particularly if we did the sort of work we did with the C.S.P. where we had properly workshopped out the programme of Government, got the appropriate buy-in at every level. We did not need a delivery unit on top of it. I do not think it has had

consequences for policy delivery. I accept that we have produced less stuff but we would make a virtue of producing less stuff.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

I will keep us, I am afraid, on time because we have got a lot to get through. But on that, are the public and Scrutiny going to have any lower quality in how they stay up to date on project progress? You said less stuff is coming out. How are you going to ensure that the public and Scrutiny are as informed as they were before, if beyond the Delivery Unit there is an ambition of less stuff?

Chief Executive Officer:

I am not sure the Delivery Unit was there to provide any particular role or support of Scrutiny. I think between what we regularly publish coming to Scrutiny, the written questions we get in the Assembly and so forth, my view is that if you take the Budget as an example, because we are on that totally, you have got the Annual Report and Accounts, you have the relevant Ministers before Scrutiny and chief officers and you have written questions. That, in my view and in a year of prioritisation, 53 per cent increase in public spending is ample but obviously you might have different views, but I feel that is ample.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Just to follow on that point briefly. I think one area where personally - and I have heard from members of the public there is less stuff coming out - is communications. I think that was one of your aims; that you did not shy away from saying that. But has there been an unintended consequence in that putting out less communications means that it is, effectively, harder for the public - and I will also admit for Scrutiny and for Members - to find reports and decisions, particularly on the States website? I would argue, yes, absolutely but I would be very keen to hear your thoughts.

The Chief Minister:

I would not have thought so but there again I am inside the Government and we have access to everything and we are always mindful of that. I am not sure we are suffering from less reports because the chief executive said quite a lot of what was produced was never read and a lot of cost and man hours went into producing it. I would hope - and the officials can answer that - doing less arguably unnecessary reports has provided more time to provide relevant information and make that public.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

The information is there.

The Chief Minister:

Yes, okay.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

It is how you get to it and find it. Before things like the Newsroom and regular press releases from Communications used to ensure that there was an obvious trail for members of the public when they went on the Government website.

The Chief Minister:

The Newsroom is ...

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

They listen to the radio, they hear a story, they want to read the full report, then they click on there and they find it. Now that process is a lot, lot harder.

The Chief Minister:

The Newsroom is still there.

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes, I have to confess I have not heard this before, which might be on me, but I think I will follow up with the team and come back to you because this is ...

The Chief Minister:

But a Ministerial Decision, then the Newsroom still publish every release and every M.D. (Ministerial Decision).

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

But if there are fewer releases, then they are not publishing.

The Chief Minister:

Right, okay, understood, yes.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

The Ministerial response contained 2 of our recommendations of which both the responses were to reject our recommendations; one about an architectural blueprint for digital projects to show how they are enabling repeatability unless it is common standards. In the response to that, one element that was highlighted to maybe ameliorate that was: "An overall digital strategy is intended to be published in June." Are we still on track?

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Brilliant, okay. Part of that same response said that a prioritised list of technology projects was due to be shared with Scrutiny by the end of February 2025. Is that list available and can it be shared?

The Chief Minister:

I am not sure when it is available, if it is available.

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes, this one is on me, rather than on you.

The Chief Minister:

Okay, all right.

Chief Executive Officer:

It will be shared following safe passage at the Council of Ministers in 2 weeks' time or 3 weeks' time. It is imminent and so it is coming through.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Okay. The architectural blueprint comment was in part, I think, in response to the commentary that having so many services and platforms, as you have mentioned, and projects running has been a hard thing for the Digital Department to deal with. This was rejected saying that, in essence: "Each chief officer and department is assessing the risk related to the prioritisation of technology and also that it would be unfeasible to provide a blueprint that covered all projects." Maybe, Chief Executive, could you expand under the rationale to reject, given there might have been a position to perhaps agree in part to some of the principles, even if you felt the implementation would be slightly different?

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes, sure. I think as we have discussed in other committees, we are going through 4 careful steps on Digital Services because of the situations we found, I think, a couple of years ago. I will not go through all those 4 steps today but they ultimately lead to the publication, the sharing of the strategy in June. On this particular issue of architectural blueprint, I am familiar with that of course from other places. I do not want you to feel it was dismissed out of hand. It was discussed but I think the team's view, and it is one I share, is that architectural blueprints are very useful when you are at the start of things to set things out. Whether it is useful to try and retrospectively apply them to an existing estate of projects and, as you mentioned, hundreds of systems of trying to take a universal

approach to that complex estate, I was very concerned on behalf of the team that they would spend a lot of effort documenting and re-documenting the past, when in the first instance we want them to prioritise and rationalise. As part of the strategy going forward, I think it is a very valid idea, the introduction of a standard of architectural blueprint. I am not sure it is as good an idea when we look at it retrospectively, trying to hide retrospectively, so ...

