



Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel

Government Plan Review 2024 - 2027

Witness: The Chief Minister

Wednesday, 15th November 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

Connétable A.N. Jehan of St. John, Assistant Chief Minister

Mr. T. Walker, Assistant Chief Executive Officer

Mr. A. Hacquoil, Group Director, Strategic Finance

Ms. H. Cunningham, Group Director, Finance Business Partnering and Analytics

[11:01]

Deputy S.Y. Mézec: (Chair):

Thank you, welcome to this Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel public hearing with the Chief Minister as part of our Government Plan review. For the tape, we will just go around the table introducing ourselves. I am Deputy Sam Mézec. I am the chair of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel.

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

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

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

Good morning. Deputy Lyndon Farnham, panel member.

The Chief Minister:

Good morning. Deputy Kristina Moore, Chief Minister.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Connétable Andy Jehan, Assistant Chief Minister.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

You have also got some officers here. If any of them need to come to the table to answer questions of detail; if they could introduce themselves at that point. Just the final formality, Chief Minister, if you could just confirm that you have read the Scrutiny statement and understand it.

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Excellent. Okay, thank you. We will crack on. The first set of questions begin asking about the government programme, design and implementation. Throughout some of these I may refer back to some of our recommendations from the previous Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel review from the Government Plan last year. I wanted to ask about the government programme itself and its constituent parts; the Government Plan, the Ministerial Plan and delivery plans, which is different to what the previous Government did. Could you give us your assessment on the effectiveness of doing it that way, now that you have had one year with a government programme and are now in the stage of proposing the second part? Has that been as effective as you hoped it would? Are there any, perhaps, changes to that model of doing it that you might consider?

The Chief Minister:

Thank you, Chair. Thank you, all, for this opportunity to outline to the panel the priorities of the government programme and the Government's commitment, which we set out in the plan itself, which is for investing now but also into our future. We are looking forward to the debate in the States Assembly and, of course, the proposals that are contained in the plan put the needs of Islanders first and support hard-working individuals and their families. Our focus is on encouraging consistency, resilience and maintaining a steady course with our public finances. The Government Plan is linked to individual Ministerial Plans, which I will go on to address shortly. They have each been developed to outline specific objectives and priorities for 2024. Of course, the purpose of that is to ensure that we provide a level of transparency and clarity for both yourselves and the public with which to hold ourselves to account on the delivery of those policies and priorities against their objectives. Our Ministerial Plans execute the broader vision of the Government Plan, which is to

deliver tangible improvements to the lives of Islanders, and to create a community where families and everyone can thrive.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Is that model of doing it as a government programme with its constituent parts working to your satisfaction, as you might have hoped it would when you deviated from the previous Government's model, which did not have the Ministerial Plans and delivery plans presented in this way? Is that working, and is there anything you might consider tweaking to improve it in future?

The Chief Minister:

I think it is working relatively well. Everything always needs tweaking as we progress, and I think, particularly now we are working with our interim chief executive, honing some of those priorities and really focusing so that we can ensure delivery of those is something that we are particularly focused upon.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

How has the Jersey performance framework been utilised in the creation of this plan, and is it any different to how it was used for the 2023 plan?

The Chief Minister:

I think that is really quite a technical question. Perhaps the assistant chief executive might like to talk about the performance framework.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay. I think this can be relatively brief for this ... it is a practical question about whether its utilisation has changed at all since the previous iteration.

Assistant Chief Executive Officer:

Tom Walker, assistant chief executive. The utilisation is very similar in that we use it to look at areas where the performance is perhaps struggling to reach the levels that we would want, or the areas where perhaps we are achieving more than we would want. Then we recommend changes to Ministers to the balance of investment. Perhaps a well-known example in this particular Government Plan was the performance framework in relation to health and some of the service performance measures, and hence the need to continue with health turnaround and reform, and so it informed it. Its use was similar, but I think its use has become more sophisticated and perhaps more informative as the performance framework itself has continued to mature.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Do you anticipate any further changes that you might consider for the next Government Plan?

Assistant Chief Executive Officer:

Statistics Jersey are doing a piece of work at the moment to improve the top level of the performance framework, so the outcome measures and the indicators. They are looking to really refine that down to a good set of core outcome and well-being indicators. I think that the work that they are doing to sharpen the focus and to refine the top end of the framework should help. Then they are also doing some work to support departments to sharpen up on the actual service performance measures that then feed into that. I think all of that work collectively should bring more focus and more precision to it as the years go on.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay, thank you. You may wish to stay for the next couple of questions, let us see how we go. The first recommendation that was in our previous review was about the presentation of the government programme and the common themes that run through it, and how they can be tied together in a way that reads better and is more clear, in particular how it connects up to the common strategic policy priorities. That was a recommendation that was accepted. Could you explain to us how, in this iteration of the Government Plan, you have sought to try to tie those themes together in a way that is easier to comprehend?

The Chief Minister:

We have provided a summary document as well, which sets out those themes and the key points of delivery against each of them. I think it provides a really helpful, easy to follow and digest summary of exactly what we are aiming to do and deliver through the use of the Government Plan.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I found on that front page where it does refer to the priorities and has some things listed next to it, there were some items listed next to it that were not necessarily new or were things that were a continuation of things that might have been decided previously. If I remember rightly, I think the 1 per cent for arts and culture is one of those, and there may be one or 2 others that are not new to this plan. Why was it chosen to do that rather than to focus on the stuff that has changed or is due to change as a result of this plan?

The Chief Minister:

Well, the government programme is about continuing what we do as well. Of course, continuing to do what we do is a choice as well, particularly when times are difficult economically and there is a need to be more efficient in our delivery of public services. I think there is an equal weight in terms

of the decision around what we continue to do and what we decide that we would like to add to our existing programme.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Another one of our recommendations was about the transparency of how ongoing expenditure and business-as-usual projects are demonstrated in the plan so that we can more easily identify what has changed, what has gone up, what has gone down and how it compares previously. Again, that recommendation was accepted. Could you explain what efforts have been made to try to improve that kind of transparency on how public money is spent in delivering services over time?

The Chief Minister:

I have to admit that here, this is something that we have raised recently. What would be most helpful in this situation would be to provide the 2023 figures against each item in the tables, and that is something that we have not been able to achieve this year.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Was that a conscious decision not to do that?

The Chief Minister:

No, I do not think it was a conscious decision not to do that, but it is something that we would certainly like to be able to do next year.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Is it difficult?

The Chief Minister:

That I would have to perhaps ask somebody to provide you the technical answer because it is certainly not a policy position.

Assistant Chief Minister:

We would certainly expect to see the 2023 figures feature far more frequently so you can compare like for like. Only on Monday we were having that discussion, looking at forecasts for the end of this year, for example, and wanting to see how it compared to last year.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Will the delivery plans for 2024 include descriptions of the department's work and their ongoing expenditure and business-as-usual projects?

Assistant Chief Executive Officer:

It will include a description of those ongoing resources and programmes where they are connected to what is in the Ministerial Plans. Some things in the Ministerial Plans relate to new initiatives or new resources. But a lot of the things in the Ministerial Plan are essentially about using the existing resource to meet Ministerial priorities. The delivery plans directly relate to the Ministerial Plans and use a mixture of existing resources and new resources to take those Ministerial Plans forward.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

The next few questions are about the communication of the Government Plan. Again, we had made some recommendations on that, that were accepted as well. How has the communication effort for this plan differed from last year's plan?

The Chief Minister:

I think I outlined the summary document, of course. There is another document that has been created for younger people to make the plan accessible to them, and that is readily available on our website. I think that has been shared with younger people.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

That summary document that you have mentioned, anything else as well as that or how has that document itself been promoted?

The Chief Minister:

Do you have any details?

Assistant Chief Executive Officer:

I think you are right. I think the 2 main changes have been production of the Government Plan in brief, which was in response to some of your earlier recommendations, and also doing a child-friendly version and starting to think more about what we could do to engage young people. I think those have been the 2 main changes from last year.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Has it worked? I think that is more of a political question, actually.

The Chief Minister:

I guess the proof will be, as we approach the Government Plan, and see whether there is any greater engagement with States Members ahead of it. I can certainly see that you, as a panel, have received, I would say, a considerable number of submissions; very helpful submissions as well. So that is good to see.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

We have also tried to engage with the public where they are. Both this time and last time we did stalls at a supermarket as people come in and out to speak to people. It is fair to say that a lot of the people we were speaking to did not understand what the term “Government Plan” meant. We then responded with it is basically the Government’s Budget, they all went: “Oh, right, okay.” It felt to us that the term “Government Plan” and what it meant, to at least the people we spoke to, was not seeming to permeate through to their consciousness. Is there any consideration you are giving to how you can improve the wider public understanding of what the Government Plan is and what its purpose in our democratic system is?

