

STATES OF JERSEY

OFFICIAL REPORT

MONDAY, 29th JUNE 2026

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[9:30]

The Roll was called and the Dean led the Assembly in Prayer.

APPOINTMENT OF MINISTERS, COMMITTEES AND PANELS

1. Selection of Ministers

The Bailiff:

Today, we deal with Appointment of Ministers, Committees and Panels. The first item on the Order Paper is Selection of Ministers. In accordance with Standing Order 117(2E), I ask the Chief Minister Designate to read out his declaration.

1.1 Senator L.J. Farnham (The Chief Minister Designate):

As you say, in line with Standing Orders, I am pleased to make the following nominations. Health and Social Services, Senator Tom Binet; Justice and Home Affairs, Senator Helen Miles; External Relations, Senator Ian Gorst; Social Security, Senator Elaine Millar; Education and Lifelong Learning, Deputy Catherine Curtis; Environment, Senator Mary Le Hegarat; Housing, Deputy Malcolm Ferey; Infrastructure, Deputy Jonathan Renouf; International Development, Deputy Carolyn Labey; Sustainable Economic Development, Deputy Gerald Voisin; and Treasury and Resources, Senator Alan Maclean. Sorry, I had all the middle names, which I was not used to, which threw me a little bit. I hope that will do.

2. The Minister for Health and Social Services:

The Bailiff:

We now proceed in accordance with the Order set out in the declaration. Accordingly, the Assembly is due to appoint a new Minister for Health and Social Services. Members will receive the copy of the notice of the Chief Minister's nomination. Chief Minister, would you please like to make your first nomination?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

I am very pleased to nominate Senator Tom Binet to continue the work in Health.

The Bailiff:

Is the nomination seconded? **[Seconded]** Are there any other nominations? As there are no nominations, I invite Senator Binet to speak for up to 10 minutes, after which there will be a question period of up to 20 minutes.

2.1 Senator T.J.A. Binet:

I would like to start by thanking the Chief Minister for nominating me for the job of Minister for Health and Social Services, and for the support he has given me in that role throughout the last Government. I hope the Assembly will see fit to find its way clear to endorsing that support here this morning. Before explaining what I would like to achieve in this coming term, in the event that my nomination is accepted by the Assembly, it may be helpful, especially for new Members, if I provide a short summary of the work undertaken to date, because a great deal of the forthcoming work will be based on those foundations that have been laid over the past 2 years. When I became Minister for Health and Social Services on 30th January 2024, I made it clear that I had much to learn, and having learned quite a lot since, I realised that that is still the case. After all, it is a large and complex service. That said, having re-read my introductory speech from that time, it is clear that some progress has been made. I knew then that internal relations were poor within the state section of healthcare, but nothing could have prepared me for just how bad it was. Bullying was also rife. There was a great deal of tension between the state service and the charitable sector, and that was also the case between the service and private G.P.s (general practitioners). I believe all of these areas have improved, but

further improvements are still required. The other key concern was the lack of connectivity between the various sections, both personal and digital. Hopefully, we now have a largely different senior team at H.C.J. (Health and Care Jersey). The culture has definitely improved with that team and the main clinicians communicating much more positively, and the issue of bullying is finally being dealt with. It took some designing and quite a long time to carry out the required consultation, but we managed to get the Partnership Board passed through this Assembly just a few months ago. It is important to be clear that it needs further development, and this will be paramount in the coming months. With regard to digitisation, we now have a well-formed digital group comprised of all the right people and a budget of £8 million annually. This should be sufficient to bring us out of the Dickensian age and well into the 21st century. We also have £4 million per year to start implementing measures to prevent illness and, when it does occur, to detect it as early as possible and treat it before it becomes unmanageable. It is great that all of this is now in place, but make no mistake, everything is in its infancy. Aside of this work, I have been the political lead for the new hospital facilities programme now for a full 4 years. As Members will probably know, that culminated at the end of the last political term with the signing of a construction contract for the acute hospital at Overdale on the last working day before the election. So what next for the forthcoming political term? If my nomination is accepted, the plan will, in part, be to build on all of the above. Central to almost everything will be the development of the Partnership Board structure, which I see as being the fulcrum of the entire health service, moving away from a solely government-centric or government-dominated model to one where all participants contribute to improve every patient journey, making it safer, shorter, better, more efficient and more cost-effective. This will involve the creation of numerous subgroups whose job it will be to discuss and resolve the many issues, blockages, gaps and shortcomings that already exist in those specific areas and all those still to come. Some groups exist already, for example, oncology; some will need slight modification; and others to be formed from scratch. In each case the key issues will run through to the main board where appropriate system-wide action can be taken and where necessary, appropriate change is made. I also intend to change the way that charitable service suppliers are commissioned. Some work has been done in this area, as kindly referenced at our initial sitting by Deputy Phil Romeril, but all health charities need better service provision directives and more security in terms of contract duration. I will be looking to apply 3-year rolling contracts with regular mutually-agreed service requirement updates. Returning to the work undertaken by H.C.J. itself, a major focus in this coming term will be the reduction in patient waiting times. The current position is a long way from being acceptable. But just in case anyone is under the illusion that any quick fixes are available, let me assure them they are not. With global recruitment problems, a rapidly ageing population, even more treatments available, and a hospital that loses operating theatre capacity every time we have a heatwave, keeping abreast of current demand while undertaking extra work to bring down waiting list times will be a major challenge. With all of that in mind, I will soon be considering the possibility of recruiting a strategic director whose responsibility it will be to analyse the structure of each department, liaise with the management clinicians and other health professionals in order to recommend structural and personnel changes wherever appropriate, without the distraction of any other day-to-day commitments. This should help improve efficiency, reduce cost and raise morale in the short, medium and long term, and by extension, help facilitate the reduction in waiting times, which is such a crucial part of what is needed to improve patient care. Among the many other areas that will continue to receive full attention is the development of a women's health strategy, and eventually one for men too. I will also be looking to strengthen care in the community and reduce discharge delays. Of course, work will continue on developing a new funding model for healthcare. Looking to the bigger picture again, now that the new acute hospital is underway, our attention must continue to be focused on the development of the other 2 operational sites; Gloucester Street and Kensington Place and the health village at St. Saviour. In my view, these sites will eventually play a crucial role in helping to make a health service an important part of our economy, not just by having service quality that attracts people to stay on the Island and to live, work and invest here, but one that facilitates health tourism.

Consideration is already being given to the possibility of establishing a local cancer centre and, if successful, other specialities may follow. We are also in the process of forging valuable strategic and operational links with a major hospital group in the U.K. (United Kingdom) that will allow for, among other things, training exchanges plus more and better co-ordinated tertiary care, and that link may contribute to the establishment of a medical school here on the Island.

