



Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Hearing

Witness: The Chief Minister

Friday, 1st December 2023

Panel:

Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier South (Chair)

Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North (Vice-Chair)

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

Witnesses:

Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter, The Chief Minister

Deputy L. Stephenson of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter, Assistant Chief Minister

Mr. A. McLoughlin, Interim Chief Executive Officer

Ms. L. Darwin, Acting Chief People Officer

[10:01]

Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier South (Chair):

Good morning, everyone, and welcome to this Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel quarterly public hearing with the Chief Minister and her team. For the benefit of the tape, we will go round introducing ourselves. I am Deputy Sam Mézec, the chair of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel.

Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North (Vice-Chair):

I am Deputy Max Andrews and I am the vice-chair of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel.

Deputy L.J. Farnham of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

Deputy Lyndon Farnham, member.

The Chief Minister:

Good morning. Deputy Kristina Moore, Chief Minister.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Deputy Lucy Stephenson, Assistant Chief Minister.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Thank you. We have some officers present who may be able to help on any questions of detail that come up. If you could remember to introduce yourself as and when you do come up. We have just under 1½ hours timetable for this and I think we will get through questions in that time. Just before starting, please confirm that you have read the ...

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Indeed. Okay, excellent. Just to twist things up a little bit, the first questions will be from Deputy Andrews.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you very much, Chair. Starting off with the ministerial plan, Chief Minister, I was wondering whether you have reflected upon the 2023 ministerial plan and could you highlight which particular priorities were not fully met?

The Chief Minister:

That is a very negative way of looking at it as a question.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

You have not answered it yet to make it positive.

The Chief Minister:

I prefer to look at what we have achieved. I hope that the panel has found the ministerial plans a useful way of identifying ministerial priorities and, therefore, holding Ministers to account. Clearly my delivery plan and ministerial plan set out areas of focus and we have made, I think, good progress in 2023 on our priorities: delivering more key worker homes, publishing a common population policy, updating the 2(1)(e) regime and making sure that there was another Be Heard survey in particular.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

So, Chief, Minister, in terms of all the priorities that you set out in the ministerial plan, of course there will be some barriers in terms of there being, say, issues that you encounter. Did you discover some difficult areas that you were maybe not able to fulfil within the given timeframe and is it still the case that those issues are outstanding?

The Chief Minister:

I think I mentioned this in the debate, one of the debates earlier this week in the Assembly. The delivery of ... well, changing regulations to enable volumetric modern methods of construction to be delivered in the Island is something that I have found to happen at a frustratingly slow pace, particularly given the Assembly's desire, quite rightly and understandably, to deliver larger spatial standards for Islanders when we have that issue that is very well known, the cost of building and construction in the Island. Of course that commitment of the Assembly comes at a cost to people who are looking to build and provide homes for Islanders to enjoy and provide them at a reasonable cost so that Islanders can afford to enjoy them. Therefore, I see enabling Islanders to undertake development that includes prefabs, essentially, which is called volumetric modern methods of construction, is a real way of containing those costs and enabling people to develop at pace, because we need homes at pace, but we also need them to be affordable and accessible to Islanders because we are committed to increasing owner occupation. So I would say that is one of my disappointments of the year. Another has been the challenges that we have found in delivering the hot school meal programme to every primary school child. It is quite a challenge to deliver 4,000 lunches to children across the Island and we have been trying our best to work with local providers to ensure that we can do this in a local way, but that has been a challenge and so it has been more complex to deliver than we had hoped.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you very much, Chief Minister. I know you mentioned about prefab housing and the hot school meals as well. Do you believe these items will be deliverable across 2024?

The Chief Minister:

I would certainly hope so.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Okay. Thank you very much, Chief Minister. I was wondering as well, Chief Minister, if you could just provide some examples of initiatives or strategies that were particularly successful in achieving the set priorities of 2023 as well.

The Chief Minister:

Yes. As you know, we have delivered over 100 additional key worker homes over the year. We published a common population policy, updated the 2(1)(e) regime, conducted another Be Heard survey to gauge the views of people working in the public service. We have published ministerial plans for 2024 and we are embedding our public service values into the Connect People system.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you very much. There have obviously been quite a few successes there, Chief Minister. I do recognise that you stood on a platform of increasing accountability and transparency during the election and I was wondering what efforts have been made to ensure performance measures are in place to monitor achievements and successes in government.

The Chief Minister:

Well, I think that is, as I said earlier, why we have published ministerial plans and why delivery plans are an important part of the general government programme. We think these documents are clear items that make our priorities clear and open and transparent to yourselves so that you can hold us to account but also to the public for their general awareness. I think they are useful documents. As we have also discussed in previous hearings, we have made minutes available at a much quicker pace and we give a much greater level of detail in the minutes of our meetings. We think that that all adds to our general commitment to being more open and transparent.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you very much, Chief Minister. I have just got one more question. Obviously you have been the Chief Minister now for about 18 months and I was wondering how do you deal with situations where maybe you want to achieve something but maybe that is not achievable within a given timeframe. How do you articulate the struggles that you face as Chief Minister openly to the public?

The Chief Minister:

I think I have just used the opportunity to do so on 2 points that I feel are really important. I also acknowledged and spoke about my desire to deliver volumetric modern methods of construction in the States Assembly last week and of course I raise these issues also at the Council of Ministers. When I meet with my Ministers I use those opportunities to ensure that they are meeting the priorities of government and to ask questions about the pace of that delivery.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you very much, Chief Minister. Thank you, Chair.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

The next few questions will be about the Control of Housing and Work (Jersey) Law. We have noticed that there was an announcement about having a review into Jersey's housing and work legislation. Could you just outline for us the purpose of that review and what you are trying to address with it?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Ministers are very open and have a desire to review housing statuses specifically and that will be done over the next year. It is something that needs to happen very carefully and needs to be looked at in the round, so that is really what that speaks to.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

But what is the purpose of that? What is wrong with what we currently have that you specifically think needs to change?

Assistant Chief Minister:

At this stage I think there is a desire to look at what the potential options could be, whether it is still right and meaningful in current situations for Jersey. We regularly receive requests from people that seem to suggest, from members of the public, that they do not feel that it is right and that it is meeting the needs of our population, so we think it is time that we took a look at that.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

When it was announced that that review would take place, there was commentary from other bodies that welcomed the review on the basis that they considered the current legislation to be discriminatory and helping to create a 2-tier system. Is that a perspective that you agree with?

Assistant Chief Minister:

It is something that we need to consider, as I say, in the round and very carefully. It is something we are very aware that there are feelings like that out there.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

But are they your feelings as well?