[11:15]

The Chief Minister:

I think that is helpful feedback, and certainly considering changing the name to Government Budget might help people to understand better exactly what is inside the tin, might it not?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

You mentioned the young person’s Government Plan summary. We have been asking about that for some time now and, as of yet, it does not appear to have been published. Is there any reason why it has taken that long, and why it was not ready to go alongside the rest of it?

Assistant Chief Executive Officer:

I think it is now ready to go. Ministers have that for final review and that is due out very shortly.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

What was the process in putting that together?

Assistant Chief Executive Officer:

It is the challenge of just trying to make a document that has the right level of accessibility. Trying to do a document which is accessible for a range of different age groups and a range of different interests requires a lot more thought to get that pitch just at the right level.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

A bit like writing a proposition for the States.

The Chief Minister:

It's a bit like ... who was it who said: "I would have written a short speech, but I did not have time"? Sometimes the work is in providing that summary, is it not? But we also recognise that it is important to engage with young people and looking to hold a briefing for the Youth Parliament, for example, so that they can have an opportunity to delve into some of the detail and ask questions of us.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

But that has not happened as of yet?

The Chief Minister:

Not as yet.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay. When is that likely to happen?

The Chief Minister:

Hopefully soon, before we debate it.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Are you not risking getting too close to the actual debate time?

The Chief Minister:

In our busy diaries it is important to make time, and certainly we will do that as soon as we can.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

In terms of the timing of it, though, what happens if you get devastating feedback at it? What happens if you get a very persuasive argument made by Jersey's young people that says: "You should have done this particular element differently"? It would be too late by then, would it not?

The Chief Minister:

We have still got 2 weeks to make amendments to the Government Plan, have we not, and then, of course, there is the process of amendments to amendments. So there is a bit of time yet.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

We met with members of the Jersey Youth Parliament on Monday evening and had an extremely good discussion with them. I got the impression that ... they are a diverse group themselves and have a diversity of opinion there. But I got the impression that an earlier engagement with them would have been of benefit. Is that something you would consider for next time, having something as early as possible with them?

The Chief Minister:

It certainly is.

Assistant Chief Minister:

I think it is fair feedback, but I think the point that Tom made about the challenge in getting the language right, perhaps we should meet with the Youth Parliament before we start translating, if I can use that word, for other youngsters. Because it is an engaged group and could give us good ...

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

It is part of why they were set up, to be a communication link to Government. What engagement did you have with the Children's Commissioner and her office about children's rights in this?

Assistant Chief Executive Officer:

The Children's Commissioner provides feedback to different Ministers on their different policy proposals. The office would have been more interested in some policy proposals than others. But it tends to work that the office of the Children's Commissioner engages where they feel they can add the most value, as opposed to trying to assess the totality of the plan, which is not their usual approach.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Even though it is not legally compulsory - at this point not going to be legally compulsory - you know what I am going to ask now, do you not? What consideration was given to having some form of children's rights impact assessment for this Government Plan?

The Chief Minister:

We have once again been discussing that this week, and I think there is a real question to ask here because, of course, it is a laudable thing to do. We all consider the impact on children in all of our decision making, as we should, and particularly children's rights. However, the advice that we have is that the act of writing a children's rights impact assessment that covers the whole of the Government Plan would be very laborious and indeed very costly, and therefore there is a balance to strike there and a decision to weigh up whether that cost would improve the delivery and improvement of children's rights or not.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

The argument for children's rights impact assessments is not necessarily that you end up with a good document at the end of it, it is that the process of having to think about the issues as you have

gone along will strengthen what goes into the substantive proposition. The process is more important than the document at the end of it.

The Chief Minister:

But it is a costly process, if I may, Chair. At the very core of our strategic priorities is creating a community where everyone can thrive. This document, the title is *Investing in now and for the future*. So it, at its very heart, has consideration about children, the younger generation, and how the decisions that we make today impacts upon them both now and in the future.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Your discussions on this so far, have they reached any conclusion that suggests you might consider deciding that the balance is in favour of children's rights impact assessment on this in future, or are you going to stick to ...?

The Chief Minister:

As I said, the information that we have suggests that it would be a very costly process indeed.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

So you are not thinking ...

The Chief Minister:

At the moment, one of the key things we are trying to achieve is a higher performing, more efficient, public service. We have many people asking questions about headcount and cost and therefore we have to carefully consider any item that would add to that headcount and cost.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

But it is your assessment so far that it would not be worth doing on that basis?

The Chief Minister:

It is, yes.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay, thank you. We also have made a recommendation previously about how the government programme is presented in line with the requirement in the Public Finances Law about economic, social, environmental and cultural sustainability and well-being of the Island generally. I guess that is a slightly intangible thing but the more that can be done to demonstrate that is obviously helpful. When you were putting this Government Plan together, having had the experience of putting the

previous plan together, did you consider anything or make any changes to highlight those sustainability and well-being elements in a way that is easier to understand?

The Chief Minister:

I think a lot of our thinking relates to sustainability and well-being. If you are talking about sustainable well-being and measures of it, that is a slightly different thing.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

The Public Finances Law says the Government has to have regard to those things when it is putting its Government Plan forward. But how you demonstrate you have had regard to it, there are obviously lots of different ways of doing that. The question is how do you think you have demonstrated it, and has it changed at all since previous iterations?

Assistant Chief Executive Officer:

I can understand the question because the focus on sustainable well-being has the largest influence on the system at the policy development stage. At the earliest stages of developing the plan, when you are working with Ministers around what their priorities might be, that is where a lot of the outcome indicators are used. It is where a lot of the comparative analysis is done. Then that results in a series of prioritised decisions made by Ministers later on in the process. I can understand the question because it has its strongest influence, if you like, right at the start of the process when we are thinking about how best to advise Ministers and how best to present data for them to make decisions and choices in.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Do you have any process for demonstrating how that has been measured when you are deciding on a growth element or a capital project or something in the Government Plan?

Assistant Chief Executive Officer:

Different elements of the plan have a different genesis. Some things in the plan are driven by the sustainable well-being perspective and the outcome indicators. Other things are driven by risk. Strategic risk mitigation has an equal influence on some things in the plan. It is one of the inputs but it is probably not the only input to Ministerial decision making in terms of what they need to prioritise within the plan.

The Chief Minister:

We certainly talked a lot about outcomes-based accountability and which indicators where we want to see the turning of a curve. Of course, that is something that will be measured as we progress.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

We made that as a recommendation previously about trying to do more to evidence how that was taken into account and that recommendation was partially accepted. In your Ministerial response to it, you acknowledged that improvement could be made for demonstrating further long-term sustainability of the Island's economy and sustainable well-being. Is there anything you think you can point to in the Government Plan that has done this better than previous iterations?

The Chief Minister:

I think, as I just suggested, measuring is something that happens afterwards, and therefore while our decision making is focused at choosing measures that will improve sustainable well-being and have an impact, it is quite hard to demonstrate when you are at the beginning of that process, making that decision to invest in a particular area or not. The proof, I think, will be in the pudding as we see those measures come through in the performance indicators, once those decisions come into effect.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

But the question refers to something that you are obliged under law to do, which is to have regard for these things. The question is about evidencing how you have regard and how that is demonstrated in the plan itself to anyone who wants to read it and work out whether what you did was good enough in that process. The question is not about the outcomes. They come later. But is there anything specific in the Government Plan that we can look at and say: "That shows a tangible consideration of those issues" in a way we can understand?

The Chief Minister:

Short of publishing our notes of every meeting, which I think would be a rather lengthy read.

Assistant Chief Executive Officer:

Pages 17 to 23 are really an endeavour to articulate the Government Plan's approach to sustainable well-being. We think that we have made a good fist, hopefully, of explaining that within those pages and how the process works and what is being taken into account. It is an improvement over last year and we think that those parts of the plan do make a good job of showing how that broader, sustainable well-being perspective then flows through into the plan.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay. Is any consideration being given to releasing delivery plans at the same time as the Government Plan and Ministerial Plans, so that in that moment a more complete view can be given?

The Chief Minister:

That is really an operational question, I think, is it not?

Assistant Chief Executive Officer:

The reason we do not do that is so as not to run ahead of the Assembly. We are conscious that the plan, as proposed by the Council of Ministers, is a draft plan that is proposed. We have always been mindful of the need to await the democratic decision of the Assembly before then knowing the totality of what needs to be delivered during the following years. We tend to do the delivery plan following the decisions of the Assembly. That seems to us to be the most respectful of the democratic process.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

There has been commentary in and around the government programme about building public trust in Government and all of its processes. What progress do you think you have made in doing this with this plan? Is there anything specific in the plan aimed at that aim?

The Chief Minister:

I think Tom, the assistant chief executive, just highlighted very clearly how we have taken one section of the plan as it was produced last year and made improvements to improve the clarity of the document, and to show how we are holding ourselves to account and sharing that information with the public. I think that that is a continuing and evolving piece of work and it goes hand in hand with the public being able to understand why and how we have used our judgment to make balanced decisions and to focus on the priorities that we have chosen to.