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Okay. I think that may have been a misunderstanding, crossed wires as to what we probably felt was useful in that exercise and maybe we will talk about it.

Chief Executive Officer:

My apologies if that is the case.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Lastly, really quickly because I want to hand back to the chair, Minister, this digital strategy, is there any political element within this maybe about how you prioritise public services and, if so, have you been part of the workstream that has created this digital strategy or has one of your Assistant Chief Ministers?

The Chief Minister:

I have been leading on it with the team there. I am trying to recall the answer to the written question on this but I cannot recall it off the top of my head what it covers. But it is endless, we have called a bit of it back to basics to reset. It builds on the work that Deputy Wickenden and you started upon.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Okay.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you. Part of the Budget review that this panel did, we made a recommendation to take forward considerations for how gender-responsive budgeting could be implemented in the future. That recommendation was rejected but during our Budget review hearing you did confirm that that was an area you would be happy to take forward. Can you just tell us some more about why you rejected that recommendation and what was your rationale for doing so?

The Chief Minister:

Referring to the comment which considered the effects of policies on all protected characteristics, that is ... Paul, would you like to just pick up there because ...

Group Director, Policy:

I am really sorry, I do not recall our commitment to take this forward, other than I think we all accept that the policy intent has to be there, inasmuch as gender, ethnicity, other protecting characteristics need to be around a positive element.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I think the issue about gender-responsive budgeting is not about protected characteristics, they are defined under a particular law.

Group Director, Policy:

Yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

It is about making sure that public resources are distributed equitably across all groups.

Group Director, Policy:

Yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

The focus is on looking across our Budget process and understanding whether other groups are disadvantaged, particularly by the allocation of funds, et cetera. The Chief Minister did give a clear indication in the Budget hearing that he would be happy to take that forward. When we made the recommendation in our report, when it was subsequently rejected, hence my question about can the Chief Minister articulate why he rejected it when he had initially agreed to it?

The Chief Minister:

I think we have possibly got some crossed wires in relation to what you are asking to any advice I received from officials. As a general point, the Government agrees that policy always consider impact on different sectors and protected characteristics but I think you are looking for something slightly different to that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Have you got any practical solutions at all in place to track the allocation of your funding, according to gender-responsive principles?

Group Director, Policy:

Not systemically on gender, no. But there are several examples within the budget of the Government choosing to spend money on issues which will benefit women.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I am just conscious of time, so I am not going to explore this anymore.

Group Director, Policy:

Sure.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

But it certainly will be something that we will be considering at the ...

The Chief Minister:

The foreword being an example of that, yes. Okay, yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Just moving on to recruitment and retention, I think we have previously heard as a panel that there is a process in place for appeals to the recruitment-freeze process and these can be sent to the chief executive. Have there been any appeals to hire for positions grade 11 and above, please?

Chief Executive Officer:

Not appeals but there is an exceptions process and people use that exceptions process, so it is a digital process and it comes ... obviously it requires the chief officer's sign-off first. It requires if it is grade 11 above oversight of the chief people officer, then it comes to me, having cleared those 2. The answer to your question is, yes, there have been, and we set up the exceptions process because we expected there to be obviously people can leave in critical roles or you could have bouts of illness or absence that need cover where the department determine it is absolutely essential for service delivery. Yes, there is an exceptions process and, yes, it does get used, particularly around recruitment, less so ranges of third-party consultants.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Do you have any idea on how many times it has been used so far and is the panel able to get further details on which positions appeals have been for?

Chief Executive Officer:

I do not want to give you a figure off the top of my head. Given that I am involved in that process, it feels like it is used a reasonable amount but I am just going to check. Lesley, have we got the data to hand or is that something that we need to come back on?

Chief People Officer:

We can come back with the actual data.

Chief Executive Officer:

It is recorded in the system, so we can come back with it.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Chief Minister, just from your perspective, could you give us an update on how effective you think the recruitment freeze has been? Have you come across any major challenges because of it as well?

The Chief Minister:

I think it has been an effective ... have we had 9 months of it, I think?