Assistant Chief Minister:

On a personal level, I can give my individual opinion. I grew up in unqualified housing for a time. I was very lucky that it was a nice home but I saw my family with some of the challenges of finding that accommodation at the time, so it is certainly something I would like to see investigated.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay. What particular things would you be considering trying to address with any changes to that legislation in terms of some of the things that have been raised about the current system, access to healthcare, access to housing, which obviously you have just mentioned? How would you look at those issues and whether you might want to change them?

Assistant Chief Minister:

The work has not been scoped out and has not started. It is extremely early days, so I think it is too early to say. My focus is on the housing status within my remit.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay. The media coverage that we saw for this was 2 months ago. Has it not been scoped in that time?

Assistant Chief Minister:

There is an awful lot of work going on across this area and so it is a priority for 2024.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay. You said there is a lot of work going on to it but the answers we have had so far have been a bit vague as to what it is specifically trying to look at, why it is looking at it.

Assistant Chief Minister:

I do not think they are vague at all. I think we have set out - and you have just also set out very clearly - that there are concerns within the community among individuals, among bodies. I have shared my own there and other Ministers have around the table as well. It is clearly an area that needs looking at. It has not been scoped yet, which is why I cannot give you the detail of exactly the terms of that review and I certainly cannot say what the results from it will be because the work has not happened yet.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay. Have you said anything in the 2 months since that was announced that you will be looking at access to healthcare for newly-arrived people into Jersey as part of that review and their rights to healthcare?

The Chief Minister:

Access to healthcare would, of course, fall into other areas of responsibility but it is something that particularly in the population skills migration group is regularly acknowledged and considered as one of the items that is under discussion. What has to be done very carefully, however, when we approach the Control of Housing and Work (Jersey) Law is some care. This is a long-established

process, which has been for many years the way that the Island has managed migration from British citizens and Irish citizens also, and so change is a delicate thing to approach, but that discussion continues. As the Deputy has laid out, it would not be wise to pre-empt a consultation before embarking upon it. However, what we have done is create some tangible and practical changes over the period of the last 18 months to assist people. You will be aware, of course, of the enduring relationships amendment that the Deputy has brought, along with critical incident exemptions to support the Island in bringing in people with particular skills to respond to the incidents that we have unfortunately experienced over the last year, student work exemptions and also second job exemptions to assist Islanders who are here, who wish to take on a second job during their time and have the time to do so.

[10:15]

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

All of those are really good examples of identifying an issue where the status quo was not helping and finding a good and practical way of overcoming them within the current framework to get those positive outcomes. Those are good examples you raised there and I am trying to work out if there are other issues that you have specifically encountered that it is the purpose of this review to work out how to overcome. What are they?

The Chief Minister:

Well, I think you have identified the 2-tier system that has arisen and how we best respond to that. That is the trickier issue that needs to be dealt with with some care. What we have focused on doing is taking practical changes that are quick to deliver and really make an impact upon people's lives. One that I have not mentioned is extending rules around educational absence to people who are over 25 so that they can leave the Island for the purposes of education because, of course, one of our commitments is to improve skill levels in the Island. It was identified to us that having that age barrier was not helping some people who wanted to gain greater levels of skills and contribute in a better, different way to Island life and the Island economy. We are trying our best to enable such things in a practical and swift fashion.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

We have both mentioned the suggestion of a 2-tier system in the current framework. Is the aim to move towards a one-tier system?

The Chief Minister:

Well, that is what we need to discuss, as I think the Deputy stated very clearly.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Are you able to indicate whether you are looking to see if the one-tier system would be better or if there are alterations to a 2-tier system that would make it better?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I wonder if I could give you an example. My thinking about one of the reasons why I think it is quite important that we look at this now ...

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

To be perfectly honest, I agree that it is important. I do not think we need to contest that point. I am trying to get to some kind of visualisation of what solutions you might already be considering or what specific problems you want to eliminate.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Okay. I am trying to give you an example of a problem. Since the introduction of this law there has been a reduction in the amount of unqualified units that exist in the Island and we are starting to see that have a real impact currently. So questions start to arise: do we need to create more of those units? To me, that is where we need to be having this conversation around the 2-tier system and whether the 2-tier system should continue so you do create more units or should we not have a 2-tier system, in which case we do not.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay. Just to round off this area of questioning, what timeline are you looking at for the completion of this review and how soon are we likely to see any of your recommendations for changes?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I am not entirely sure on the timeframe of it but I can very happily come back to you with that detail.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Thank you. Any supplementaries?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Just a quick point of clarification. We have a 2-tier system because, as the Chief Minister said, we have controlled our population and immigration that way. Do you think it is realistic to have a one-tier system when we cannot provide enough homes and housing for our locally housing qualified people? Possibly could the solution be just closing the gap in housing standards between the tiers?

The Chief Minister:

That is, I think, why it is a very difficult debate that needs to be conducted in a careful fashion. Of course we are also faced with recruitment crises in many areas, the private sector and in the public sector, and so we are doing our best to approach that and find tangible ways of resolving those issues, again in a swift fashion because it is an immediate need. We have full employment and people are always looking for more staff. There is a real balance to strike and I think for many years we have taken a very careful approach to migration matters but, of course, we are now seeing that causing significant issues within our economy and our community.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Thank you. The next area of questioning is on the public sector workforce. In recent months there have been departures of senior officials who performed crucial roles in managing the public sector workforce, one in particular leaving last week. How do you foresee their departures impacting the strategic direction and operational efficiency of government?

The Chief Minister:

I think we touched on this when we last met. Of course, people take personal decisions to move on and change their roles and their employment for various reasons, and so of course we cannot speak to that, but change often means that it provides an opportunity to regroup and consider the structure of the organisation. We also have an interim chief executive whose role is very much focused on looking at our structure and ensuring that it is enabling the organisation to perform to its very best. It is a time for us to take stock and to look forward to how we can best support all of our workforce.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

How are you facilitating a smooth transition following those resignations?

The Chief Minister:

Well, I think that is really a matter for operational people. Would you like the interim chief executive to come to the table?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

The question area I was going to get at was how the departure of the chief people and transformation officer is currently being managed and how succession is going to be dealt with.

The Chief Minister:

I would look to the interim chief executive particularly to talk to that.

Interim Chief Executive Officer:

Andrew McLoughlin, interim Chief Executive Officer. On that one in particular, obviously I had notice in August of that resignation and we put in succession planning. We have Lesley who is stepping up, which was part of that plan, and we will look at full-time recruitment of the role, but it has been pretty seamless, I would say, from my perspective, operationally.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Recruiting someone for that specific role, is that the intention or are you looking at the shape of that role and any changes to it in recruiting someone new to it?