Assistant Chief Executive Officer:

I think also, Chief Minister, you mentioned earlier, production of the Government Plan in brief is, again, additional work that is designed to hopefully make the document more accessible, more easy to digest for the majority of Islanders who might be interested.

[11:30]

The Chief Minister:

It is certainly a lot slimmer than it has been in the past. We managed to produce the annex at the same time as the substantive document this year, which was a logistical challenge but it was a challenge provided by yourselves last year and one that was met.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Great, thank you. Any supplementaries on those?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

No, thank you.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Does reducing inequality feature in the Government Plan and, if so, how is it approached differently to the previous plan?

The Chief Minister:

Do you mean financial inequality or inequality as a whole across society?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Either/and.

The Chief Minister:

Okay. As you know, one of our areas of relentless focus is the cost of living. We have taken decisions to focus on increasing tax allowances, to put more money in people's pockets, and therefore to assist people who are feeling financial pressure to live their best lives and feel less financial pressure, which helps to reduce income inequality. With regards to equality as a whole, we are progressing with independent taxation, of course, which is one of those key areas of inequality in our system. Progressing towards removing the use of the word "chattel" in our income tax legislation, which will be an important step, and also funding and prioritising areas of work, such as introducing the hate crime legislation, which I think is an important item that was held back by the previous Government. I think it is absolutely clear, as we see a situation rolling out at the moment, why hate crime legislation is required.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

You mentioned tax allowances. How does increasing tax allowances reduce inequality?

The Chief Minister:

It enables those who are earning the least to retain more of their income.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

How does it do that?

The Chief Minister:

How does it do that?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

There are lots of people in Jersey who have zero per cent income tax rates because their allowance entitlement is greater than their incomes, and so they have no taxable income. Therefore an increase in tax allowances does not benefit them a penny.

The Chief Minister:

However, they have received increases to their income support across the board.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Not all of them will be on income support.

The Chief Minister:

Those who are in the category where they do not pay tax yet, they are on a low income, will have received and will continue to receive the increased Community Costs Bonus that has been rolled out. I am struggling to recall exactly, but I believe that there are other elements where that group fall into other categories where they can receive support. Then, for those taxpaying low earners, the increase in the tax allowance, of course, enables them to retain more of their income.

Assistant Chief Executive Officer:

Perhaps also, Chief Minister, it is worth highlighting health inequalities and investment in the population.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Could we not, because that was not technically my question? I want to explore that a little bit more. Raising tax allowances also does not see the highest earners pay more because they are not eligible for allowances in the first place. My question is: when asking about financial inequality and efforts to reduce it, is it fair to say that tax allowances, while they may be a good mechanism and do something good for people who benefit from it, they are not a measure that reduces income inequality because it does not see the highest earners pay more, and it does not see the lowest earners pay less.

The Chief Minister:

We have a low, broad, simple and fair tax system. It is something that makes us competitive. Something that has worked extremely well for many decades. Therefore by maintaining the position where people who are on the 20 Means 20 rate do not benefit from increased allowances, surely that is closing the gap between those people who pay a full tax on their entire income versus those who benefit from a greater amount?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

It does not because it plateaus at 20 per cent and therefore these changes themselves that you are citing do not see them paying more. The point I am making is that if we are talking about income inequality, is it not an idea to not mention tax allowances because as a measure to reduce income inequality that does not do it. Raising personal allowance to £20,000; great thing for people who benefit but it does not impact on inequality. Is that not statistically right?

The Chief Minister:

I think you are proposing what is a very political argument.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

No, this is mathematical.

The Chief Minister:

The position that I would take ...

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

No, I reject that, Chief Minister. This is a mathematical argument that raising a tax allowance does not reduce income inequality. It does not help bridge the gap between the poorest and the richest. Is that not statistically true?

The Chief Minister:

I would suggest that taking the decision that we have done is a considerable investment in the public ... in supporting those people who are some of the worse off in our community. I think that that is something that we should be proud of. I believe also ...

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Raising tax allowances does not help the worst off in our community because they are not paying tax already.

The Chief Minister:

Let me finish my answer.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I am trying to get a straight answer to a straight question and you are diverting from it.

The Chief Minister:

I am trying to give you an answer. It would be helpful if I could speak.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I would appreciate a direct answer which you have not given so far. Tax allowances, do they or do they not have no impact on reducing income inequality?

The Chief Minister:

I was trying to explain to you that our strong belief is that this is a good investment which puts more money ...

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

The question does not reject that.

The Chief Minister:

... in people's pockets. If you would let ...

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I am at the point of just moving to the next question.

The Chief Minister:

If you do not want me to answer then ...

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I would love for you to answer, could you please?

The Chief Minister:

I would really love to have the opportunity to finish my answer, if I may. It would only be polite. As I was saying, we feel that this is a good investment because it puts more money in people's pockets. We also feel that it is important to protect our 20 per cent tax rate and our low, broad, simple and fair system, which has operated very effectively for decades, making us a competitive jurisdiction in which to live and for businesses to thrive, which ultimately helps our community thrive also.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

None of that was relevant to the question I asked, unfortunately, so I will move on to the next question, Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister:

That is your political view.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

It is not a political view, it was a very simple question that was not answered. The next question is: how have improvements been made in this Government Plan for how productivity can be measured and monitored over the course of that Government Plan?

The Chief Minister:

Productivity is an economic measure. This is a Government Plan. As we were discussing earlier, it is a budget. That would be a question, I would assume, would be better answered by the chief economic adviser, who is the person placed to demonstrate productivity measures.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay, thank you.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I have a brief question on income equality, if that is all right.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay, please.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

The best way or perhaps the only way to reduce or improve income or reduce income inequality is simply to decrease the income of the wealthiest in our society and increase the income of the poorest in our society. Does the Government have any plans to do that?

The Chief Minister:

And see many people who are income generators and employers in the Island leave the Island because we fail to be competitive.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

That could be a result, yes. I am not condoning in any way, I am just wondering if ... I am just trying to simplify the question.

The Chief Minister:

That would not be a policy direction that I would expect my Government to take.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Okay, thank you.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Deputy Andrews, your set of questions now, unless you wanted a supplementary on that.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

No, I am fine, thank you very much. Chief Minister, I would like to start off by asking you a question about the Government's spending plans for the period of 2024. There have obviously been some vocal proponents who are saying that the Government is spending too much, and especially during a period of high inflation. I was wondering whether you could give a response to that stance that many Islanders do have.

The Chief Minister:

I think I said at the outset that we are very focused on ensuring that we are delivering the most effective services and value for money. That value-for-money work continues from last year, and we can invite the group director to give greater depth to my response as and when you wish. However, we also have to invest in improving services and ensuring the best delivery of our services. We employ thousands of teachers and nurses and doctors who are here to support Islanders in providing those fundamental public services, which we are proud to be seeing improvements in. We have introduced the financial recovery programme following the input from the turnaround team. That is again another investment in improving our public services and the delivery of them for the public. It is a fine balance and I hear and understand questions that the public and other people ask. I do have one statistic, if I may, which I think you will find interesting in relation to public sector headcount. A little bit of work has been done looking back at the balance of the size of government workforce versus the population. Census shows that the proportion was 13.6 per cent in 1971, 14 per cent in 2021, and in December 2022 that figure was down to 11.2 per cent. It is a very interesting area, but I think that demonstrates that there is work and challenge going on in that route. We can also look at other figures which compare us to other nations, if it would be helpful. Jersey, when compared internationally against data from 2021, we had a proportion of 15.4 per cent of employment in the public sector. That is against the whole working population, which was lower than Ireland, where it is 20.5 per cent and the O.E.C.D. (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) average is 18.6 per cent, the U.K. (United Kingdom) is 16.9 per cent against our 15.4 per cent. The 15.4 per cent is slightly higher than Portugal and the U.S.A. (United States of America), which were both, in 2021, 15 per cent.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you very much. We will touch on headcount a bit later on, Chief Minister. Looking at the extent of public spending, do you believe that there potentially could be an impact on Jersey's economy due to how much money has been proposed within the Budget? Also, could that be inflationary as well?

The Chief Minister:

What we are trying to demonstrate is that we are taking as little out of people's pockets as we can to run and deliver our public services. Of course, that spending generates benefits within the economy as well. It is a matter of balance. I think in the circumstances that we are in, we are doing our best to keep that balance at a sensible level.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Of course, as a panel, we see that the Council of Ministers have prioritised growth bids that are part of the Government Plan. However, if we look at our reserves, our reserves have been depleted and there have not been any transfers to them, such as with the Stabilisation Fund. I know the Minister for Treasury and Resources is saying underspends should be used at the end of the next calendar year, up to £25 million then would be transferred across. What would you say in response to the extent that people may be saying the Government is spending but they are not taking any time or potentially effort to then make sure there are short-term transfers across to our reserves?