[9:45]

In addition, we will continue the current work to establish a major fundraising scheme similar to those currently being run by certain other U.K. hospitals. In our case we will be targeting a sum of £25 million, all of which will be used to help with projects that have been mentioned. I know I have raised a few eyebrows in certain quarters for not having developed a formal health strategy as yet, but the truth is, and as you may have gathered from what has been said so far, we are already in the process of implementing one simply by addressing the many glaringly obvious problems that we confronted from day one and having a positive drive for future developments. There will be time enough in the next term to gather everything together and articulate it clearly so that the full picture can be seen by anyone who is interested now that we have actually got something positive to tell them. Looking to the future, the vision for this term is very simple. It is to have a first-class, efficient, properly digitised health service ready to move into a first-class hospital building in 4 years' time. I genuinely believe that can be done, and I am extremely hopeful that I will be permitted to retain the excellent Assistant Ministers from the previous term that have proved so helpful in making the progress that we have made so far. I would like to close by thanking them most sincerely and thanking the very many people throughout all elements of the service who are now working very enthusiastically towards our vision for the future of Jersey's health service. I hope that Members will see fit to permit me to continue to serve a further term as Minister for Health and Social Services.

[Approbation]

The Bailiff:

The Chamber remains warm - probably too warm for most of us - we have taken steps to address that, but with perhaps limited success. So Members may remove jackets and the like if they so wish. The first question is from Deputy Andrews.

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

Can the candidate confirm whether he has the full support of the other candidates seeking roles in the Council of Ministers to build the new health village in St. Saviour?

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

Thank you for the question. I am just trying to think about each individual. I know there is some concern been expressed about the health village. Yes, sorry, you are quite right. There is some concern, I think, from one Member. Discussions have already started to try and resolve that difference of opinion.

2.1.2 Deputy M.B. Andrews:

Will Members be seeing any plans brought forward in the forthcoming Budget regarding the health village in St. Saviour?

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

That is highly likely, but they are not likely in the next 12 months to be enormous because we are still at the planning stage.

2.1.3 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour:

Would the Minister agree to keep the issue of A.D.H.D. (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) medication prescribing at the top of his priority list? Obviously, this was a Scrutiny review from the

previous term. Could the Minister advise whether he will be meeting with the primary care body soon, and whether this will be one of the topics that would be discussed?

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

Yes, I should probably apologise to the Deputy and to the Assembly for not mentioning A.D.H.D. I knew there would be a number of things that I would miss; it is not possible to get everything in, in 10 minutes. But no, this will remain towards the top of the agenda. I am very happy to meet G.P.s on the subject. That would be the intention. I have met them on the subject before, and I certainly intend to continue a dialogue with them so that we can try and get a joint care package to organise with them, because I think that would ease the situation quite considerably.

2.1.4 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I thank the Minister for that positive response. I would wonder whether he would consider putting to the primary care body whether any G.P.s would be directly employed by the Health Department, given the lack of finding this shared care agreement, so that in the short term we can get a solution to the hundreds of Islanders who are suffering with this.

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

This is quite a complicated area because I think that the G.P.s consider that they should make a collective agreement. But I will be putting as much pressure as I can to get a resolution to this.

2.1.5 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

The state of the current hospital and healthcare was something that very much came up on the doorstep during the election period. Many of my constituents reported that they had long waiting lists, which the Minister has already referred to, and that they felt under pressure ... that they were coming under active pressure to go private, especially when they did not have the money or the insurance to do so. Could the Minister speak to this phenomenon and whether he thinks that is an active policy of the Health Department?

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

I have to make it clear that is certainly not an active policy that I have enacted. It is something that is happening increasingly because people that have got the money are not prepared to wait. It is a very difficult situation. If we had all the people that we need, all the money that we need, and the facilities that we need, this probably would not be happening. We are not in that position at the moment, so I think we can expect more of that to happen, particularly between now and the completion of the new hospital.

2.1.6 Deputy M. Tadier:

Would the Minister outline what his vision is for getting that balance right? It seems to me that it is the same consultants doing the private work as the public work and, therefore, if people are being encouraged to ... are being told by a consultant: "I can do this in 2 years' time but if you come to see me privately I can do it next week", it seems like a highly divisive and unfair practice. What is the Minister's opinion on resolving that issue?

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

Once again, it is not as simple as it first appears. There is a need for private healthcare here and there is a requirement for the clinicians to retain a balance in the state and private work that they do. You cannot simply do away with private work because people would not be attracted to work here, so it is an ongoing situation. There is a balance to be struck, and I know people feel differently, sort of ideologically, about this but we just do our best to keep the balance as good as we can. Hopefully I have outlined in my 10-minute speech the actions we are taking to try and improve the entire situation.; it is a system-wide problem.

2.1.7 Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier Central:

The Senator mentioned in his speech that there was £8 million allocated towards digital within the health service. Can the Senator expand on how this is going to help with links with the G.P.s, for example, as I know that in some cases fax is still being used and that there is not necessarily a fully integrated digital system between the hospital and G.P. practices?

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

The Deputy is quite right about the state of play at the moment. We were assessed on an international rating scale 12, 15 months ago, and it is a rating of one to 7. We came out at zero in terms of our connectivity between the different departments. The objective over the 4 to 5 years is to get to level 5, 6, which will take us towards the front end of where most places are. We will be ahead of the game if we can get to that, and work is progressing at pace. We have now got a lot of people dedicated in the tech department to making that happen. We have got a very good health digital director, and we have got a digital board or a digital group that reflects all elements of the health service. It is a very well-selected group, and we meet monthly, and I think it is going exceptionally well considering our very more than modest starting point, our appalling starting point.

2.1.8 Deputy C.S. Alves:

This was talked about almost 25 years ago when I first started working for G.P.s. Can the Senator give us his assurances that this will be made a priority? What is the timeline that he is looking at to get to that 5 rating?

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

This has been one of my pet projects from the time that I arrived. It would be great to have another 4 years because the object of the exercise is to have the digitisation fit for the new hospital. As I have made clear, the objective throughout this term is to have a health service that is worthy of the new building otherwise it is just not worth spending the money to build it. It will, for as long as I am here, remain a very top priority. It is vitally important.

2.1.9 Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St Lawrence and Trinity:

The Jersey Care Model introduced in 2020 set out explicit ambition to reduce dependency on secondary care by expanding primary and community services. This was effectively ended in 2020, leaving Jersey without a clear strategic framework for how primary care, particularly G.P.s, should function within the wider healthcare service. Could the Senator outline his vision for the role of G.P.s in Jersey's health system, specifically whether he sees G.P.s as the co-ordinators of care for Islanders with complex or long-term conditions?