Interim Chief Executive Officer:

I am certainly looking at per my objectives what is the right structure particularly for the E.L.T. (Executive Leadership Team) going forward, given the issues that we have got across the public service. It is a possibility that we recruit like for like. It is also a possibility that we take this opportunity to try to reshape the role. In particular, from my own observations, I would like probably a better balance between the operational aspects of the role of a chief people and transformation officer versus the strategic aspects of the role. We have got some particular operational challenges, as all employers have around the place, with recruitment, retention and so forth. It might be about rebalancing as much as the structure of the role.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Would that rebalancing potentially involve splitting off aspects of that role to have them covered by more than one person?

Interim Chief Executive Officer:

I do not think our thinking is as far developed as that at the moment.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

When do you think you are likely to have somebody recruited permanently into that particular role?

Interim Chief Executive Officer:

The current plan is, first of all, because Mark had the goodness to let me before I even started that this was likely, we have been working quite hard on succession and you obviously see the successful candidate from that succession. Certainly it is my view that we need to have a reasonable period of time for the new role holder to demonstrate performance in the role. Alongside that, we will look at whether there needs to be any changes in the role, either its structure or the balance of its activity. I would imagine that that will take several months at least.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

A quick question. I think the chair has already asked the question but on a more general view, about at the time of the departure of the previous chief executive, the Chief Minister alluded to the fact that the job might be too big for one person. The roles and responsibilities can be agreed at another time. Do you think it is? Do you think the role needs to be split or do you think it is manageable?

Interim Chief Executive Officer:

I can only give you an early impression obviously because it is a few months. If I think about it compared to other roles I have done, it does not feel too big for one person to do. I may, of course, change my mind at a later date but it does not feel too big at the moment in terms of its scope as a leadership role and the essence of leadership. What I do think we will need to have a look at is how we properly maximise and leverage the effectiveness of the Executive Leadership Team in the context of the chief executive's role. I think when I look across the team, we have got 11 or so very experienced professionals. I am more looking at the moment and my feeling at the moment is we can get more out of that team collectively and in so doing it might mean that that might relieve some of the pressures that previous chief executives have alluded to. As it happens, I might just have had a good run in the first period when there has been a lot of different incidents and things cropping up. It has not felt like too much for one person.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Okay, understood. Thank you.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Chief Minister, on Sunday we heard of the resignation of the then Assistant Chief Minister and vice-chair of the States Employment Board, the Constable of St. John, and saw his resignation letter to you and your response to that. In his resignation letter he cited an indefensible misuse of taxpayers' money in relation to spending in the Health and Community Services Department. Do you agree with that analysis that there was an indefensible misuse of taxpayers' money?

The Chief Minister:

No, I do not. I think the Constable is obviously a great loss to government. We very much enjoyed working with the Constable of St. John and he has been really at the forefront of the great improvements that the States Employment Board has been able to make in terms of its engagement with unions and holding officials to account in the decisions that we have to take as the States Employment Board. The Constable has for some time been focusing on this one particular issue around the health board, but we also see that members of the public who are observing the health

board, attending their meetings, looking at their papers, which are published online, and also the meetings are later published online also, their feedback, and I think you will have seen emails to all States Members from people who have formerly been great critics of our health service, is saying, this is a really useful function. This is holding officials to account in public and helping us to deliver a better health service, which is of course what everybody wants to see done. There is a particular issue that the Constable has raised and of course we are always focused on delivering best value for money and it is a shame that he feels that way.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

At the very start of what you just said there, you clearly distinguished your position from his. He said it was an indefensible misuse of taxpayers' money and I take it from your answer you think it is ...

The Chief Minister:

What we are focused on doing is supporting our executive leadership team in Health to deliver their financial recovery programme. That will drive out £25 million worth of spending every year once they have got through that programme and we want to support them in doing that. I think that they have found a great benefit in having a medical professor available to support them in the work that is being done by the turnaround team, which the Constable says that he supports also. We can see that there is change coming out of this process.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

A quick point of clarification. Does that mean then that the Minister for Health and the chair of the health board have your full support?

The Chief Minister:

The Minister for Health does have my support. She is an intelligent woman who has a great level of experience in health. That has been her work for her whole professional life. I think there was an essay in the newspaper at the weekend in which a former doctor identified and described meddling politicians and the like but also identified that there was one who understood health and knew what they were talking about and that was the Minister for Health.

[10:30]

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Are you also supportive of the continued appointment of the interim chair of the health board?

The Chief Minister:

Well, the continued appointment is for one month, that is all. The person is a professor of international repute, therefore we are very fortunate to benefit from his expertise, experience and contacts. I think for the one month to ensure that this board, which is recognised as being a positive move forward and progress for the Island, I can live with that.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

While he is in post, he has your support, basically?

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I have a couple of questions on the chairship of the Health Advisory Board but just dwelling on the point before of the former Assistant Chief Minister's comments and you have provided, I think, your response to that in clear terms in this hearing. The Minister for Health has obviously distinguished her position on that from the former Assistant Chief Minister and offered a defence of the spending levels and how that has been managed. Do you share her perspective entirely on that or would you offer a particular defence of the current position in your own words?

The Chief Minister:

As I think I have already outlined, what we are focused on is delivering an improved Health and Community Services Department, one that delivers greater value for money. There is a programme that has been put in place, we have invested in the turnaround team and we have invested in the health board. Of course it is important to hold everyone to account in these circumstances but we have built and are continuing to build a strong team to deliver what is one of our most important public services.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

You are confident that the measures you are taking in support of that aim have themselves all represented good value for money?

The Chief Minister:

Time will obviously tell and that is probably a piece of work for the Public Accounts Committee to look into but we can see that progress is being made, that the new Executive Leadership Team has moved away from what was termed by the turnaround team as uncontrolled spending that had been unfortunately the case under the previous Government. This Government has turned that around and we are putting right the legacy that we have been left with and the public has been left with.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

The departing Assistant Chief Minister referred to the chairing of the Health Advisory Board and the extension of the current post holder there but the lack of acceptance of what he termed an excellent candidate recommended by the Jersey Appointments Commission. Can you explain to us the rationale for not reaching the same conclusion that the Appointments Commission had proposed there?

The Chief Minister:

That was not a matter for me, and you and I, Chair, have recently engaged in a process with the Jersey Appointments Commission. That process is clearly set out and it offers the final decision-maker an opportunity to meet with and consider the person that they are putting forward, but the process is apt. It offers for practical reasons an opportunity for relook and that is what it is. I have not had any part in that particular decision.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay. Are you satisfied with the process that took place? You refer to the right of the Minister at the end of that process to exercise her judgment but are you satisfied that that process was carried out as it should have been and satisfied with the outcome of it?