The Chief Minister:

It is a difficult argument in a difficult economic environment. I think our chief economic adviser would tell you that the scenario is changing quite rapidly, and therefore it is very difficult to take decisions at a moment in time when the position continues to move and evolve. However, if I can get myself back on the track that I was on, we are doing our best to find that balance so that we can move forward. We have made very difficult decisions about restraining the growth bids that we received. I think you have received that list of all of the growth bids that were brought to us. It was a real job of work to keep them down at the level that we ended up at. That does not mean to say that we will do things again the same way next year. Going back to the reserves point, what we have done in the past year is pay down the debt for COVID, and the alternative to that would have been to put that money in reserves. But we considered that it was more sensible to pay down the debt before we start replenishing our reserves.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Of course, we see there is £52 million in the Government Plan for the new healthcare facilities. There is also a proposal coming forward next year before the States Assembly.

[11:45]

What is your view on the Government's spending plans, but also in consideration of the borrowing that we will see across this Government Plan?

The Chief Minister:

That is exactly why we have committed to our new healthcare facilities programme being both affordable as well as deliverable. That work continues under the guidance of the Minister for Infrastructure. We are seeing a new approach and a real determination within that team, who are a highly-skilled team, to deliver the maximum that we can in the best spending envelope to minimise that impact on public resources.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

I know, Chief Minister, there is some ambivalence in terms of when people are saying about the cost. They look at, say, the aggregate cost and then affordability at the same time is also mentioned. Is the Council of Ministers stance when speaking about affordability, about making sure that their, say, tranches are made payable one section at a time, so then it is more affordable with one-year budgets, is that where you are coming from?

The Chief Minister:

Both affordable and deliverable as well. We see that our construction industry is under some pressure and we want this project to be something that we can use local providers to help us deliver it.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

To deliver it, yes.

The Chief Minister:

That is one of the reasons why it is being taken in smaller parts.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

I do have to ask a question about resourcing. I know the building trade at the moment are up in arms, there have been a number of developments that have been rejected and there is a risk that some of those big companies, potentially, could be leaving the industry. Do you have any concerns about that and also is that going to impact any capital projects that the Government are looking to deliver?

The Chief Minister:

I think it is something that we all watch very carefully and it is something that is concerning. There are clearly private businesses out there who want to invest in projects in the Island. They see the future of the Island and have confidence in it and it would be really good to see that being done.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Being done, yes, absolutely. Chief Minister, when it comes down to resourcing across all government departments, are there any concerns in one particular department or a number of departments that you feel more attention needs to be applied during this Government Plan?

The Chief Minister:

Resourcing in terms of additional resourcing or ...

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Yes, in terms of ...

The Chief Minister:

We always see the call for investment in our Health and our Education Departments and so that is partly why we brought the turnaround team in, to ensure that there was greater level of financial control. It was found and reported back to us that there was a level of uncontrolled spending and a lack of financial maturity in that department. We have had to focus on that. We have invested in that. We are turning it around with the help of the turnaround team and the Ministerial team and officials.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you very much. Because I did attend the Health board meeting at St. Paul's Centre, so it was very, very interesting and I just wanted to gather your thoughts on the use of agency staff because I know that has obviously then impacted on the Health budget and also with the proposed budget that is in the Government Plan.

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

What measures do you believe could, potentially, be introduced in the short to medium term to try and alleviate the costs that we are seeing?

Assistant Chief Executive Officer:

There is quite a lot of work that has been done in that area. Following the success in the education area, we use similar techniques within health and we have seen progress being made there. We have done a lot of work around the accommodation, so that when people arrive they can land in Jersey and make a good start. We have got dedicated people in there. We have got a new microsite. We have also got an incentive scheme for existing staff. If they recommend somebody that comes and joins our health service then they get a reward for that and they get a second reward

after a period of time, so that we kind of keep them here. Also, the benefit of that is if you are coming to the Island and you know somebody, there is probably more chance of you staying and establishing yourself on the Island than if you come here not knowing anybody, so that is being used well. There is lots of work and effort in that area but there is still a lot of effort needed to progress, but quite pleased with the progress that is being made at the moment.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

I know in response to a written question that I asked about 2 or 3 weeks ago, the Minister for Infrastructure provided a response that there was 248 units that the Government own, however do you believe this number should be increased in the future to allow the public sector to be enhanced and to be supported as well with additional staff?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I think there has been some good work in the area. It is not just about the ownership of the property, it was how we managed those. We have found that we were not very efficient in managing those historically. There has been some excellent progress made there, so we are relying far less on hotel accommodation and other types of accommodation. It is about encouraging people to come here, have somewhere where they can stay and then find somewhere to live in the longer term. I am not sure what the right amount of units are but we have certainly bought a lot of units online this year, and we have had some good help from Andium as well.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Yes. I know, Minister, you touched on about Education being rather effective, could you maybe just explain what was done to ensure that Education improve things in that specific area?

Assistant Chief Minister:

It was quite complex for both the candidates and for the hiring manager, so we have streamlined the whole process. We have people who will look after the hiring manager right the way through the process and look after the candidate right the way through the process. Another area with success we have had is by identifying what we term silver medallists, so people who were suitable for the job but unsuccessful for job A. Instead of going back to the bottom of the pile we have looked at other similar vacancies and then we have gone through the shorter process with those. Because they all work for the Government, they are not employed by individual schools, we are able to say we have got a science teacher, unsuccessful at school A, there is a vacancy at school B; this is the person to fit your criteria. We have seen some really good success there and also with teaching assistants.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you very much, Minister.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Sorry to interrupt, a lot of that work was done by the delivery units and now it is passed into business as usual.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Chief Minister, we will go back to a favourite topic, headcount. I know with the I.o.D. (Institute of Directors) they spoke publicly about there, potentially, being an impact for the private sector with the Government's recruitment drive of there being, I think, close to 1,000 vacancies across all government departments. Do you believe that the current strategy that is in place is an effective one or do you believe there should be alterations that are made to the Government in terms of how it then identifies vacancies and then advertises them?

The Chief Minister:

There is some ongoing work at the moment which very much focused on being more efficient in that process. I think ongoing is probably the best word to use.

Assistant Chief Minister:

I think there is also the challenge of the competitive element because in that private sector are suppliers who supply Governments and it is far more efficient at times for a Government to employ somebody directly than to employ via a third party.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Third party, yes.

Assistant Chief Minister:

It is a bit like your agency working model.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Yes.

Assistant Chief Minister:

For example, within I.T. (information technology) we have made some good progress in employing people directly. We are relying less on third parties. We are very conscious of the fact that there is a limited pool of people and we are looking at using technology. But when it comes to front line staff we have increased the amount of people working in education dramatically and over 169, I think it is, teaching assistants have joined the organisation. Those kind of people perhaps are coming from

nurseries and coming from healthcare jobs. It is a challenge for the Island but we are really focused on putting in the right amount of resource on the front line especially. We have also, as I said, made good progress in I.T., as an example.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Okay. Thank you very much. I know that the Government are proposing the supertax deduction in the Government Plan for the private sector but what is happening at the moment within government in regards to the implementation of technology across all government departments?

The Chief Minister:

Do you want to ...

Assistant Chief Minister:

I think we have seen some good progress in the last 12 to 18 months. Deputy Curtis is far better equipped to talk about the subject than I am. We have recently appointed a new head of I.T. within the Government, a very capable individual who is excited to have joined the Government and he is going to join with a very good team. I think what we have seen in the last 12 months is that team being empowered to deliver. I think it is probably more practical for Deputy Curtis to write to you an answer to that but I am really encouraged by the work that is going on in that area.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I think we have slightly jumped ahead here. Can I ask a couple of questions and then we will move on to Deputy Farnham's ones? Just in terms of competing pressures no doubt between different departments and Ministers who want greater funding to deliver on their agendas, what is the practical process you go through to settle on what everybody is going to get at the end of it? In terms of like how do you workshop things and at what point are things decided by the whole Council of Ministers versus subgroups of Ministers, et cetera? What is the process before finally deciding what those bottom lines are going to be?

The Chief Minister:

We spend a lot of time in a room together in workshops discussing how best to approach that and how to achieve consensus and focus on the right priorities.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

How did it differ this time from last time, if at all?

The Chief Minister:

I do not think we ate so much chocolate this year. Last year we used a colour-coded sticker system, which was quite effective but we did not get to the stage where we needed to use that this year but it was quite a similar process of arguing ...