Group Director, Policy:

From 1st August, yes.

Chief Executive Officer:

Since 1st August, yes.

The Chief Minister:

We are not quite 9 months in but 6 months. I would like to see it run for a full year's cycle but it certainly has had an impact, it appears, in curbing the growth. The graph has slowed down. Like I said at the end of December last year, we have seen a reduction of a couple of hundred people.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

We have seen a decrease in terms of new starters by 317 in the same period.

The Chief Minister:

A decrease, yes.

[12:00]

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

The issue is that our turnover has decreased and so we would have seen significant changes if that happened to be the case.

The Chief Minister:

More people are staying put, less people are leaving, so that is more stability, so it seems to be working.

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes, I think it is starting to get traction and you can see the curbing. We are not seeing a full net reduction, not that we expected to. You can see the curbing and you can see the behavioural changes coming through. The other thing I think it is important to note - because undoubtedly it will be in the published data - is that we wanted to curb it but there were areas of the service, areas of the health service, being an example, and Education, where we wanted to and expected to see growth. Because in some of those areas we wanted to see a displacement of agency workers with F.T. (full-time) workers. It will be a mixed picture. We had some exceptions to the policy, and in those exceptions we are seeing growth. What we also expected to try and do is focus our efforts more in the centre of Government than in front line service delivery or customer service delivery. Again, I think when the data comes out you will see that we are starting to get small amounts of traction with that and that those areas are either not growing but they are certainly growing at a lower rate than other areas.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

We have reached the end of our allotted time but are you content for me to add 10 minutes of injury time, being that we started a little bit later?

The Chief Minister:

Yes, absolutely.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you. Just if there have been any major challenges, are there any areas that are really struggling with the freeze?

The Chief Minister:

Andrew is probably best placed to answer that. There will be push back. But, again, we have had a culture if we perceive to need another member of staff we will employ one. Now I think that that is not always the solution, so it means that workloads have to be carefully considered and distributed.

Chief Executive Officer:

I think it is fair to say that a couple of departments regularly petition that it is tough, and we are empathetic to that with the exceptions process. But definitely it is an element here of cultural change as well in terms of some of the behaviours around recruitment, looking outside before you have looked properly inside, looking off-Island before you have looked on-Island. I think there are a lot of behavioural things where we are just trying to slowly but surely see if we can get some change. In particular a big objective given to me by the Council of Ministers, in addition to curbing, was to try and open up opportunities for people who are already in the service and to develop. We talk a lot about development but sometimes the best form of development is just to get an opportunity. We are trying to open up those opportunities by slowing down the culture of always thinking outside before you think inside.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Those 2 departments are ...

Chief Executive Officer:

I do not want to put those 2 departments in a slot because those are private discussions with the chief officers. But I think if you are asking me if there are a few who regularly petition, the answer is yes.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Thank you.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Minister, I would just like to have your stance on front line services and whether you feel that there is a sufficient supply of labour across the board or whether there are potential struggles at the moment and, if so, how are we then going to overcome that?

The Chief Minister:

We are suffering from, I think, a global skills shortage in some areas, not least health. We know that the challenges around there, that is partly the catalyst for the review of how we are going to deliver health through staff in the future. But the recruitment freezes have not extended to front line services with the view that we wanted to make sure those were properly resourced. As Andrew alluded to, the figures show that while we are making ... we have curbed the growth and in some have reduced the numbers, we have seen increases in health and education because there were shortfalls in the staff there. Lesley might be in a better place with a bit more detail around that.

Chief People Officer:

We have seen positive improvements in terms of health, specifically in nurses. In terms of C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills) we have seen significant increases in terms of teachers, teaching assistants. We did have a recruitment drive with the school lunches in terms of catering assistants. In the areas that we were struggling in in 2023, we have seen improvements because we have been able to concentrate our resources in those recruitment areas.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Yes, thank you very much. Chief Minister, I think it is quite important that I ask you this next question. What is the labour requirement for the multisite healthcare facilities? Obviously we are speaking about front line services and there are so many people employed at the moment, but do you know what the figure will be once everything is up and running?

The Chief Minister:

We would have to refer to the business plan, which I do not have in front of me, with that information.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

You can provide that information to us at a later time, thank you.

Chief Executive Officer:

Yes, it is in the business plan.

The Chief Minister:

It is all in the business plan, yes.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Okay, thank you.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Can you just update us on any further redundancies and the impact where redundancies have already occurred?