The Chief Minister:

Well, it is not a job for me to be satisfied with the outcome but it is clear that the process has been conducted appropriately by the Jersey Appointments Commission.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

But given that their proposed appointee was not accepted by the Minister at the end of it, do you think there are improvements that can be made to those processes to mitigate against the chances of getting to the end of it where the Appointments Commission finds that for potentially all the right reasons, and having done an honest and decent job, it ends up recommending a candidate that for whatever considerations there are from the Minister they do not want to approve?

The Chief Minister:

I think in this particular instance the Minister was not approached or engaged with when terms of reference were being set out. That was for the right reasons but it, of course, has perhaps led to some practical circumstances that have caused this situation to arise.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Can I just be clear? The Appointments Commission did not communicate with the Minister for Health in the early stages of the process; is that what you are saying?

The Chief Minister:

There was a particular set of circumstances for why that did not happen and forgive me but I do not recall precisely enough exactly why that was. For genuine reasons it was decided that the process would begin without that engagement, and there we are.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Do you know what is a genuine reason to do that? I think it is important that there is good communication and collaboration between Ministers and the Appointments Commission in certain areas. Do you know what genuine reason is or what ...

The Chief Minister:

As I said, I cannot recall exactly.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

If you know it is a genuine reason, you must know something about it.

The Chief Minister:

Simply no more than it was for a genuine reason that was felt the best way to proceed in the particular circumstance.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Okay, thank you.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

The former Assistant Chief Minister referred to the potential reputational damage there is in going through this process and identifying what was considered a high calibre candidate only to then say no to their appointment at the end and then have to extend the position of the incumbent. Do you agree with that analysis?

The Chief Minister:

I do not think it is an uncommon circumstance to find oneself in throughout an appointments process. These things do happen from time to time and that is the process as it is set out. It also happens in other decision-making processes that we have seen occur in recent times.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Do you think it runs the risk of putting off other high-calibre candidates from wanting to put their names forward or being persuaded to put their names forward?

The Chief Minister:

Well, some will say that the highly personalised nature of some of the discourse on this topic and the changes in the focus of attention on the creation of the board have also done the same.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Just one final question. Do you think that perhaps the bumpy start between the board and the Minister for Health could have perhaps led to the decision process?

The Chief Minister:

I do not think the start has been bumpy. It appears that the board have started first in a shadow process and moved into public meetings and, as we acknowledged earlier, there seems to be wide public acknowledgement that it is a successful process in holding the leadership team to account and helping to improve our healthcare services.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

At the end of the day it is the Minister's choice.

The Chief Minister:

The appointment?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Yes.

The Chief Minister:

Yes, ultimately, after the process.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Thank you.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Deputy Farnham, for the next round of questions.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Thank you. We are going to key worker accommodation now, which is priority 7, I think, in the list of your plans. The former chief people and transformation officer acknowledged inconsistencies in the previous accommodation policies with some individuals receiving accommodation outside of the usual policy. Can you provide clarity on the extent of this oversight, including the number of health

workers affected and detail of the strategies your department has established to prevent such lapses occurring again?

The Chief Minister:

While I do not have exact numbers, what I can tell you is that some people were found to have been enjoying subsidised accommodation for periods of up to 10 years. Therefore, it was determined that in order to support people moving to the Island, that those who are better settled, it was right for them to seek their own accommodation solutions in the Island and to release some of that publicly-owned property for others to benefit when they were trying to acclimatise and settle into Island life.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Okay. Are there any measures in place to support the health workers who are being moved out, especially considering the potential challenges they might face going into the private sector, private market I should say?

The Chief Minister:

Well, of course, it is a service that is focused on ensuring that we have long-term people working for our public service. The process has been created with their wellbeing in mind, offering a reasonable amount of time for them to find alternative accommodation and, of course, keeping in touch and working with them to ensure that they find a good route to that.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Do you know how many health workers were impacted upon by this?

The Chief Minister:

As I said, I do not have that exact figure but of course what we have done also in the last year is create an additional 132 units of key worker accommodation in the Island, which is of course great benefit for people working in the public sector.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Just very quickly if I can jump in, because it follows on from the previous point there. Of those who are now being worked with to transition them into the private housing market, has any feedback been received from them specifically finding that prospect too daunting and so considering leaving Jersey as a result of that?

The Chief Minister:

I have not received any information to that effect. Obviously it is not an easy message to share with people and we are very mindful of that. However, we feel that while managing public property and being responsible for that, it was a reasonable way forward.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

One of the ministerial priorities proposes consolidation of new central key worker accommodation. You might have alluded to some of that a minute ago, but can you provide some further details on what the service will include and how the Government will ensure fair access to housing and the correct priority for key workers?

The Chief Minister:

When we entered Government and identified recruitment and retention as one of our key areas of focus, one thing that we were quite shocked by was that we had key workers such as nurses who were having to make phone calls during their shifts to help to find a hotel room for another colleague for that night or the next day, such was the insecurity of some of the accommodation that the former Government was offering to their staff, their key workers who were delivering services such as healthcare and education, which all Islanders benefit from. We found that to be a really indefensible place to be and so setting up a key worker accommodation service has made a great difference to that. Obviously it provides a central service that can identify and allocate accommodation to staff so that they are not going from pillar to post, from one hotel room to the next, that they are starting to lay their roots in the Islands, have a good roof over their heads, a pleasant place to live where they can settle for a period of a year or so. We think that is a much better way to manage. We have also been able to make considerable savings in doing so because, of course, hotel rooms come at a cost. Although we were, of course, pleased to contribute to the local economy, we feel that it is much better for our staff to be able to enjoy more secure accommodation.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

We spoke earlier about a 2-tier system. Have you checked out this accommodation? Is it of a good quality? Is it something that we can maintain or is it something that will have to be addressed again in the future as we look to the 2-tier market?

The Chief Minister:

There will be differing situations. Of course, with Westaway Court a decision was made some time ago to spend money on renovating and refurbishing it to reopen it, because it had been left empty under the previous Government for the past 4 years and it seemed a waste of a good amount of space. It offers 52, I think, units of accommodation and so we did a complete internal refurbishment. It still does not look fantastic on the outside, which is something that we are very aware of but

unfortunately there is an issue with the render, which has meant that we have not been able to even spray paint it to make a bit more pleasant for the time being.

[10:45]

Of course it is a building that is identified for a different use but we feel that having made that investment in that building it is now delivering quality accommodation for those people who live there.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Outside of the accommodation, what measures are being taken to support key workers beyond housing?

The Chief Minister:

I think the Island is a welcoming place generally and of course people begin their work in teams that I am sure welcome them also and we are committed to the whole workplace being one where people will enjoy their work and their relationships with colleagues. You are aware through your other work that the Your People and Culture review is looking at the work that is going on within government and I am sure the officers can tell you about that in greater levels of detail if you wish, the work that is going on to continually improve the culture within the public sector.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Thank you.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

You mentioned that Westaway Court had been earmarked for a different use in the future. Is that still the case or are you looking to change that particular site to give it a longer-term use as key worker accommodation?