Assistant Chief Minister:

I think one area that is maturing is our approach to risk and so I think there is more emphasis now on risk management. So where the organisation has a lower appetite for risk than that, which clearly helped somebody that was trying to get additional resource. But I would say that the organisation as a whole is getting more mature in its risk management approach, although I would not say we are the finished article. I do not think you ever become a finished article but there is certainly more of a mature approach to risk management.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Was there anything specific that was raised at all about the process of deciding what public spending would go towards last time round that anyone said ought to be different this time round so that it could be more effective? Did anyone express any dissatisfaction with how something was handled last time that needed to be changed for this time round?

The Chief Minister:

No, I have not been aware of any dissatisfaction at all.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay. Could we hand over to Deputy Farnham for the next one?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Can I just ask one quick question on headcount?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Yes, sure, go for it.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I think Andy might have partially answered it but why is there no policy within the Government Plan to ensure the headcount is managed insofar that it does not continue to grow in the way we have seen it in areas that are not on the front line? We are still getting 18-month waiting lists for cataract operations but we seem to be increasing headcounts in back-office departments. Is there an overall strategy to reassure the public on that?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I think the example that you gave us is about the ability for us to recruit people. If we have been asked as the States Employment Board to replace somebody in health as a consultant, then they absolutely get replaced. If there is a case that comes even for a short-term person when it comes to health, they would get replaced. But it is about the availability of these kind of specialists in the country and wider.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Yes. No, I see the point, I understand that.

Assistant Chief Minister:

But in terms of cataracts, I think there is a project which is reducing those waiting lists that I was made aware of last week.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

In relation to, for example, chief operating officer, I think they have seen an increase of 70 headcount.

The Chief Minister:

That is due to the amalgamation of different areas. It is an apples and pears situation because of the change.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes. I think the point that the chair made earlier about the 2023 comparison, that is when it becomes more difficult when you are moving headcount from one area to another. An example I could give you is people in Corporate Services are now responsible for the People Hub, which previously was under Customer and Local Services. It did not make any sense to us at all to have that separation; it made sense to us to have the People Hub under People and Corporate Services. Those people have moved from one area of the organisation to another; they are not new people, they have just moved their budget.

[12:00]

Assistant Chief Executive Officer:

Yes. Obviously that then gets reported as a plus because people do not report the minuses but it is the same job, it is just moving from one place to another.

Assistant Chief Minister:

I think there is huge awareness of the pressures and the cost of employing people and there are some incredibly talented people in our organisation working incredibly hard and perhaps do not get the credit they deserve. As I said earlier about the front line people, where we have identified we need additional front line people; those people are being recruited where we can.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Yes. It might be just some feedback from speaking to people who do get confused because they generally just tend to look at one figure. Perhaps it might be an idea to categorise that, so ...

Assistant Chief Minister:

I think another area we are working on, that figure is far too large in my eyes but some people count them more than once because they may have a fixed-term contract or a part-time contract for 10 hours that they do in the morning and they may do something in the afternoon. In education, for example, we have people with 2 contracts but, ultimately, they are one employee. We have also got people on zero-hours contract where we are trying to make those annualised. They may not be able to work in the school holidays, for example, but they want more surety about when they are going to be required. We want more surety about covering those shifts, so why not look at an annualised contract, which means that we only have to cover 3 months of the year, rather than 12 months of the year? We are looking at how we can do that in a more manageable way.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Yes. Surely, I mean you have got a headcount figure and then you have got an F.T.E. (full-time equivalent) figure, so that should ...

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Okay, thank you. Just going to turn briefly now to Cabinet Office budget and a question for the Chief Minister. Are you satisfied with the departmental budgets you are showing for the Cabinet Office in the Government Plan? Do you believe there is sufficient to deliver your key service areas and policies?

The Chief Minister:

I have not got the right page in front of me but the Constable of St. John seems to have found the right page. It is a large department but dealing with a large number of different priorities using a wide variety of skills, and I am confident that we have a good team of people who are focused on their priorities and know what they are and are committed to delivering them for the public.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Okay. You are comfortable that your budgets are sufficient?

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

What funding pressures are facing the services under your remit and have any of the challenges identified been addressed in the Government Plan budgets?

The Chief Minister:

Pay is of course a difficult matter for everyone, is it not? We have seen average pay stasis for a long period of time since 2008 really. Of course with rising cost of living, that is a difficult situation for many people and, therefore, ensuring that we are able to deal with that in the year ahead and support people who are working for the public service as best we can will be an interesting challenge. We also have commitments to providing family-friendly policies, which need to be paid for as well and have an impact on that. Then we look across to the digitisation of our services and the integration, the I.T.S. (integrated technology solution) project and the integration of I.T. that helps us to be more productive and effective as a public service. Then there is statistics, the investment that we are making in that, and I hope that will make a positive impact on the reporting of information and sharing with the public and ensuring that they are well-informed and that the Government is well-informed to make decisions.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Okay, thanks, that is ...

The Chief Minister:

Yes, there are so many different areas.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Yes. Do you see any of the staffing challenges that you have identified impacting on the ability to deliver policy or priorities, especially in relation to your key areas of policy delivery?

The Chief Minister:

In the Cabinet Office in particular I think ... well, we were very fortunate to be able to recruit the chief information officer recently but finding people with skills in technology I think is sometimes

challenging. I am not sure if the assistant chief executive has any particular insight into difficulties that officials have.

Assistant Chief Executive Officer:

Generally it is a stabilising position, as the Assistant Chief Minister outlined. There are perhaps one or 2 areas which can be more challenging. For example, finding people who are very experienced in health H.R. (Human Resources) has been challenging for a couple of years now. That is why part of the turnaround team is involved, interim H.R. expertise alongside the financial, and I think we are going to have to work quite hard to find and develop people that have real expertise in clinical H.R. management and in helping us in those areas. I think we have a few pockets where you do get more of a challenge to get just the right expertise that the Island public services need.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Okay, just drilling down a little bit into some areas of service that have used up a lot of cash to date, and I think it has been alluded to there is progress being made, such as modernisation and digital side of technology, data security, et cetera, have all the challenges and risks been identified and, if so, how are they accounted for in the Government Plan?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I do not think you are ever going to identify all of the cyber risks and I think it is an area that we are very, very aware of and we are investing heavily in. That is one example where if we need more resource to help us with cybersecurity and be that people or technology, then we are going to have to invest in that area. It is not a nice to have, it is a must have.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Have you got any provision in the Government Plan, any insurance, any backup in there?

Assistant Chief Executive Officer:

The Government Plan includes the investment needed for the next round of the cybersecurity programme. As the Assistant Chief Minister has outlined, cybersecurity is not something that you can ever say we have got there, we are done, we are safe. It is an area where you need to make progressive investments, you need to make progressive improvements year on year. I think that we are moving in the right direction but we need to continue to work on that. We need to continue our maturity in that area. A lot of the improvements that we need to make over the next 12 months, yes, some of them require the investment that is in the Government Plan but a lot of them are really around human factor and the changes that we need to make to policies and procedures in order to continue to tighten up on areas of cybersecurity where there are opportunities to make improvements.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Would you say that the resourcing and staffing risks perhaps outweigh the risk to financing challenges still?

Assistant Chief Executive Officer:

Yes, I think it is about the ability of the whole organisation to absorb those changes and to make those changes. A lot of the challenge in that area, yes, there is investment required and that is being done and it is still in plan. Yes, there are always challenges in finding expert staff but we have got 2 or 3 good staff, and we rely on external contractors and their expertise a lot because they bring global expertise into what we are doing. But the thing that really measures out the progress is the degree to which the organisation can continue to absorb and make the right changes. Those changes are planned and phased and progressive and they get absorbed step by step incrementally. It is not possible to go from zero to 100; you need to progressively build on layer upon layer until your security has improved and that is the process that is underway.

Assistant Chief Minister:

We should pay tribute to the interim chief officer in technology who is going to be leaving us now we have appointed a permanent member of staff, but she has done a terrific job with I.T.

Assistant Chief Executive Officer:

She has.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Do you remain confident that the challenges that are going to be coming our way will be effectively dealt with? Easy question.

Assistant Chief Executive Officer:

Cybersecurity challenges, I think the professionals would characterise it as when not if. There will be challenges, there always are with cybersecurity. We are constantly on the defence because inevitably our systems, like everyone's systems, are constantly at risk. Are we better equipped than we were? Yes. Have we completely eliminated the risk? No, and I am not sure that we will ever completely eliminate it, as the Assistant Chief Minister said.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Thank you.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay. The next few questions are about the value-for-money programme, which was a new initiative in the Government Plan in 2023 and is in both your and the Minister for Treasury and Resources' Ministerial priorities. The 2023 plan was for £10 million total savings for this year; is that on track to be achieved?

The Chief Minister:

For this year, so far £7 million of the £10 million has been delivered centrally through inflation provision, that was an issue to departments, but the work continues. The additional £3 million: "Chief officers are responsible for ensuring a feasible delivery plan is in place and savings that are delivered on a one-off basis are carried forward in the departmental cash limit to be delivered on an ongoing and annualised basis." I think the short answer is yes.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay. How is that being monitored and reported internally?