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

I regard G.P.s as a vitally important component of the health service. They are the place where most health journeys start. Relations with them have improved dramatically. I think they are working better within the system than they were. As I say, the whole point of the Partnership Board is to give everybody a voice in how patient journeys are planned throughout, and I see G.P.s retaining a very important role in that. Their status as private businesses should remain. I think we should be very grateful for the G.P. services we have got here, and I want to make sure that their position is, if anything, strengthened.

2.1.10 Deputy C.S. Alves:

I was wondering if the Senator could maybe delve into a bit more of the issues that he saw and he faced in the last 2 years related to how G.P.s worked with that secondary care, and also specialists as well. I myself have come up against barriers where information was not shared between maybe the U.K. hospital that you have referred to, G.P. surgery that gets all that information, and then follow-

on care at the hospital and consultants themselves, and how he sees that a specific way could make that better, that co-ordination.

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

I have to refer back to digitisation because that is the one thing that is missing in all of this. People have fallen through the gaps already. We have seen even fairly recent cases of that where patient care suffers very badly because there is not a failsafe system that takes people from one end of the journey to the other. There are gaps. People fall through those gaps, and that is a patient-care issue. I come back to the point of saying that I will be very insistent. I am trying to make sure that we maintain the budget that we have been promised over the forthcoming term, and it will certainly receive all of my attention.

2.1.11 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Could the Minister please give an update on the situation in neurology; has a consultant been recruited, and if not, when will this happen?

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

I do not want to speak out of turn, but I am very hopeful that that has been achieved. It is very early days. I accept we have had problems in neurology, we have had problems in spinal care, and this has basically been down to the difficulties in recruiting people in a market that is very short of specialists. It has to be said that certainly 2 years ago the Island had an extremely bad reputation. Anybody going online to come to Jersey would have seen lots of negative headlines about the place. It seems to me that some of those headlines are diminishing. I am hopeful that the press going forward will bear all of that in mind when they sometimes raise headlines that are very unhelpful and sometimes not terribly accurate, because people from the U.K. and elsewhere do keep an eye on what is happening here. Those sort of things, careless comments by the media when it does happen, does not do us any favours. I hope they are listening.

2.1.12 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

My follow-up was going to be along the lines of the question that Deputy Jeune asked about the communication off-Island. I understand that the Minister is pushing for this digital system, but in the meantime what meantime improvements can be made, particularly for those neurological patients who are having difficulties in this area, to improve that communication?

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

I stay fairly close to this because it is an issue of pretty major concern. But I can only trust the good people that we have got now trying to do the job. As I say, from what I can see, they are really using their best endeavours to do everything that they can. In terms of tertiary care, there is a limit to what can be done. To the best of my knowledge, I think some information is still passed in envelopes from here to the U.K., which is crazy. But as I have said, I described it as moving from the Dickensian age into the 21st century, and that is the journey that we are on. But it is underway, we have got a very good team of people and a very clear action plan.

2.1.13 Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

Would the Senator please explain what he would seek to do to increase - often G.P.s but also hospitals - rates of diagnoses? Too often I have - my own family and constituents that I meet - suffered because of a slow rate of diagnosis and often dismissive attitude, particularly to women's health matters, and I would like to know what the Senator would do in these areas.

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

If I can give an example, I, along with my Assistant Ministers, all ended up attending a meeting at the Arts Centre, I think it was, about endometriosis.

[10:00]

It is something I was aware of because a family member had suffered with it, that is what took me along to the meeting, and we have since set up an endometriosis group, and we have got a clinician specifically now available for referrals. It takes a long time to build up a network of communication where people do all the right things. Once again on the Partnership Board, which we only just got through by the skin of our teeth, we are going to be building those subgroups that feed into the main board, so all those issues will be tackled. The whole idea is that those subgroups will work on the patient journey from getting it right at the beginning, shortening the journey, making it more efficient so people come out sooner with better outcomes.

2.1.14 Deputy K.F. Morel:

A lot of the time this is a case of ensuring that doctors, particularly G.P.s, actually listen to their patients. There is one case I have heard of just in the past week where a doctor was passing off the patient as having psychological issues when actually the patient, in this case, was pointing out recent foreign travel and the fact that that was a far more likely cause of the problems. Indeed, it turns out to be the case, and the psychological issues that the doctor was talking about were not there. What will the Senator do to ensure that doctors start to listen to their patients on this Island, rather than just dismissing them out of hand?

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

Once again, there is not a straightforward, simple answer that can be implemented today. I know exactly what the Deputy is talking about when he talks about people being referred for psychiatric care, because the case in my own family that was exactly what happened. Somebody was in serious trouble, and to add insult to injury, that was what came out. So, I am very keen to see that that stops. But, as I say, once we have got these subgroups established, those sorts of problems become known by everybody, and the G.P.s through the primary care body will be responsible for making sure that they communicate that to every single G.P. That is the reason for having the whole network, so that we can send those messages back and we have got a defined network of information that goes back to every G.P. I cannot say it will be done tomorrow, but it is one of the things that is paramount in our thinking.

2.1.15 Deputy S.J. Gleave of St. Helier South:

Would the Senator, and I know he already recognises the value of preventative care, one of the things that would really help in the Island is a health M.O.T. with simple things like blood tests, which are unfortunately out of pocket for some Islanders at the moment and is one of the commitments that I made on the doorstep to my constituents. Provided we can prove the business case for this and the cost savings for the health service, is this something that the Senator would support?

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

I would be delighted if we had a system where everybody went for regular M.O.T.s. Being a hypochondriac, it is something I have done every 6 months since the age of 50. But the big worry with that, as I have tried to make plain at various times in the past, is that we have not yet got a system that can cope with its day-to-day work. If everybody decided to rock up to the hospital for their regular check or with their G.P.s, we would probably be overwhelmed. What we really need to be doing is getting the system-wide improvements that we want and planning for this, so that it can be introduced at an appropriate time once all the infrastructure is in place to be able to cope with it. But in principle, yes, it is a very good idea, and hopefully towards the end of the 4-year period that is something that we can contemplate.

2.1.16 Deputy A. Maltman of St Mary, St Ouen and St Peter:

Will the Minister advise what model is being planned for food provision in the new acute hospital, including whether patient meals will be cooked on site or supplied from a central production kitchen?

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

There are no plans to do any food preparation of that sort ... overall food preparation in the new hospital building. The plan at this point in time is to continue with the facility that we have got, and that is simply because we have got an awful lot going on already. I think it would probably be overloaded if we tried to increase that. However, we will be looking at hospital food in the round going forward because, as much as it is acceptable, I think we could perhaps improve that, because I think nutrition in the hospital is an extremely important part of patient care.

2.1.17 Deputy A. Maltman:

On that, will the Minister be prepared to publish a food and nutrition strategy for the new hospital before design and procurement decisions are made?

Deputy T.J.A Binet:

I do not want to commit to anything specific this morning, other than the fact that I can confirm that it is something that we are looking at and will continue to look at throughout the course of the next 4 years.