The Chief Minister:

As you will recall, under one of the previous hospital iterations it was destined to become an outpatient centre, I believe. So there is no known use for it at this particular moment in time. Therefore, it will remain in serviceable use, which is creating good quality homes for essential public servants.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I asked that because I know that Andium Homes would love to have the site to do something with it, if that were an option. Is that something to be discounted now or could you shift things around?

You have mentioned some problems with the building, that you have not been able to address some of the external issues as well as you would like. I am sure that there are housing providers on the Island that would be happy to do a big-scale redevelopment there. Is that something to rule out at this point?

The Chief Minister:

We have a large property portfolio and there are many calls on using publicly-owned land for various issues. One job of work is to create some priorities, working with the Minister for Infrastructure, who holds that political responsibility. He also participates in the Future Places Ministerial Group, which is focused on strategically considering what areas of land we have available, what needs the community has and identify how we best meet those needs through the land that we do have available and how we encourage people to move around, particularly the town areas and improve the environment in our urban areas in town, creating more open spaces, more sustainable transport routes.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

How long do you see that particular site providing key worker accommodation?

The Chief Minister:

At the moment and for the foreseeable future and until an agreement is reached as to what should happen next. Of course, we need key worker accommodation. Until we have found further alternatives, I am sure we will not be letting go of 52 units of good quality key worker accommodation.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

It is predicated on identifying alternatives before making a decision for that site?

The Chief Minister:

Yes. We are grateful to Andium, who are doing a fantastic job at the moment of delivering additional units of accommodation and great quality ones. Their building programme is continuing at pace. You will all be aware that they have now started work on the Ann Street Brewery site and the Northern Quarter, which is good to see.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Thank you. Next round of questions from Deputy Andrews.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you very much, Chair. In relation to headcount reporting, Chief Minister, it was during a public hearing on 13th October 2022 that you shared the view that there should be a very fixed focus on

reducing the number of agency staff and people on non-permanent contracts. I was wondering what work is underway during the period of 2024 to enact changes.

The Chief Minister:

That work continues. It is something that we are seeing some success with, which is something to be celebrated. There are 290 fixed-term contracts that will expire predominantly in quarter 3 of next year. We are constantly seeking solutions, particularly in our key services of Education and Health, to ensure that we have permanent staff in their roles.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

When we are looking at premiums, where do you see the issue being across all government departments where premiums are being paid to these contracted workers? Where do you see the problems being? Across all government departments here premiums are being paid to these contracted workers, what departments stand out to you?

The Chief Minister:

Clearly, Health is a department that, like many health services across the world, has been filling gaps with short-term contracts and locums. That is not the best option. However, it is an issue that is worldwide. There is a global shortage of people with these skills. We are doing our best to ensure that Jersey stands out as a place that people want to come and work. We are seeing that happen. The medical consultant group are now at full capacity, which is the first time for many years. That is good to see.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Of course we do need to see statistical production of headcount figures and also the number of vacancies to inform policy decisions. What forthcoming policies will be introduced so you have a better understanding of headcount and vacancies across the public sector for the period of 2024?

The Chief Minister:

In order to be able to do the reporting, of course it helps to be able to see that headcount across the organisation. That is being achieved through better monitoring through the use of I.T. (information technology). I could ask an officer to come and tell you more about the Connect system and how it is going live and the structure of that and how it will help to provide a greater level of detail of those vacancies, if that assists you.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Very briefly, that might be useful.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Yes.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

It might blend into that, going back to the use of agency staff, especially in Health, given the shortages, they have been heavily criticised for using so many agency staff. Given the challenges, almost globally, they have no other option.

The Chief Minister:

We are doing our very best to ensure that we offer something different in the Island and that we are a place that people want to come and work.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

The criticism on the use of agency staff and the cost of that, causing the health service to go over budget, they do not have any other option currently, do they?

Acting Chief People Office:

We have been working with Health in terms of reducing our need for locum doctors. We have gone out to recruitment for more permanent members. As the Chief Minister has said, there are certain areas where we do have global shortages, so there will always be an element of agency/locum workers. However, we have been working extremely hard in looking at those roles and where we can make them permanent, going out to recruitment.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Is the health service's budget sufficient to deal with these staffing issues?

Acting Chief People Office:

I am not able to answer that question at this time, sorry.

The Chief Minister:

We have a turnaround team, who are implementing the financial recovery plan. As part of that there is an H.R. (human resources) director in the team. That is a question they will be working on.

Acting Chief People Office:

I thought you were asking me specifically about the budget for Health. In terms of the H.R. team within Health, they have been increased in terms of giving that support to the financial turnaround. They have designated resource within that team at the moment.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Thanks. We just asked for some detail on the Connect system and how that can assist with reporting these vacancies.

Acting Chief People Office:

The Connect system or line managers now can see on the system all of the headcounts. They will be able to see all of the vacancies that they have. They will be able to cleanse the data themselves. They can remove posts and request posts. They have to be in line with budget and F.T.E. (full-time equivalent) requirements. It is very visible for managers now to be able to see who they are responsible for and where their vacancies are. In terms of an individual, they will be able to see all of their information and see it quickly. It is now in real time, where they can make changes to their bank details, address, personal information that they have never been able to do before. Line managers will be able to approve in the system, rather than using various forms, et cetera, to do that, where we have delays. It will very much be seen as a benefit.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you very much. Chief Minister, I wanted to touch on headcount and the correlation with housing as well. With the Jersey Development Company, I asked a question in the Assembly of the Minister for Infrastructure to see whether the Jersey Development Company could be utilised to provide key worker accommodation, so key workers are not having to pay private sector rents. Has any consideration been given for the Jersey Development Company to be used to be building more housing supply for that purpose?

The Chief Minister:

We have particularly been working with Andium in this regard. Andium are already offering some of those additional key worker units that we have talked about earlier in the hearing. They continue with their programme of work.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you very much, Chief Minister. I also wanted to ask a question in relation to the 2022 States-owned entities and arm's-length organisations regarding their staff reporting, considering their varying sizes and complexities. I was wondering whether any discussions have taken place that you are aware of between the Minister for Treasury and Resources and those arm's-length organisations and States-owned entities.

The Chief Minister:

I am not party to those discussions, but you would expect the Treasury team, who have that relationship with the States-owned entities and the arm's-length organisations, to have those

conversations. I am sure that with majority publicly-owned organisations they too see themselves as public servants delivering for Islanders and will all be keen to improve standards and meet requirements that are asked of them to demonstrate their value to the Island.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Yes. In terms of your personal opinion on some of the statistics that are being produced from these yearly reports, do you believe there needs to be enhanced data when it comes down to staffing within those 22 different entities?