The Chief Minister:

Then I can look to the group director, who has joined me here. If you would like her to introduce herself and answer that question.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Please.

Group Director, Finance Business Partnering and Analytics:

Thank you. Hazel Cunningham, Group Director for Finance Business Partnering and Analytics, Treasury and Exchequer. Thank you, Chief Minister. As we have explained previously, as part of the monthly corporate monitoring process, we engage with chief officers and their teams to ensure that they are keeping a close eye on the delivery of their value-for-money targets and particularly the cashable savings targets. We also go through a process of working through some of the detail and, as the Chief Minister said, if the departments are not able to deliver those annual savings targets on an ongoing basis, then obviously we will keep a note to ensure that that action, if you like, is then carried forward into the following year. Effectively, the cash-saving targets are built into the annual budgets, so departments have to deliver those savings to live within those budgetary targets. As the Chief Minister said, if they are not delivered or if they are delivered on a one-off basis they will then be carried forward as part of the cash limit into the following year.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay. Let me try and understand this then. There are the budget limits for each department which incorporates the value-for-money target in that. Of the items that they might choose to implement

that value-for-money programme through, something they think they can do cheaper or differently or what have you, if it transpires that they cannot for whatever reason or cannot do it on time and it then gets carried over to the next year ...

Group Director, Finance Business Partnering and Analytics:

If this is part of the base budget, so the net revenue expenditure incorporates the cashable savings target to be delivered. In effect, that is then built into the year-on-year budget, so they have to work within that. If, for example, a department may have a scheme that they propose to take forward that is going to deliver on those cashable savings, if there are any issues around timing and slippage, they would have to find another way of delivering it. Some examples would be the carrying of vacancies, for example, but that would only be a one-off intervention, unless they are going to delete those vacancies. They might deliver within that year but then in the following year they have still got to think about what sustainable measures are they going to put in place, as you say, to achieve a lower level of spend or to do things differently in order to maintain that level of expenditure going forward?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

This line for value-for-money savings, which was agreed in the 2023 Government Plan and departments when giving the green light for that being included in the plan will presumably have had some idea of where they would get those savings from.

[12:15]

As the year has gone on, have you had much feedback about whether what they anticipated would be feasible at the start of the year has remained intact or have they come back and said: "We misjudged this, we will have to look at this instead"? How much has it changed at this point in the year versus where they thought it would be at the start of the year?

Group Director, Finance Business Partnering and Analytics:

Yes. As I said, part of the monthly monitoring process we will be having those conversations with them. We will have a view on which of those interventions are making progress and where they have not done that, for example, so we will do that on a department-by-department basis. We know, for example, we have had some challenges in particular departments, and then there is a process to ensure that any expenditure that has not been met or those cashable savings have not been met, that has to be regularised through a Ministerial decision, if you like. We need to make sure that we monitor that and we apply the Public Finances Manual requirements to each of the departmental spend limits.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

But is it happening that departments are coming back and saying: "This is not deliverable, it is going to have to be this instead"?

Group Director, Finance Business Partnering and Analytics:

Yes. We will have some departments who say, for example ... I have given one example, which is vacancy management. They will make a conscious decision. There will be a number of factors, for example, where if they have got hard-to-recruit vacancies they will come to a point where they know they cannot appoint to those positions in this financial year, so they will use that to supplement their savings but obviously they will know that that is on a one-off basis.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Is any of that having an impact on the delivery of services where they thought they might have been able to achieve this particular saving? It turns out for whatever it is not exactly the case. Is that putting pressure on other areas of their budget to find savings on to make up for that; that are touching too closely front line services, which did not appear to be the aim of this programme when it was first explained?

Group Director, Finance Business Partnering and Analytics:

That is not really a value-for-money issue; in some cases there will be operational issues. We would expect the chief officers and their teams to be considering all of those factors, as they are looking at delivery of their objectives and providing a clear narrative to their respective Ministers and to the chief executive in terms of their current performance framework and what they are being held to account for in the year.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

What is the difference then between something identified as a value-for-money saving and an operational saving or an underspend because at the moment I think underspends can be contra against the value-for-money savings? That is sort of an insurance policy for the senior officers, that if they have not met their value-for-money savings then the underspends can be carried over and they would be okay? How is that monitored to make sure that the value-for-money savings are not weakened by the fact that they can do that?

Group Director, Finance Business Partnering and Analytics:

There is a clear difference, there is a definition between what would be an underspend. There is not a policy for then that to be carried forward into the following year. A value-for-money saving, a cashable saving, is to do more or the same with less money, so you are not impacting on services. That is the definition of a cashable efficiency, a cashable value-for-money saving. There is a

difference and that is what we are flagging really. We understand sometimes that is plan B and operationally that might help them to achieve their outturn for the end of the year but it is not a sustainable position and that is why we would ask chief officers to continue to look at some of those reasons for underspending and to ensure that that is taken account of in future planning.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Okay, so should ... sorry, Andy, go on.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Our understanding is that the Finances Manual is quite robust in this area and we are only talking about 1 per cent of the total budget, so 1 per cent saving should be achievable across that ...

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

No, I get that and I think it is positive and it is well-intentioned. But when departments do get underspend that they do not foresee that if there is an underspend, should that not be banked separately with the diligence maintained on the value-for-money savings so you can get those as well; that is what I am asking, I guess.

Group Director, Finance Business Partnering and Analytics:

From an operational perspective - I do not want to answer a political question - as I say, that is where, I think, it is important that this is seen more holistically as part of the kind of performance agenda. If it is understood that some of that delivery is through a one-off basis an underspend, I think, as the chair has identified, what is the impact, if any, on services and how can that be considered going forward? I think those are questions that are always ongoing from an operational and official perspective. It may be honestly politically, but the Chief Minister may want to take that one.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Perhaps it could be considered that there should be a difference, a managed difference, so there is more focus on achieving the value-for-money savings.

The Chief Minister:

I think there is plenty of focus on achieving the value-for-money savings, as the group director has outlined. Of course the issue I think you are touching on here is those recurring savings versus one-offs, and I think we touched much earlier on in the hearing on what to do with underspends and whether those underspends at the end of the year can be banked and used to replenish our reserves.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Thank you.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay. Has there been anything in the value-for-money programme for this year, any experiences or learning that has influenced any potential changes for its implementation next year?

Group Director, Finance Business Partnering and Analytics:

I think, as I have outlined previously, a big part of this is about cultural change. It is about bringing different teams together to ensure that they are sharing the progress and the benefits initiatives that they have taken on in a particular year. Trying to facilitate collaboration; we have a number of examples this year. We are just about to pilot a number of schemes, so we have got a value-for-money cashable savings planning tool kit. We are working with the Treasury and Exchequer team and the C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills) team who are going to pilot that and then give us some feedback so that we can then roll that out fully across the organisation, and that will be available to all departments in 2024. We are also piloting a continuous improvement maturity assessment model. Again, we are just about to do a small pilot on that and that will help departments to consider their maturity around their ability to identify and move forward with continuous improvement, which obviously we touch on both cashable savings but also productivity and service improvements. That will help departments to think about gaps that they have got in their knowledge and expertise and then how they can address that. The third area that we are looking at is enhancing customer insight. Within Treasury and Exchequer we are doing a pilot which is a sort of culture development initiative. We need to help colleagues to understand how they can use customer data, develop skills around reporting, to think about using insights and how they can take action on insights to improve customer services. Those are some enablers that we are working on that will help departments in planning and actioning their V.F.M. (value-for-money) plans in future years. The other change, I think, I would highlight in the design and preparation of the government programme is that all Ministers have been asked to include in their Ministerial delivery plan comments around their specific areas for value for money. There is quite a bit of detail in the Chief Minister's plan both from a corporate perspective but also an individual departmental perspective. We have seen some really good progress within the Children and Young People's Services as well. I think they are building a really good platform for next year which will cover both the central elements of C.Y.P.E.S. but also schools. I think we have made some really good progress. There is more to do and I think the Chief Minister and Assistant Chief Minister have really touched on a lot of initiatives that have value-for-money impact and outcomes already in responding to your questions.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay. Were you looking to come in? All right, okay, fine. With regard to the thematic and best value reviews undertaken this year as part of the value-for-money programme, can you provide any update on that and outline the tangible outcomes that have been achieved through those?