2.1.18 Deputy L.D. Carpenter of St. Helier Central:

In the last term, the candidate attempted to introduce charges for patients using the Emergency Department for non-urgent treatment. Does the candidate accept that while this would probably have the desired effect of a reduction in appropriate A. and E. (Accident and Emergency) use, the underlying issue is one of affordability, and that for many G.P. fees often in excess of £50 for a short consultation are the primary driver of this inappropriate A. and E. use?

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

Just a very minor correction, I did not try and introduce them. I floated the idea and said that it was an issue worth considering. In the end, we decided against it. There has been some recent comment about it because apparently, according to the analysis, there were 9,000 cases that would have been deemed appropriate to go to G.P.s. However, one of our now-retired leading G.P.s made the comment that it would be a similar figure in the U.K. because people are not always aware of whether something is sufficiently serious to go to A. and E. or to the doctor, so they usually take the safe option and go to A. and E. It is not a problem that can be entirely resolved; that figure will never be zero. In terms of affordability, I think we are doing everything we can. I think if you are on income support the cost of going to a G.P. is £10. While it would be lovely if everybody could have everything for nothing, we have to be mindful of the fact that we are under spending pressure and these are very delicate matters that need to be reconsidered from time to time.

The Bailiff:

That brings the period of questions to an end, and as there were no other nominations, and the speech and period of questions being completed, I can confirm that Senator Binet has been selected for appointment as Minister for Health and Social Services. **[Approbation]**

3. The Minister for Justice and Home Affairs:

The Bailiff:

We now move on to the new Minister for Justice and Home Affairs. Senator Farnham, would you like to make your nomination?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

I am very pleased to propose a return to Justice and Home Affairs for the now Senator Helen Miles.

The Bailiff:

Is the nomination seconded? **[Seconded]** Are there any other nominations? As there are no other nominations, I invite Senator Miles to speak for up to 10 minutes, after which there will be up to 20 minutes of questions.

3.1 Senator H.M. Miles:

I would like to start by thanking the people of Jersey for giving me the opportunity to be part of this Assembly for a further 4 years. Of course, I also thank the Chief Minister for nominating me for this role. For more than 30 years, I have worked alongside the people who keep Jersey safe. Before entering this Assembly, I worked for Customs and Immigration, the States of Jersey Police, the Probation and Aftercare Service, and in developing justice policy at the centre of government. My career has included operational service delivery, strategic leadership, and legislative reform. I developed major pieces of legislation, including the Criminal Procedure Law and the Sexual Offences Law, helping to modernise Jersey's criminal justice system. I then had the privilege of serving as Minister for Justice and Home Affairs between 2022 and 2024. Those experiences have shaped one simple belief; the first duty of any Government is to keep its people safe. Justice and Home Affairs is not defined by the departments it oversees, it is defined by the people it protects. It is about ensuring that every Islander can live in safety, that victims receive justice, that vulnerable people are protected, that our borders remain secure, and that when people need help most, they know those entrusted with protecting them will be there. Jersey enjoys an enviable position as one of the safest places in the world and that reputation has not been achieved through luck nor is it something we should ever take for granted. It has been earned over many decades through the professionalism of our emergency services, the commitment of our Honorary Police, the strength of our justice system and the willingness of our communities to work together. My commitment is straightforward, to ensure that Jersey remains one of the safest places in the world to live, work and raise a family. Keeping Jersey safe requires constant vigilance, constant continual improvement, and political leadership that understands both the operational realities and the strategic challenges facing our services. During my previous time as Minister, I had the privilege of working alongside exceptional public servants, and together we strengthened our focus on prevention through the Building a Safer Community programme, established Jersey's Violence Against Women and Girls Taskforce, enhanced our emergency planning and resilience, and progressed important legislation and continue to support the front line services that protect Islanders every single day. Since leaving ministerial office, I have continued to work closely with policing and justice matters through my role on the Jersey Police Authority and as a member of the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel, and those experiences have reinforced rather than changed my thinking. Good public safety depends upon partnership, it depends upon evidence, it depends upon listening, and it depends upon having the confidence to make difficult decisions when they are needed. I have spent my working life alongside the people who keep this Island safe. I know their professionalism, I know the pressures they face, I know the difficult decisions they make every single day, and above all, I know how deeply they care about Jersey. Every day our States of Jersey Police, Honorary Police, Customs and Immigration officers, Prison Service, Fire and Rescue Service and Emergency Planning teams perform difficult and often dangerous work on behalf of every one of us. They respond when others are in crisis, they protect vulnerable people, and they do so with professionalism, courage and quiet dedication. They deserve not only our gratitude but our confidence, our support and our leadership. I will continue to be their advocate in Government, in this Assembly, and indeed during every Budget discussion. As Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, I will also have responsibility for the Office of the Superintendent Registrar, which continues to modernise and improve its services every year, and for the Health and Safety Inspectorate, which, as we have seen lately, undertakes vital work on behalf of Islanders. Both will have my continued support. I will also have the privilege of overseeing the Jersey Field Squadron. We have just concluded Armed Forces Week and on Saturday we marked Armed Forces Day. Jersey's links with the Armed Forces are a key part of our constitutional status,

and the Field Squadron is a central part of that relationship, and I look forward once again to working with them. Everything we do in Justice and Home Affairs begins with public confidence, and that is why accountability, transparency and fairness matter. Justice must not only be done, it must be seen to be done. Victims deserve to be heard, and communities deserve confidence that the institutions entrusted with protecting them are worthy of that trust. The challenges facing Justice and Home Affairs continue to evolve, and these threats demand increasingly specialist skills and new ways of working. Good government is not about pretending these challenges do not exist, nor is it about believing that yesterday's solutions will always solve tomorrow's problems. It is about recognising new risks early, making sensible decisions and continually strengthening the services upon which Islanders depend. That means investing in people, investing in technology and investing in training. But it also means that ensuring as much of our resource as possible is directed towards the front line. Our highly trained professionals should spend their time protecting Islanders, preventing crime, safeguarding vulnerable people and keeping our borders secure. My responsibility as Minister is to ensure that they have the necessary support, the legislation and the political leadership that they need to do exactly that. I want to pay particular tribute to our Honorary Police. They are one of Jersey's greatest strengths and one of the defining features of Island life. They embody something that makes Jersey different. The principle that keeping our Island safe is not solely the responsibility of Government; it is a responsibility shared by the community itself. They know their Parishes, they know their communities, they build trust before problems arise, and they provide reassurance where people need it most. Throughout my career I have seen first-hand the extraordinary commitment they make, often balancing demanding careers and family life with voluntary public service. As Minister, I will continue to champion the Honorary Police, support recruitment and retention and ensure they remain a valued and integral part of Jersey's justice system for generations to come. The safest communities are not those that simply respond well before something goes wrong.