The Chief Minister:

One of the benefits of creating States-owned entities and arm's-length organisations is that they have an element of independence, so that they can run their business in an agile way and deliver great value for money. It would not be for me to decide that, but I am sure that they are all keen to meet the requirements of modern life and the expectations that Islanders have of them.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you very much, Chief Minister.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Do you believe that out of the States-owned entities and arm's-length organisations, which on the whole do a very good job in their respective portfolios, do you think greater productivity could be driven by combining some of their resources?

The Chief Minister:

We are looking across the board in the public service at improving efficiency and productivity, like most Island organisations, I would imagine. It is the only way we can deliver growth in our economy and improve delivery for Islanders.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Could I ask if the interim chief executive has any thoughts along those lines? I am not sure you have had the opportunity to give it great consideration as yet.

Interim Chief Executive Officer:

To double-check the question: that is whether there is scope for productivity by ...

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Could we get greater value for money or free up elements of budget, so they have more budget to spend on their core targets, as it were, if we were to combine some of their resources?

Interim Chief Executive Officer:

The point is very well made. When you look at it afresh, you do see the potential for sharing of resources and there might be some duplication in there. That is certainly one of the areas that are under consideration when I think about my objectives and how we can improve productivity and performance across the public service in its widest sense.

[11:00]

We sometimes restrict it too much to what we now understand is the Government of Jersey or the States of Jersey, but of course we have got quite a hinterland of organisations we have created over the years. The point is very well made.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Thank you.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Thank you. The next round is a relatively quick-fire round, which is about the legislative programme, just to get some updates on where you are on specific pieces that are referred to in there. There is the Statistics Census Law, looking at reforms to the legal structure of Statistics Jersey to enhance the work that they are able to do. Do you have any updates you are able to offer on that work?

The Chief Minister:

The Deputy Chief Minister is continuing to lead on that project. I am pleased that the law is on course to be lodged on time, which is something to celebrate.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay, excellent. Public services ombudsperson, again a very important one and we have received occasional updates on that when we have asked for them. What do you think the timetable for establishing that is likely to be at this point?

The Chief Minister:

That work continues, as you may have been told in a private briefing. We look forward to providing Corporate Services with a draft of the law prior to lodging it.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

When is that likely to be?

The Chief Minister:

It is in the plan at the moment for next year.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

When next year?

The Chief Minister:

I am not aware at the moment of a particular timeline. It is still under discussion.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay. Just to sum up, we have probably heard this before, but it is important to have it stated again: how do you envisage that a public services ombudsperson would improve accountability and transparency in public services?

The Chief Minister:

We have to give our thanks to the volunteers who have taken on the difficult work of the complaints panel to date, and they continue to do so. We are very grateful to them for that voluntary service. However, the complaints panel does not have the teeth that an ombudsperson would have. Sometimes it has been felt in the public that they would like to see a body with that ability to have a greater grip on the results and the response to their findings.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay. The Employment of States of Jersey Employees Law is on the list as well. How do you envisage that affecting the role and function of the States Employment Board? Are there any particular ways you are seeking to modernise or update that?

The Chief Minister:

That work has been paused. It had dragged rather a long time through the last Assembly. What we are finding is that changes have been made. Last time I saw you we talked about directions that had been made internally. That gap that was there and had been identified has been closed. We found an alternative route to ensuring that those checks and balances are in place.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay. Are you no longer looking at any legislative changes to affect that?

The Chief Minister:

As I say, it has been paused. We will continue to reflect. At the moment, it does not appear that it is a matter or priority.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Paused rather than cancelled?

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay, thank you. Finally, any potential changes to enhance the legal and operational independence of the Appointments Commission? We have had a little bit of a discussion about their role, but is there anything specific that you are looking at in legislation to enhance that?

The Chief Minister:

No. At this time, the Appointments Commission works well. It is the view of the States Employment Board that in practice the present legal arrangements work.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay. So we should not anticipate to see any legislation coming forward on that?

The Chief Minister:

No.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay, thank you. Any supplementary questions? No. Deputy Farnham now.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

In relation to recovery from some of the major incidents and tragedies that have impacted us recently, we are coming up to the time of one of the first incidents. Can you provide an update on the current situation for each of the major incidents recovery efforts, where we are exactly?

The Chief Minister:

Sadly, as you rightly point out, we are approaching the anniversaries of the tragic events of 8th and 10th December last year. We have spoken before about this, but the response of our whole community has been quite astounding. We have seen so many different challenges over the last year and we should all be proud of the response to them. You will be aware that a service memorial has been arranged by the Bailiff's office for 7th December, which is next week. The demolition of the buildings on the south of Haut du Mont is currently underway. That is expected to complete on schedule, ahead of the first anniversaries. There is a health and wellbeing support programme,

which continues to offer support to those who have been affected by these tragedies, particularly those displaced residents and people who were first responders.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

What kind of support is that?

The Chief Minister:

Psychological support and wellbeing health checks for people who have been affected by these tragic events. There is also work to embed an appropriate process to ensure that effective and consistent responses to future major incidents is underway, with an initial categorisation framework on schedule to be agreed in quarter 1 of next year. With regards to the storm, we have so far quantified about £500,000 worth of revenue cost in the Infrastructure and Environment Department. That is due to the clean-up of about £500,000 worth of estimated damage to buildings.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Are you talking about States-owned buildings?

The Chief Minister:

Yes, publicly-owned properties.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Has there been an estimate of how private buildings have been impacted?

The Chief Minister:

No. We are not aware of all of the damage to privately-owned buildings. We are very aware of some of the sport sites in particular. Those organisations and the private property owners will be making their own arrangements through their insurance companies, so it is difficult to quantify. We can see that there is an incredible amount of work to be done.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

What steps are being taken to ensure that the needs of those affected and displaced, particularly by these major incidents, are central to the decision-making process? First of all, with the storm, we have seen a lot of people displaced with severe, almost total disruption to their way of life. How are their needs being catered for? Moving on, how central to the planning process is the experience from this?

The Chief Minister:

I would like to give credit to the Strategic Coordination Group, who stepped up as the week advanced. We thankfully had notice of this event coming. They took time to consider everything that they needed to do to prepare, which included ensuring that there was agreement in place with hotels locally, so that people, if necessary, could be transferred. Initially a great number of people were provided with hotel accommodation. Our social services were there. There was a team of social workers and people from the youth service also to support those Islanders who were put up in that temporary accommodation. I visited some of them myself and they were grateful for the support and attention that was being given to each and every one of them. We did our very best to meet their needs, whatever they might have been; whether it might have been finding medication, looking after pets or the whole other variety of issues that people had to deal with. I am proud of those people who stepped up to support Islanders in a moment of need.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Where does funding come from to support Islanders? Is it from individual departmental budgets?