Group Director, Finance Business Partnering and Analytics:

In the programme we identified some areas of focus particularly and then some more specific areas. Really the biggest area of focus in this financial year has been around the Health and Community Services Department. As the Chief Minister has already outlined, a significant resource has been provided to support them and that has included some support from Treasury and Exchequer colleagues, both finance and commercial services, in identifying the opportunities for improved value for money, which is fed into their financial recovery plan, so that has taken quite a lot of our resource really. The other areas that we planned to look at were looking at consultancy spend, interim staff and contractors. Currently the C. and A.G. (Comptroller and Auditor General) is conducting a review, so we have deferred our work awaiting the C. and A.G.'s report so that we do not duplicate. What we would like to do really is think about the recommendations and observations that come out from the C. and A.G. and think how we can use our resources either in responding to some of that or looking at some slightly different areas. But there is already quite a lot of work in that space but, as I say, we want to look at, potentially, rescoping some of that. The other area was identified as part of the H.C.S. (Health and Community Services) plan, was looking at the laundry service. Some work has been done in that area but we are awaiting more detail on their financial recovery plan before we provide additional assistance in looking at that in a little bit more detail but we feel there is an opportunity there, so that is this year's plan.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay, and next year?

Group Director, Finance Business Partnering and Analytics:

Next year, as I say, all of the Ministers have been asked to look at their particular areas, so we have quite a bit of detail coming out of the C.Y.P.E.S. team at the moment. I think generally there is a theme around establishment looking at vacancies, as we have already touched on in the meeting, ensuring that we are driving down the use of agency and interims where there is a premium, so more cost effective to build our establishment and substantive staff. Departments generally, I would say in general, are looking at the number of vacancies they have been carrying, how long for and, therefore, are there different opportunities to look at resourcing in order to deliver some of their services? If there are opportunities, to remove some of those posts and think about our establishment differently, which will then release some cash-saving opportunities. Also, looking at overtime, potentially, is another one as well to make sure that, again, it is the right combination of staff to delivering of service. Then looking at some of the contract management issues, particularly

looking in C.Y.P.E.S. at the moment to support them around things like grounds maintenance, cleaning contracts but also some of the high-cost areas. As we have done with the health team, we are looking at high-cost care packages, for example, looking at our file in placements and then ways to improve both the procurement but also contract management piece. There is an element of developing maturity in the organisation, to make sure we get the best value out of some of the unpaid expenditure. Those are just some examples but we have also looked at some other specific areas that I think you have already touched on today.

Assistant Chief Minister:

The delivery unit are identified as giving additional support in 2024 to some of its V.F.M. one.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

You mentioned previously about the culture as a part of this. Are you able to identify any areas where you think it can be demonstrated this year where that culture and the attention that goes along with it has led to tangible benefits?

The Chief Minister:

Do you want to answer that? Yes, I think you ...

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Probably.

Group Director, Finance Business Partnering and Analytics:

Yes, okay. I think this is in danger of repeating ourselves quite a lot, but I think the work that has been developing in the Health and Community Services Departments is a really good example of the progress and the journey that has been taken over the past 12 months with the support of the turnaround team as well. You can see the attention and focus around these sorts of areas has definitely progressed quite significantly.

[12:30]

As I say, in the C.Y.P.E.S. Department the fact that they have already built a structure, a sort of programme structure around delivery of value for money both in terms of what cash savings they can make but also service improvements. That culture around continuous improvement I think is really promising and we should see in 2024 some benefit coming out of that. The plan, and I am sure this is coming out of their own Scrutiny process as well, I know the Minister and the team are really keen to ensure that they have got good engagement with schools and using the business managing network to support that engagement and make progress in those areas. Those are the 2

really good examples but we are not starting from a standing start, if you like. There are departments who for a long time have engaged in the delivery of continuous improvement and provide some really good examples and have helped in the development of design some of the toolkits that we are now planning to pilot. You both have very good knowledge and expertise in certain individuals, but we also have good practices in a number of departments across the Government.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

This next question is probably half political, half officer, so let me phrase this in a vaguely clear way. The F.P.P. (Fiscal Policy Panel) last year said that it did not recommend including speculative savings in the Government Plan. They have restated that in their report, which came out in the last few days. When you look at the future years of the value-for-money programme in the Government Plan, it has that £10 million figure at the bottom, but nothing above it. It is only for the year that we are approving that there will be a breakdown by department of what you are expecting you can get through value for money, which you could hopefully understand makes some people nervous. What happens if you do not get your £10 million this year? In terms of future years, are we plotting ourselves down a course that, for all we know, might turn out to be unrealistic if we do not know as much in advance what the savings are going to look like. To give greater confidence in this programme, so that it cannot be deemed to have a speculative element to it, are there improvements in the reporting of it, both as you go along and also up front at the point of approving a Government Plan that that could be made so that it is clearer, what areas are being targeted with those value-for-money savings, not just at departmental level but where the money is coming from? Are there improvements in that reporting that could be made?

The Chief Minister:

The improvements of reporting perhaps is an operational answer, but would you like me to touch firstly on the approach to the F.P.P.'s recommendation?

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Yes, please.

The Chief Minister:

We did reflect heavily on the advice about speculative savings and how that sits with this work. As the group director very eloquently laid out in her previous answer, this is about cultural change and approaching things in a different way. It is also about teamwork; people being able to identify from the bottom up elements where we can be more effective as a public service in their own respective teams. Given the global spend budget of the whole organisation, it was very much agreed that this £10 million allocation is something that should be achievable against an overall budget of £1.2 billion or thereabouts.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

What if it is not? What if you get halfway through next year and realise you were overly optimistic on something? Are you able then to say for the next Government Plan: “We are not going to try for £10 million next time. We will try £9 million, £8 million £7 million”, et cetera, or equally the other way around if you find areas that you could do more on?

The Chief Minister:

That is where the regular progress and reporting comes in. We have discovered through the financial recovery programme within Health that there are always opportunities to do things differently and to find those savings by taking a different approach. That goes back to the culture. That would be my high-level political answer. I might hand over now to the group director to provide some more detail about the reporting, which was the other part of the question.

Group Director, Finance Business Partnering and Analytics:

Yes. It might be helpful to start by talking about the methodology. We have a methodology which we discuss with the Council of Ministers, in terms of how we can apportion the overall target to the departments. Then there is an initial risk assessment, in terms of how deliverable that is. It is very much part of the discussion, both with E.L.T. (executive leadership team), so the chief officer group and also the Council of Ministers. There is a process of thinking about the feasibility of that. As the Chief Minister has already outlined, the belief is that 1 per cent of the revenue expenditure should be deliverable. It is about driving that culture around continuous improvement, rather than thinking about a knee-jerk reaction to having to identify savings on an ongoing basis. That is one of the things we need to develop. In terms of consideration of the future, as schemes are identified there will be that assessment of what that can deliver in a particular year, whether it is in the first year, there might be a part-year effect, and then ongoing in future years. As the Chief Minister has outlined, with the financial recovery plan in the Health Department, for example, the delivery of savings looks much different now than we might have expected. They have had some challenges in delivering past targets, so over the next 3 years we have agreed a profile to bring them back in line. A lot of that is cashable savings that need to be delivered. They have identified 66 different initiatives within that, which will bring them back in line both to live within that cash limit but also to deliver their savings targets on an ongoing basis.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

In the Government Plan itself, where it has a chart with departments and then the bottom number is £10 million, then for the next years there is no breakdown of the £10 million, but that £10 million number is still in that bottom line. Is there more that could be done either on that chart, or as an appendix that refers to it, that provides a greater breakdown, that those decision makers who have

to decide whether we approve that plan or not can have greater confidence of the specifics included in each of those numbers, so that from our perspective they are not speculative? If I see a £10 million and no breakdown, from my perspective as someone who is not doing this job personally, it is speculative to me. In my brain it is speculative. Is there more that can be done in the Government Plan document itself to provide greater transparency on that?

Group Director, Finance Business Partnering and Analytics:

From an operational perspective that is something we could look at. The consideration we need to give is that in future years there are always factors and assumptions that we would have to come back to each year. It is always difficult to absolutely fix it in stone. Each year we look at the Government Plan for the next few years and changes will be built into that plan going forward. You would potentially have a situation where you would revisit those because you take into account factors that you had not been aware of previously or changes that you had not factored into your planning in the previous year.

Assistant Chief Minister:

There is also a risk in giving too much detail too far in advance. You want to be running as lean as you can. The Lean process management was used within the Government for a number of years, up until around 2017. It is a really good tool. It involves front line staff and often front line staff are the people who know the answers. It is a way of involving them in looking at efficiencies and asking: "How can we do things better? How do we do things right first time?" It will involve the staff in a positive way, where they can see their ideas have been implemented.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Moving on to capital programme questions now, which Deputy Andrews will lead on.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you very much, Chair. Chief Minister, please may you provide detail to the panel about your priorities for the delivery of the capital programme?

The Chief Minister:

First and foremost, of course, is that we progress with our new healthcare facilities programme, which is an important programme and one that we are committed to delivering; I touched on that earlier. Secondly, we have a programme for capital and we very much wanted to ensure that it was something that was deliverable. This is an area where it has been identified where in the past there was huge appetite to deliver capital spend, but often that is not achieved by the year's end. We were quite careful in making our decisions to ensure that we were choosing projects that could be

moved to delivery. There are continuing I.T. investments, alongside building delivery projects. Most of those are listed in the plan itself.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

You mentioned some capital programme delivery targets not being part of the Government Plan. What plans have maybe, say, not featured in the Government Plan but were discussed at the Council of Ministers regarding capital programming?