Chief People Officer:

In terms of redundancies and voluntary redundancies for 2024, we have had 28. But what I would like to say is a number of those have been fixed-term contracts and if they have been over 2 years we have to pay redundancy. We have not seen significant redundancies or voluntary redundancies in 2024. What we have been doing is concentrating on internal transfers and redeployments and so that is where we have been progressing in those areas. Also, looking at opportunities for all

employees, not just those senior recruitments, to give them career development and career progression.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you. That all sounds very positive; it does sound very positive, thank you. You will be pleased to know we have come to the last couple of questions. Freedom of information, for the benefit of the public obviously there was some concern about some of the announcements that had been made about curbing the public's access to freedom of information. I guess as a solution to that you have asked Deputy Ferey to pick this up. Can you briefly outline the work underway in the area to review freedom of information and give us some idea of immediate aims and deliverables?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes, thank you. Yes, I have been tasked with seeing this piece of work through to the end of the year and our plan to review the legislation. We have had it in place for 10 years now and we can learn from other jurisdictions and how it is working well in other jurisdictions. But, fundamentally, for me it was brought in to give the public the right to know. We need to preserve that, while finding better ways of getting information out to people. Very often people are just asking for information which we very often hold. We need to make it easier for people to find that information and be proactive in the way that we are publishing that information. In the U.K. (United Kingdom) they very often rely on the concept of publication schemes, and we have got some really good examples internally. Statistics Jersey is a good example, where they are very proactive on the information that they disseminate to the public. We need to push that model throughout other departments. I think another thing that I am looking at is in the U.K. Government is one scheduled public authority and in Jersey they are separate scheduled public authorities, which can add layers and complexity. I will be looking at how we can perhaps change that. Any changes will make it easier for people to get information and it will make it cheaper for Government. We are also looking at digital solutions, so many websites now you can go on and you get a Chat Bot. What is your question? You can put in your question and they can harvest the information for you and just deliver it. While there would be an expense in setting that up initially, the ongoing expense of freedom of information is beyond the scope when the law came out. That in the first years, it was literally a couple of hundred of requests; last year we had over 1,000. It is an expensive unwieldy piece of legislation that we have got or the way that we are administering it is very labour intensive. Of course it is not just about finding the information, in some cases it has to be redacted. In some cases we need legal advice before we can produce that information. There is a lot of cost behind it. But if we are proactive and we get information out for people that is what they basically want; 99 times out of 100 people just want access to get information.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

What is the timescale for your review? When do you expect a report?

Assistant Chief Minister:

We are going to engage with stakeholders in the next couple of months. Certainly by the end of this year we will have something tangible where we can come and work up some recommendations for changes. Some of it will be some very simple internal changes that we can just ... there will be quick wins, we can make those fairly quickly.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, thank you.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Can I really quickly ask on that?

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Of course.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Deputy Ferey, do you believe that a lot of that was about providing access to the data proactively rather than reactively, and you suggested digital? Will this be part of the digital strategy, if not, why not?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes, it would need to form part of that, absolutely. If we can find a cheaper better way of doing it, why would we not do that? But to be fair, I have only recently had this piece of work, so we can weave it in I am sure.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

I think one of the headlines that grabbed a lot of people was the idea that people would be limited to the number of F.O.I.s (freedom of information) they could submit in a year. Is that a policy intention from the outset for you as a Government?

Assistant Chief Minister:

No. Within the legislation there is provision for repeated and vexatious requests and we have an internal policy that deals with repeated and vexatious requests. Sometimes perhaps it is not applied as rigorously as it should be. Because what we are trying to do is just help people and give them the information that they want. But that part of the legislation is there to stop people continually asking for the same information day in, day out. We do need to make sure that we are applying that

correctly. But the flipside of that is quite often - and it is sometimes from the media - we get asked for information which is produced yearly. Why not get on the front foot and get that information out to people, rather than wait for an F.O.I. and all the cost that lays behind that?

The Chief Minister:

Better still create a system using A.I. (artificial intelligence), for example, that takes people straight to that information when they type in the question and reduces a need for F.O.I.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you. That has taken us to 12.10 p.m. on the dot. Thank you very much. Thank you to everybody for attending. Thank you for your answers. There were a couple of points there that officers will follow up, a couple of questions we have not asked but we can put those into writing.

The Chief Minister:

Sure.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you very much. The hearing is now closed. Have a good weekend, everybody.

The Chief Minister:

Thank you.

[12:11]