The Chief Minister:

That is right, yes.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Can you share any specific initiatives or policies that are being developed as a direct result of the input from those most impacted?

The Chief Minister:

As I mentioned, we are working on a framework for preparation and a categorisation framework, which sounds quite a clunky process but something that will help in a time of crisis, when people need to act expediently and sometimes will not have the benefit of advanced preparation, as we did with the storm. That work is being done. We are also now starting to bring together a group of people with some of our voluntary sector organisations such as Trees for Life and the National Trust, working with the Lieutenant Government, who, on behalf of the King, has a particular interest in the natural environment, replacing trees that we have sadly lost as a result of the storm. We also will look to what will be done with all of the wood that has fallen. It would be fantastic to see that being put to good use. There are programmes that people can access with great ease in terms of, once the wood is seasoned, creating chairs and pieces of furniture or items that would be useful to Islanders. It would be a positive legacy for what was a terrible incident.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

We understand that some Islanders were not insured. Without going into the ins and outs of that, you said you were developing thoughts on how more affordable insurance could be supported. You

mentioned the Social Security Fund. Have you had any further thoughts on that or is that going to be a work in progress?

The Chief Minister:

That is a work in progress. It has been quite shocking to see how many Islanders have not had adequate insurance in place. That is a matter for the Minister for Social Security to pursue. I will do everything I can to support her in doing it, because people have to take personal responsibilities for their own buildings and property. Government cannot always be the place of last resort, particularly with finite levels of resource.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Thank you.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Any supplementary questions on that? No. The next round of questions is on the ongoing response to the Care Inquiry Report. Could you provide a general update on the status of the implementation of the inquiry's recommendations?

The Chief Minister:

Yes. That work continues. Some of which is now well embedded, such as the Children's Commission, with which you are familiar, work to ensure that the children's voice is heard. We have seen the Youth Parliament begin its work and starting to deliver some fantastic and insightful reports, which is extremely useful. There have been standards for engagement established, which is also useful. Ministers find that of great benefit when trying to engage with different voices, and particularly our younger community. The independent inspection process has been established and a regulatory framework providing independent assurance regulations for inspection of children's services were agreed by the Assembly last year. The Care Commission is currently consulting on standards for inspection. There is evidence of system work with the Care Commission where they have identified over the past year areas of improvement required at Greenfields. That has been done. With regards workforce, which was another of the recommendations, we have seen on-Island routes to social work being established. On the wider work that we are doing in relation to recruitment and retention, ensuring that we have established long-term committed people working in our public services, we have set up the Population and Skills Ministerial Group, which addresses those workforce and skills challenges. Then in legislative reform, which is recommendation 5, the Assembly approved the Children and Young People (Jersey) Law, which will be enacted in quarter 1 of next year. The Assembly also approved the Children (Convention Rights) (Jersey) Law, which should also be enacted in quarter 1 of next year.

[11:15]

The Assembly approved the smacking ban that Deputy Le Hagarat brought to the Assembly now some time ago. The Marriage and Civil Status (Jersey) Law, included raising the age of marriage. Then we move on to corporate parenting with the establishment of Jersey Cares, which is a grants-funded body with a focus on children in care and care leavers. The Children and Young People Education Service has published the care leaver offer. They did that in 2018, as I am sure you are aware, Chair, setting out how Government will assist care leavers as they transition into adulthood. Just this week we were holding workshops with Fiona Duncan from Promise Scotland, which was well received. We looked, as you are aware, Chair, to Promise Scotland and the work that they have done in supporting care leavers and changing attitudes towards how we care for children in those circumstances and how we approach them and provide the love and consideration that any parent would when they are in the care system. That continues with some re-emphasis and renewed vigour. Would you like me to continue?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I have to say, Minister, I am struggling to contain my deep sense of satisfaction with this list. There is lots of very good things on there. As you say, lots of those have been embedded, which is very important. Rather than dwelling on those, I would like to focus on questions in the future, in terms of what areas of priority do you think there still are to make improvements on, beyond those where we can tick the box of quite a few of those? Are there any culture-based recommendations about the philosophy underpinning where the Care Inquiry wanted to take Jersey and how we embed that into our culture, not just in how you administer government services but how you approach them? What progress and what is your approach on that?

The Chief Minister:

I have touched on some features already, which is listening to the voice of the child, giving greater consideration for children in our care as well, improving corporate parenting and the understanding in the Island of the role of corporate parenting, ensuring that children in our care feel loved and that consideration is given to them as a parent would do. Equally, in conversation I am going to see P.P.C. (Privileges and Procedures Committee) soon to talk about how we provide a public apology in a permanent format. That is something I have progressed through discussions with the Bailiff. There has been a great change in emphasis and attitude towards our children and young people. That is something that will continue to flourish as we move forward.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

You mentioned corporate parenting, which is an important one because it is not just about what you put in legislation, it is about what people feel inside them, in terms of their responsibilities. How do

you think the Government can capture people's hearts on that issue to help them understand what it truly means and how it affects their work on a day-to-day basis, beyond just passing a law that says this is now the policy of Government? What training or that sort of thing have you been doing?

The Chief Minister:

As I mentioned, we had the benefit of Promise Scotland providing workshops this week, which is a further step to talking to people about what the responsibilities of a corporate parent are, how we understand them, how we can do a better job. That is an important thing.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Dare I raise recommendation 7 in the report, which was the Jersey Way? How have you been responding to that recommendation in particular?

The Chief Minister:

Our progress towards introducing an ombudsperson would be considered as one of those. The issue of the dual role of the Bailiff is something that is widely discussed and has been raised in the Assembly.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

And rejected in the Assembly. I will broaden the question to the balancing of perceptions of conflicting roles in various Jersey institutions which may have historic roots there. Is there any work you are particularly doing to rebalance some of those so that the public can have better confidence in the ability of those institutions to perform their roles?

The Chief Minister:

There is always balance to strike in a small community with finite resources and also well-respected traditional roles. However, as we do progress and modernise those roles do come up for discussion and debate, and rightly so, from time to time.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Is there any tangible progress you are looking to make on any of those?

The Chief Minister:

That will be a matter for the Assembly.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Indeed. The previous Chief Minister did himself bring propositions and tried to advance one of those. Is that something you have plans to do?

The Chief Minister:

It is certainly something that is under consideration.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Interesting. Thank you, very much. A final question on this from me: is there any particular mechanism that you have for tracking the progress on Care Inquiry recommendations? Do you have an internal system or anything like that that you are actively managing to track the progress against those?