The Chief Minister:

Goodness, there is a challenge to the memory. You will appreciate that the majority of those conversations were held in July and therefore I would have to refer to some notes to be able to give you a detailed response.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Okay, that is fine.

The Chief Minister:

You will see I am looking at page 65, which lays out a considerable number of projects that are outlined. I am very helpfully joined by the group director for Strategic Finance who might be able to give you some further detail.

Group Director, Strategic Finance:

Hello, Andy Hacquoil, group director of Strategic Finance. In general for the capital programme, in the process that was run by the Council of Ministers we considered a lot of individual projects which were delivered. It was often more a question of when those projects could be fitted in. The Chief Minister has already referred to making sure that the programme is deliverable. Last year the F.P.P. recognised some of the progress that had been made. That is something that we have tried to continue through into this programme as well, in respect of how the programme will be delivered. The nature of that means that not necessarily all projects can be delivered in the first year of the plan. A lot of discussion was around scheduling and what was a realistic schedule based on both external capacity in the market and also internal capacity of Government to deliver those projects.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you very much. Chief Minister, you touched on the new healthcare facilities. This is over several sites. The impact of having a tight labour market and also looking at the number of firms in the building industry and the concerns that they have raised, are we now in a position where potentially there could be delays to the new healthcare facilities being delivered on time, due to these problems that have arisen?

The Chief Minister:

I would hope it is quite the contrary. As I set out earlier, one of the benefits of this programme is that it provides deliverable chunks of the project that can be achieved by smaller teams in distinct periods. One of the risks with the previous project was that it was going to require a huge number of people to come into the Island to work on that project. There was a lack of clarity as to where they were going to live during that period and how they would be sourced from around the world. We feel that this will be both affordable and deliverable, which is what we set out to achieve. We are taking a different approach.

[12:45]

You mention multisite there, but if one considers the previous project versus what is going to be delivered through this whole programme, the previous project would have been on a multisite basis also, because it did not include a number of items that are now factored into this programme throughout its entirety.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you very much for confirming that, Chief Minister. In terms of what has been proposed in the Government Plan, do you believe funds are sufficient enough to meet all of the capital programme objectives?

The Chief Minister:

As the group director identified, one issue that we were really aware of was deliverability and not overpromising against not being able to deliver that. There is still a sizable amount of money apportioned to the capital programme, £113 million. We think that is well-timed, in terms of getting projects underway and spending in the local economy. We also think that they are achievable.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Yes. What level of monitoring is in place, looking at, say, the costs that we currently see that are rather inflationary when it comes down to capital programming?

The Chief Minister:

That is more of an operational answer.

Group Director, Strategic Finance:

In terms of monitoring, once the capital programme is established and the Assembly agree that these projects should go ahead, there is a lot of internal infrastructure in terms of monitoring. You

will obviously have project management occurring in the department that is delivering the project as well. There is also the Programme Management Office, who provides that oversight, in terms of project and programme delivery across Government. That is in terms of the practical delivery of the projects. Obviously it also feeds into financial reporting as well, which is something the delivery team takes a keen interest in; how projects are doing and how are they delivering against the budget that they have. In terms of inflationary pressures, we do see some projects where you will have had a business case and you will have made your best estimate of costs. You go to market, you go through a procurement exercise and it may be somewhat different. We have a risk inflation reserve, which is held. That is in part to mitigate the impact of that inflation coming through in some of those projects as and when we see them. We have those mechanisms, but they are managed at an overall capital programme level, rather than on individual projects, to avoid piling inflation on absolutely every project that maybe will not need it and to get the temptation to have scope creep, rather than keeping it to the focused offer of what the business case really needed to deliver.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Thank you very much. Thank you, Chair.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

We will move on to the next subject then.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

With consideration to the number of major, sometimes sadly tragic, incidents and emergencies we have faced recently, what consideration was given to the impact of these types of events when allocating funding within the Government Plan to ensure that further contingency or emergency funding is available, especially to support Islanders who have faced tragedy and severe disruption from unforeseen circumstances?

The Chief Minister:

As you rightly identified, these have all been unforeseen major incidents. To have 4 in the space of 11 months is quite unprecedented. We are fortunate, and Islanders have been reassured by the way the public service has stepped up and supported them through these various, sometimes as you say tragic, incidents and responded to them. We have in the main been able to do so through additional budgets. There has been some additional resourcing, but that has not put too much pressure on our budget. There are always allocations for emergencies within those budgets. The Bailiff has now begun a second appeal to respond to these local incidents. People want to give and support each other within our community. The community spirit that has been shown in the last 11 months has been truly extraordinary. Finally, to answer your question, obviously people have insurance as well for difficult circumstances. There is an element of people bearing their own

personal responsibilities in response to some of them and Government is, of course, taking its role in that as well.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

What are your thoughts on helping Islanders that cannot afford to insure themselves and often face longer-term impacts of such disasters? Whether it be flooding or storm, it tends to be the less well-off in our society that are more adversely impacted. What are your thoughts about providing taxpayer support for those people who are really in need through no fault of their own?

The Chief Minister:

Sadly that is a risk that people bear. It is a responsibility that they bear when they take such a decision. We understand the difficulties and the impact on people's budgets and personal circumstances, particularly at this time. It has long been my view that perhaps there is opportunity by using the strong financial position of the Island, particularly with regards our social security funds, to offer our own insurance programmes. For example, critical illness cover I am aware is something that is very expensive for the self-employed. I have discussed with the Minister for Social Security whether, when the time comes, we can look at developing our own opportunities that might help to provide affordable options for Islanders.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

How has the funding for major incidents last year and this year impacted upon the budgets and how are you going to manage it moving forward?

The Chief Minister:

That is something that is still being monitored as they continue. The chief of police spoke earlier in the week about the complex work that they have been doing, which has impacted on their resourcing. They have managed that. We continue to quantify and officials maintain that overview.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

We can ask some questions specifically on COVID. How is that legacy from having to deal with the COVID response impacting on the financial position right now and as it will be in the next year as well?

The Chief Minister:

That is now largely closed. We have moved into the business-as-usual approach. Some of the Public Health team have been transferred into Public Health. As I mentioned earlier, we have paid down the debt that had been accrued. We did so earlier than anticipated, which now offers us opportunities to flex budgets and look to those reserves or doing other things.

Assistant Chief Minister:

There was a budget of £28 million for COVID and the forecast spend is £18 million.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

What happens to that underspend then?

The Chief Minister:

That is an additional underspend and will be considered as usual at the end of the year. We, of course, listen to the advice of the F.P.P.; that is part of what their job is.

Assistant Chief Minister:

The forecast for spend in other areas is over £16 million with operation Spire and Nectar. That is the challenge we face.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Chief Minister, we are almost out of time. There was another area of questioning we were going to look at, but I do not think it is worth starting it and then getting cut off with the time. I wonder, if instead, I might ask you, given the decision that was made by the States with Deputy Luce's proposition on funding for farming and fisheries, and also today in the media there was an article about hospitality and duties and that kind of thing, is there anything you are able to tell us at this moment about the consideration you are giving to amendments you might be bringing to the Government Plan based on any kind of experiences or feedback you have had since you published the plan. Is there anything that is helpful for us to know at this point?

The Chief Minister:

It is helpful that you remind us of the debate around Deputy Luce's proposition. It was voiced at the time that the proper place for that debate would have been as an amendment to the Government Plan, to identify that money properly and to work with Government to find the proper spending solutions for it. While we all agreed, through the vote, that it is right to invest in our agriculture industry, it places a level of pressure on budgets that is difficult. We have had many difficult conversations about it and it is work that remains in progress. The other part of your question was about other potential amendments, and you acknowledge the comment about duties from the Minister for Treasury and Resources. We are very focused on the other industries who are facing difficulties and challenges at this time and, of course, want to support them so that they can thrive. The Minister for Treasury and Resources is still considering how we might be able to do that through duties. That remains a point of discussion and debate. We look forward to seeing what other amendments States Members have. We have taken a look at some of the amendments that have

been lodged so far, but we sense that there will be more. We continue to look at that and monitor them and will consider how best we can respond.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

There is nothing else that you are considering as an amendment yourself, not talking amendments to amendments, but there is nothing else you are thinking of at the moment based on feedback since the plan was published? Those are the only 2 areas?

The Chief Minister:

Yes, that is right.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you for your time. Thank you to your officers as well for their helpful answers too. Thank you to our officers as well for all their support too and for anyone who may be watching online as well. On that note, I will bring the meeting to a close.

[12:58]