[10:15]

They are communities that work together to prevent harm before it happens. That philosophy shaped my work long before I entered politics, and it remains at the heart of how I believe Justice and Home Affairs should operate. That is what building a safer community means. It is not simply the name of a programme; it is a way of thinking. We often judge Justice and Home Affairs by the incidents that we see, the number of arrests, the emergencies, the prosecutions. But success for me is just as often measured by what never happens. The child who never becomes a victim, the family who receives support before relationships break down, the young person diverted away from offending, the woman protected from abuse, the emergency that careful planning prevented. Good public protection is often invisible, and that is exactly how it should be because every offence prevented means one less victim. Whether safeguarding children, supporting vulnerable adults or standing alongside victims of abuse, Government has a responsibility to act early, to act decisively, and to act compassionately. I was pleased to establish Jersey's Violence Against Women and Girls Taskforce, and I commend my successor, Senator Mary Le Hegarat, for her focus on the recommendations and for the introductions of key legislation to tackle this issue. As the baton is handed back to me, I want to ensure that that work continues to deliver meaningful improvements, supporting victims and survivors, holding perpetrators to account, improving education and awareness, strengthening partnership work across agencies and ensuring that every woman and girl in Jersey can live free from fear. Success will never be measured by the number of meetings we hold or the number of reports we publish. It will be measured by safer lives. Public safety also extends beyond the prison gates. Our prison service performs an essential role in protecting the public, but if we want fewer victims tomorrow, we have to have fewer offenders tomorrow. One of the phrases I often used as Minister was that we should strive to release better neighbours. Rehabilitation is not about lowering expectations; indeed, the opposite is true. It is about expecting people to take responsibility for their actions, rebuild their lives and contribute positively to our community. I want the prison to continue to work closely with Probation, to promote rehabilitation and reduce re-offending in our community.

I will take my *ex-officio* seat on the Probation Board, and I will actively engage and set out my policy agenda, but I will not seek to bring Probation into the Justice and Home Affairs Department. I look forward to working with ministerial colleagues, with Scrutiny, and across the community to make our Island even safer and a better place for everyone. I ask Members to support my nomination, and I look forward to taking questions. [Approbation]

The Bailiff:

The first question is from Deputy Coles.

3.1.1 Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South:

Does the Senator commit to continuing the work that was decided by this Assembly at the end of the last term into reviewing the work permit policy to ensure that we are tackling the efforts of modern-day slavery?

Senator H.M. Miles:

The broad answer of that is yes. There is currently a work permit policy review in hand, and I will be looking closely at the recommendations of that. To me, there is no doubt that our work permit policy needs to change. When it comes to modern slavery, I think we have a migrant safeguarding issue, and one of the things that my predecessor set up was a migrant safeguarding group. I think that group is going to be highly successful in providing recommendations and protections for our work permit holders.

3.1.2 Deputy T.A. Coles:

Does the Senator also commit to working with, whether it is the new Minister for the Environment or the new Minister for Planning and Regulation, about the inspections around migrant worker accommodation to ensure that it is fit for purpose and up to standards?

Senator H.M. Miles:

Yes, most certainly. Certainly, in the 1980s, when I was administering work permits as my very first role in government, there was a total inspection regime, and accommodation was inspected. If it was not fit for purpose, then the employer would not have the work permit. I think after the tragedy that we did see in Grouville, it is incumbent on everybody in this Assembly to work together to make sure that our work permit holders are suitably protected through safe and appropriate accommodation.

3.1.3 Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

The work of the Home Affairs Department extends to immigration and the policing of our borders. I would like to understand, because I do not think a great deal was said in that speech about this area, the Minister's approach to Jersey being pulled further and further from our nearest neighbours in terms of being seen constantly as the southern border to the United Kingdom, which we are not. The United Kingdom's southern border is the southern border to the United Kingdom, we are Jersey's border. I would like to just ask the Minister if she could explain her approach to this area.

Senator H.M. Miles:

As the Deputy will know, we are bound by the Immigration Act and the Nationality Act as extended to Jersey, and we are part of the Common Travel Area. Jersey does not have its own immigration law, and it does not have its own nationality law. So, for immigration purposes we are at the mercy of the U.K. Government. One thing that I would like to consider during this 4-year term is the possible development of Jersey's own immigration law so that it provides a framework whereby changes to the Nationality Act or the Immigration Act that would benefit Jersey both in economic terms and in heritage and cultural terms might be useful. The Deputy will also know that during my last term as Minister, I made the bold decision to permit French nationals to come here on *carte*

d'identité. That is outside the policies of the U.K., so I am always willing to consider and take a risk-based approach as to where Jersey may provide better services for its own economy.

3.1.4 Deputy K.F. Morel:

With regard to such things as the E.S.T.A. (Electronic System for Travel Authorisation) and the E.T.A.s (Electronic Travel Authorisation), or the E.E.S. (Entry/Exit System), I forget all the abbreviations that are used which hinder travel between here and our nearest neighbours, and indeed the I.D. (identification) cards which allow French citizens to come here for 24 hours, could the Senator please explain whether she would seek to gain some sort of respite from those restrictions? Also, with regard to those I.D. cards, whether she would seek to extend their provision for the amount of time spent in Jersey?

Senator H.M. Miles:

There are 2 questions there. Obviously, the E.T.A. and the E.S.T.A.s refer to British passport holders, and I cannot see that Jersey would ... Jersey hold British passports. They may be issued by the Bailiwick of Jersey, but they are British passports, and I would think it extremely unlikely that Jersey could have any sort of carve-out from E.T.A.s and E.S.T.A.s, if you have a British passport. When it comes to the *carte d'identité*, I do think there is some possibility of stretching that a little bit. Certainly, the hospitality industry have said on many occasions that they would like to see an overnight potential for a 48-hour system. Again, all of that has to be risk-based and it has to be risk-assessed properly because, like it or not, we are the southern border of the Common Travel Area and we do have to be very careful that we are protecting the borders to the satisfaction of the United Kingdom Government.

3.1.5 Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

In the last Government, the former Minister for Justice and Home Affairs said that there was not enough budget and time for officers to be able to develop the hate crime legislation. Could the Senator explain what she would like to do related to the hate crime legislation?

Senator H.M. Miles:

Yes, I think there was insufficient time. I think I was actually the Minister that withdrew the hate crime law because there was an opportunity to watch and wait and see what had happened in other parts of the United Kingdom. To the best of my knowledge, the consultation for the hate crime law is ready to go, and I would certainly support that consultation going forward. I have said on a couple of occasions, I am not a fan of legislation for legislation's sake. My area of academic interest is informal justice, and I would far rather people be motivated to behave properly without law. However, I think what we have seen over the last few years tends me to suggest that there are elements that need to be legislated for so people can be properly brought to account and punished for elements, but let us see where the consultation takes us and, of course, it will be subject to further policy development, legislative development and scrutiny.