The Chief Minister:

I am not a great systems person, but I do have regular meetings with officers who work on this. I continue to take a great interest in all of the roles and responsibilities around this area, because I consider it to be of great importance.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay. Do you see yourself as being the one who ultimately leads on that or do you consider it more the Minister for Children and Education's responsibility?

The Chief Minister:

We both have responsibilities in this area. I did assume the responsibilities for the response to the Care Inquiry myself, because I felt that it was something that needed that level of prominence and I felt it was the right place to do it.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Thank you very much. Anything on this subject? No. Okay, the final area for questioning is from Deputy Andrews.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

We are moving on to population and migration. Chief Minister, can you provide an update on the specific contributions and decisions made by the Population and Skills Ministerial Group in developing the Island's population policy and addressing human labour needs and how this has been relatable to the Government's priorities as well?

The Chief Minister:

Would you like to respond?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I am very happy to. The Population and Skills Ministerial Group continues to meet regularly and is proving to be an effective way of bringing together important areas of the different ministerial portfolios working on this. They have discussed and agreed a wide range of areas. Ministers are keeping up to date with activities across the Government. Examples are looking at participation in the labour market access for unmarried partners, which led to an amendment to the Control of Housing and Work (Jersey) Law, and looking at access to housing, increasing capacity through the rent a room scheme. As we have talked about, some of the conversations around that review next year, around the 2-tier system, have started around that table. Key worker housing policies are being, as you have already touched on, on there as well. There are overseas relationships and employee standards and the Minister for Home Affairs working with the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development and the Minister for External Relations on new employee rights and routes and simplifying those and making sure people are very aware of their rights. Then there are work permit reforms. The group continues to look at lots of different areas at every meeting and is always keen to explore different subjects that come up. We have also considered the likes of attitudes of young Islanders in returning to Jersey, the skills development fund, an investment framework, population projections and more. It is a busy group, bringing together lots of thought from across areas.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

There is a lot of good work that has been going on there. At the same time, we are seeing an exodus of Islanders. That was recently seen in the Statistics Jersey report titled *Population and Migration Statistics Update for 2022*. The figures are quite damning when we look at entitled and entitled for work residents leaving the Island. We are looking at a 94 per cent increase on the 2 years prior. What data is being collected from those who are departing the Island to then inform future policy moving forward?

Assistant Chief Minister:

The data that was released on the 26th by Statistics Jersey is a great example of how we are starting to collect more data in an area that traditionally has not had a lot to provide that evidence-based decision-making. It is key and it helps to reinforce some of the conversations and thinking we have had. There is a clear message that there is a stable population there but, yes, there is a very mixed bag of figures there. One area that we do know is in that 900 figure it does not split entitled to work and entitled. It does not break down how long those people have been here. There is still, clearly, a job to do, as you identify, in understanding that 900 further. We are hopeful that further work on population and migration data that is continuing to come out all the time ... there is another update due in December, which will be the first time that we have had some updated figures since the census has been using some slightly different methodology that we have not used before. We are building all the time to inform those discussions.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

When we are looking at the demographic and the number of people who are leaving, where do you see the common areas of age demographic or when we are looking at a nuclear household of a family of 4 leaving the Island, which type of households are in this difficult situation where they can no longer remain in the Island and they are then forced to relocate elsewhere?

The Chief Minister:

As the Deputy has outlined, there is a slight lack in the granular detail of that. However, what we can see, and we spoke about this earlier in this hearing, is that our demographic profile is changing. That is certainly a matter for concern and a matter of focus. At the heart of our common strategic priorities is having a community where everyone can thrive. Therefore, we are very conscious of this issue in ensuring that Islanders can enjoy a good quality of life here. That is why we are focused on housing and the cost of living also. When we look at the dependency ratio, which is changing, that is much profiled and much warning has been given to that. We also look at the declining birth rate and the causes of that. Therefore, we are looking at introducing new policies around childcare, the early years in particular, so that families feel they can thrive and lead their best lives and bring up children to contribute to our community and belong to our community.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

When we are looking at our population, pre-school for instance, is rather expensive. Females are disadvantaged because they maybe cannot re-enter the labour market or they cannot enter the labour market due to having a young family. What efforts are being made to address income equality among males and females and to also increase a female labour market participation rate as well?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Jersey has taken some great strides forward in recent years in this area around our family-friendly policies and our parental leave policies within the public sector and within law now. We are seeing that feed through and it is starting to make a difference. However, childcare, as you identify, is key in all of it. I know that the C.Y.P.E.S (Children, Young People, Education and Skills) ministerial team are working hard in that area.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

I also need to note, as the Chief Minister said, our dependency ratio is rather problematic compared to other jurisdictions. There is obviously going to be more social expenditure being incurred in the future. What fiscal considerations have been made or will be considered in the future to try and find a balance in terms of enhancing the economy, at the same time making sure that people are protected?

The Chief Minister:

That is underway in the future economy programme, which brings together a lot of elements of our ministerial commitments across departments, focusing particularly on demographic change, increased productivity, and economic growth as a whole. It is valuable and important work.

[11:30]

We look to various solutions to that. We also do that through enhanced investment in public health. We all have responsibility for looking after our own health. As science evolves, knowledge and understanding of medical issues evolves, we feel it is important for everybody to live good, long and healthy lives so that we can increase enjoyment into later life and also minimise the impact and cost of delivering care to people who do not enjoy good health.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

I was reading a recent paper that was published by the O.E.C.D. (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) on labour markets across Europe. One of the things that was spoken of was artificial intelligence. As a Government there has been the regtech economic policy. Do you believe there potentially could be other incentives in the future that could be utilised, maybe for firms to invest in technologies that could maybe replace human labour or where there are human labour shortages, artificial intelligence could be used to substitute human labour?

The Chief Minister:

For many years there has been discussion and debate around the changes in the technology and whether or not it will benefit people. We continue to see great strain in terms of workforce. With that in mind, we obviously look to the future and the greater use of technology and A.I. (artificial intelligence) that adapts. I have spoken to business leaders who have been really successful in adapting their organisations and delivering much greater productivity through using technology and A.I. That is something that I think it is really important that we support the regtech proposals in our Government Plan so that we can ensure greater numbers of Island organisations can use that. We are obviously watching with great care the regulatory impact of that and I think that is an area perhaps where it would not be wise to be an early adopter but we certainly are committed to being fast followers.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Okay, thank you very much.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Thank you very much for that. We got through everything there only a couple of minutes over time, so thank you very much for your answers to those questions. Thank you to the officers who attended for helpful answers and to those supporting on our side as well and, of course, to everybody who has tuned in to watch this. I am sure hundreds and hundreds of them are very pleased with it. Thank you very much and I call this meeting to a close.

[11:33]