3.1.6 Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I did speak of this in the last Assembly to the Assembly, about the concerns of some of my constituents who had experienced some hate crime, but the police were unable to take that further. As the Senator said, there may be not a legislation specifically but, focusing on specific areas, how will she be working with the police with this to ensure the police have the right tools to be able to take any hate crime forward and to help support those victims?

Senator H.M. Miles:

It is my understanding that the States of Jersey Police have all the tools they can possibly have on an informal basis outside of legislation in order to take those complaints forward. But there are areas

whereby they can sympathise and support victims, but they have no teeth in legislation to be able to put that forward to the Law Officers' Department for prosecution.

3.1.7 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

The proceedings of this Assembly have been publicly available via webcasts since 2016. Does the prospective Minister believe that, when it comes to the transparency of the courts, public proceedings in our courts should also be televised and live streamed? If not, why not? If so, what is her vision for that?

Senator H.M. Miles:

I think the purview of the courts is the area for the Bailiff to address. As Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, I have influence over legislation, but the operation of the courts remains clearly with the court. I know that hearings are held in public, unless the judge orders otherwise for very specific reasons. I have no strong views about the televising of proceedings, but it is clearly a matter for the court, not for the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs.

3.1.8 Deputy M. Tadier:

I am slightly surprised by the answer. The second part of her perspective to her title will be "Justice", not just "Home Affairs", and we know that a few years ago Justice was brought to a certain extent under the purview of the Chief Minister then, and it will be now delegated to her department. It would seem to me natural that there does need to be some ministerial input in the right way, respecting the separation of powers, and does she not agree that if one branch of the Government is subject to its public proceedings being streamed in the 21st century that there is no reason logically that the courts should shy away from that level of probity as well?

Senator H.M. Miles:

I refer to my previous answer. The proceedings in the court are the purview of the court. As Minister for Justice and Home Affairs, I will sit on the Criminal Justice Strategic Board and that is an issue that could be raised at that level but, notwithstanding the separation, what happens in the court is within the purview of the court, not under the influence of the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs.

3.1.9 Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

The Senator highlighted in her speech the need to invest in technology. To what extent does she see that digital transformation and innovation is needed within the functions that are under her to deliver the best services for the public and the most effective delivery of their work?

Senator H.M. Miles:

I could talk about this for ages. Having had conversations not only with Customs and Immigration but also the States of Jersey Police, it is critical that they have the same level of technology available to them as the offenders that they are seeking to investigate. Of course, everybody knows now, everybody has a mobile phone, every offender has a mobile phone. This Assembly has already allocated many millions to the States of Jersey Police to their Digital Forensic Unit, and I think we need to keep a close eye on that funding to make sure that they have the tools that they need. Also, we have got artificial intelligence coming down the road, and I think a lot of our processes are still overly paper-based where potentially there is an opportunity to modernise and reduce bureaucracy through using technology.

3.1.10 Deputy A.F. Curtis:

The candidate touched on one area which is Customs, whose responsibility does cover import and G.S.T. (goods and services tax), and I think it is widely known that these impact the cost of business and red tape in Jersey with systems such as CAESAR (Customs and Excise System for the Administration of Revenue). Does she then see a need to invest in those, and how will she work with

other Ministers to ensure that her digital functions support any wider council ambition on digital improvements to support Islanders and businesses?

[10:30]

Senator H.M. Miles:

If anybody has tried to clear anything through CAESAR, whether it is a pair of shoes or a pallet full of commercial goods, it is probably one of the most user unfriendly systems that you would ever come across. It was something that I was in discussions of previously when I was Minister. As Minister in a slightly unusual position, because obviously it is about duty collection so that falls to Treasury, I would need to have some significant conversations with the Minister for Treasury and Resources. There is no doubt that CAESAR is not fit for purpose. It does not have accessibility features. Anybody who has done business here will say how unwieldy it is. It does need some funding and some focus to see how that can be significantly improved.

3.1.11 Deputy S.J. Gleave of St. Helier South:

I was encouraged by the Senator's comments about the need to reduce the level of re-offending by supporting prisoners. I think there has been some really good work in the last term between the police service and adult mental health. However, I am still hearing quite concerning things through the mental health charities and mental illness charities about their level of access to the prison and the support that those who do have mental health problems within the prison are supported. Would the Minister care to comment?

Senator H.M. Miles:

The provision of health services in the prison has slowly been transitioned to the Minister for Health and Social Services, so any support into the prison would involve my discussing that with him, which I am more than prepared to do.

3.1.12 Deputy S.J. Gleave:

Would the Minister commit to that discussion with the Minister for Health and Social Services and also the charities to hear their concerns?

Senator H.M. Miles:

Certainly. Charities have approached me as well, but again I am more than happy to have that conversation at the earliest possible opportunity.

3.1.13 Deputy K.F. Morel:

Picking up with the theme of technology once more; some jurisdictions, including the United Kingdom, have been rolling out the use of facial recognition technologies in the streets and elsewhere. Could the Senator please explain her position on these technologies within Jersey?

Senator H.M. Miles:

I am a Minister that is not supportive of intense supervision by C.C.T.V. (closed-circuit television) or facial recognition. However, I do recognise that there is a role for that technology on a risk-assessed basis in order to protect our community. To the best of my knowledge, we do not have facial recognition C.C.T.V. available in public places. That may not be the case at the airport or the docks - of that I am not sure - but I would not want to see facial recognition software widely applied over the Island of Jersey; I do not see it as a need at this particular point in time.

3.1.14 Deputy K.F. Morel:

Given that the Senator started her speech by talking about just how safe Jersey is, it would seem, in my mind, that such technologies would be an overstep. Could the Senator please explain what she would do to ensure that Jersey does not go down that road of being a police state, being overpoliced

for a very safe and, in the main, law-abiding society? Because it is always very tempting for the police just to get their hands on the next piece of equipment that is available in the U.S.A. (United States of America), for instance.

Senator H.M. Miles:

I think to answer that question I have to use the word “balance”. We have to take into account that we are a very safe community, and we probably have more people *per capita* who enforce the law in Jersey as a result of our Honorary Police than other communities have. I am not a supporter of the ‘Big Brother’ approach and certainly, as Minister, I will be having very close discussions about technology and accoutrements that are necessary for our States of Jersey Police.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I do not believe Deputy ...

The Bailiff:

If you do not mind not asking a question, there are other Members on my list who have not had a question yet, so I will go to them.

3.1.15 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour:

I want to follow up on the hate crime legislation. Would the Minister agree to meet with leaders of the L.G.B.T.Q.+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and additional identities) community and where anecdotally we are experiencing increased hate, and this is very much something that needs a hate crime legislation put in place as soon as possible?

Senator H.M. Miles:

Yes, of course, I can give the Deputy that absolute clarification that I will meet with them as soon as possible.

3.1.16 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

The Minister mentioned V.A.W.G. (Violence Against Women and Children) in her speech. I know she’s a big supporter of tackling this. Will she be continuing the V.A.W.G. Taskforce and will there be L.G.B.T.Q.+ voices on that taskforce going forward?

Senator H.M. Miles:

The taskforce was established for a particular reason, and although I need to have discussions with officers, I am not minded to continue the taskforce in its current form, i.e. as a taskforce. I think what we have is the recommendations, we have an implementation plan, and what I would like to see is that those recommendations are fed into the mainstream of the Building a Safer Community framework, because that is the framework that we have for community safety in Jersey.

3.1.17 Connétable I. Gardiner of St. Helier:

The candidate is aware that Jersey residents with settled status have reportedly been refused boarding or been led to purchase a special authorisation form. What is the candidate planning to do to stop the situation happening again?

Senator H.M. Miles:

I thank the Connétable for the question, and certainly when I was campaigning in town it was something that a lot of Polish and Romanian nationals spoke to me about. Clearly something has gone very wrong with the communication between Jersey and the United Kingdom over the status of settled status, and I think it is not acceptable, but I think we have to acknowledge that it is not specifically a Jersey problem; it is clearly a problem with the Home Office. So, my approach to tackling that would be to have very direct conversations with the Home Office, but also to do

something from a Jersey perspective so that when people are stuck in far-flung places, in queues, that actually the information is readily accessible to the airline companies who are refusing them access to board.

3.1.18 The Connétable of St. Helier:

I am sure the candidate is also aware that the residents were pushed to purchase E.T.A. tourist authorisation, but as we know it is not the right document to access C.T.A. (Common Travel Area). This authorisation will be expired in another 6 months, and it is likely that our residents might be refused to enter back. How will the candidate rectify this because 6 months will be expiring in the next 2 or 3 months and can face the situation imminently.

Senator H.M. Miles:

I am in 2 minds about that because obtaining an E.T.A. was a very pragmatic solution to get you on to the plane, and you were entitled to one if you held the appropriate passport. But I do take the point that there may be a problem, and again that is for the Immigration Department to liaise with the Home Office in fairly short order to make sure that these issues do not happen again for our citizens. I do wonder whether there needs to be not only an information campaign but an information drop and a letter potentially to the people that have been issued settled status in Jersey, to encourage them to contact the Immigration Department so that support can be given where necessary.

The Bailiff:

The period of questions has come to an end and, as there were no other nominations and the period for speech and questions has been completed, I can confirm that Senator Miles has been selected for appointment as the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs. **[Approbation]**

4. The Minister for External Relations

The Bailiff:

We now move on to the selection of the Minister for External Relations. Senator Farnham, would you like to make your nomination?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

I would like to nominate Senator Ian Gorst to continue his work at External Relations. Is the nomination seconded? **[Seconded]** Are there any other nominations? There are no other nominations. I invite Senator Gorst to speak for up to 10 minutes, after which there will be questions for up to 20 minutes.

4.1 Senator I.J. Gorst:

In 2024, I opened my nomination speech for this office by saying that today the international outlook looks more complex and uncertain than ever. That remains true, and even more so 2 years later. In uncertain times, maintaining Jersey's international reputation as a stable, outward-looking and tolerant Island is of critical importance. The confident, robust and successful representation of Jersey on the international stage is fundamental to Jersey's success, underpinning the jobs and growth that sustain our prosperity and quality of life. We need to stand up for our economy, defend our autonomy and promote our identity. This requires experience, knowledge and good international networks, which I have built working with colleagues over many years of representing our Island. The role of Minister for External Relations requires a carefully balanced mixture of diplomacy, tact and mettle. It requires the ability to build and sustain relationships with political leaders and officials worldwide. The success of those relationships is critical to the success of our Island as a whole. I have shown that I will stand up for Jersey against threats and intimidation. I will continue to do so against any challenges to our constitutional autonomy, our economic freedoms and our right to self-government. We must protect Jersey's core interests and promote new opportunities for growth and collaboration

with our international partners, be it new economic and business links, cultural exchanges, addressing labour shortages, tackling international crime, and responding to climate change, to name but a few. Working concurrently with the Chief Minister, I will use my knowledge and experience to help Ministers to deliver on their domestic priorities and, where necessary, to find the right international partners, be that on housing, improving our education system, supporting young people, improving our health and care services or tackling the cost of living. There is much more we can do working with our sports teams to grow diplomatic ties, supporting our twinning associations to strengthen our regional ties. I will do so by maintaining and building on our key partnerships in the U.K., Europe and around the world. We will also continue to support States Members in their work through the A.P.F. (L'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie), B.I.P.A. (British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly) and C.P.A. (Commonwealth Parliamentary Association). We live in an ever-changing world and one that is unfortunately more dangerous and less stable. In the coming weeks or months, the U.K. will have a new Prime Minister. There will be new relationships to forge and a need to ensure we maintain and build on our existing strong relations with our most important partner. We have excellent access to U.K. Ministers, parliamentarians and officials, with real influence on the policy that will affect our Island. I have made our voice heard in Westminster, in Whitehall, and in Downing Street. Our relationship with the U.K. is as strong as it has ever been, and I will build on that, working of course with my colleagues, many of whom have their own extensive networks to call upon in the Island's interests. Similarly, we will continue to build our links in France. We have worked hard with colleague Ministers in the post-Brexit world to rebuild our relationship with Normandy, Brittany and Paris. I have had more ministerial meetings in Paris than any previous Jersey Minister. But that relationship must continue to be strengthened, together with countries such as Portugal, Poland and Romania, and with the E.U. (European Union) institutions in Brussels, to ensure that Jersey's voice is heard as the post-Brexit world continues to take shape. But with western democracies under pressure, and with the ongoing tragedy of wars in Europe and the Middle East, the one certainty continues to be that there will be significant turbulence and change ahead, which Jersey cannot ignore. In the current climate, the Island can benefit from being a reliable and trusted partner, one where investors can be confident of stability. The core of our economy and our ability to pursue global partnerships all rely on the strength of our international standing and confidence in our Island. We have a developing network of bilateral tax and investment agreements with countries and markets across the globe, and I will negotiate more of these agreements over the coming years. I will also help position the Island to obtain maximum benefit from the participation in the U.K.'s network of free trade agreements covering goods and services, having negotiated our inclusion for services in the G.C.C. (Gulf Co-operation Council) agreement as a particularly important first. We will continue to play an important part in implementing the U.K. sanctions regime following Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. Jersey cannot ignore what is happening around us, be that tougher global competition, the adoption of AI. (artificial intelligence), or threats to stability.

[10:45]

In a turbulent world, investors will be looking for responsible, stable, and trusted markets for investments, and for jurisdictions, which are clear on the values they promote and protect. That is where Jersey must continue to come into its own. In conducting my role as Minister for External Relations, I will continue to represent all our industries, financial and professional services, digital, dairy, agriculture and fisheries, tourism and hospitality, and stand up for their interests. I will encourage new diversification, which brings jobs and investment. The *Time to Win* report is clear about what we must do to confidently face the future. Strong foundations are in place, and we carry our reputation for stability with pride, but competition from new rivals is clear, as is the effect of emerging technologies which are rewiring how business is done, how we work and where we work. Capital and talent can move more freely than ever before. In short, the world in which we operate has turned on its head. I am absolutely determined that we will not fall behind but that we will change and continue to win on behalf of all Islanders. We have, of course, already been making progress.

We have made core reforms to the Companies Law, to the Trusts and Limited Partnerships Law and enhancements to private funds. We have seen an increase of 10 per cent of new private funds, changes to prospectuses, civil penalties and the Sound Business Policy regime. We have already reduced the Control of Borrowing framework prior to its full repeal later this year. I have asked Jersey Finance, the J.F.S.C. (Jersey Financial Services Commission) and our C.E.O. (Chief Executive Officer) to provide the new Government with their proposals to implement the 5 imperatives for competitiveness and growth. They are renewing our appetite for growth, reducing regulatory costs and complexity, leading in tokenisation, embracing digitalisation and investing in Jersey, our infrastructure, connectivity and our people. I stood on a platform of continuing in this job and I am grateful to Islanders for giving me their support to do so. By continuing to promote the Island abroad and by standing up for our interests, we will create the basis for the change we must make to maintain our competitive and growing economy at home. The world appears to be in turmoil, but I remain optimistic about how we can navigate that uncertainty. By working together, maintaining our strong foundations and taking the steps to improve our competitiveness, I am convinced we can have a successful future. Thank you. **[Approbation]**

The Bailiff:

We now move to a period of questions. Are there any questions for Senator Gorst?

4.1.1 Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

Jersey published its report on the potential of offshore wind energy in November 2025 setting out technical, commercial and economic assessments. It mentioned that we cannot viably export energy unless we have access. Could the Senator tell the Assembly whether active diplomatic discussions and market access for offshore wind energy are ongoing with the U.K. and France, and what steps he intends to take to advance those negotiations so that Jersey can move from assessment to decision?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Thank you for that question. Yes, in short, they are. Of course, the connectivity problem is not just a physical problem. It is also a regulatory problem. If we are to build an offshore windfarm, that offshore windfarm would need to be regulated. We have some difficult questions to consider and they do roll into the constitutional arena because who is going to regulate it? The jurisdiction to which we would connect would want to either know that we have equal regulation or be involved themselves in the regulation. I have personally spoken to U.K. Government Ministers about this. I have also spoken to colleagues in France about this. I think sometimes there can be a little bit of a competition between those 2 jurisdictions. When one says: “Yes, we think it is possible”, the other one then comes and thinks: “Well, we might quite like that energy and it is possible as well.” Of course, we know in relationship to France, the energy market is governed by the E.U. and therefore the U.K.’s reset would be critical not just around regulation if it were to be France, but also around the energy market *per se*.

4.1.2 Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I thank the Senator for a detailed answer. Could the Senator set out where he sees a realistic timetable for the Council of Ministers to make an informed decision about this, or is this another area where we talk about offshore wind energy but never get to the point of making any decisions on whether we will go ahead or not?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

That is rather out of our hands. We will continue to have those conversations. We will continue to make the case. Why is it important that we make the case? It is important that we make the case so that the Island can make an informed decision about what is involved and what the financial benefit is to Jersey or the economic benefit which, as my former colleague used to absolutely say, is at the core of this decision-making process. The reason I cannot give a line of course is, as the Deputy

knows and as I alluded to in my opening comments, we are about to see change in the United Kingdom. We do not know whether that will be a change at the Department of Energy and net zero or not yet but, in all likelihood, there will be changes, and we also know that France is running up to its presidential elections as well. Some of the decision-making with our counterparts could be slowed down.

4.1.3 Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier Central:

Jersey currently holds a number of double-taxation agreements with various countries across Europe and the world. Unfortunately, Portugal is not one of them. In the last term, I met with the Senator with a number of different Portuguese delegates, and this was raised a number of times. Can the Senator outline what he will do to support a double-taxation agreement with Portugal going forward and how soon he thinks this could be done?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I thank the Deputy for the question. It would, in my mind, be excellent if we could get a double-taxation agreement with a European member state. We know, for all of the reasons, that we have not been able to get one previously. I visited Lisbon just prior to the election - I think it was a fortnight or so before the election process started - to talk about, in that instance, 2 things. One was the tax blacklist, which she will also be aware of, and the other was the double-taxation agreement. I met with the Minister of Finance there. It is fair to say those conversations were ... how can one describe it? We both articulated our points of view. We left with a process around the tax blacklist. The process for negotiating a double-taxation agreement was less clear, but I am absolutely committed to continuing that. If I revert, though, to double-taxation agreements with E.U. member states more broadly, I think the most progress and where we have been received most warmly is in regard to Romania. As Members know, it is a sadness that that Member that was most closely associated with that work is no longer in this Assembly, but I have spoken to her, and she wishes to carry on supporting our work in the department to deliver that. I think that that is probably our best chance at this stage.

4.1.4 Deputy C.S. Alves:

As the Senator knows, Madeira does have a level of autonomy as well. Can the Senator outline whether any discussions have been had with Madeira in particular, given that a significant proportion of our Portuguese community come from Madeira and often return there on retirement?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Last time I had the conversation with a member of the Madeira Government, it was confirmed to me that they would not be in a position to have the authorities sign a D.T.A. (double tax agreement). If their autonomy has been enhanced or strengthened, then I will certainly reach out and start those conversations.

4.1.5 Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

I would be grateful if the Senator would express his views on the Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement signed by the United Kingdom and the European Union with regard to Jersey, and whether he believes it is a satisfactory settlement for Jersey or not? Would he please explain his answer?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

The Deputy knows very well that we did not have a vote in the Brexit referendum. We fought hard to not be further disadvantaged. The United Kingdom Prime Ministers had different approaches about what was in the U.K.'s interest. For my part, having accepted the Brexit referendum, which because of our constitutional position we had to, it would have been far better for Jersey to be in a customs arrangement with the E.U. because all of the friction that we have seen would cease to exist.

That is what we are trying to do now in supporting the U.K. Government with their reset around the S.P.S. (Sanitary and Phytosanitary) Agreement, around the Youth Experience Scheme and around energy. We are now, in slow time, having to unravel the friction that Brexit caused, which was not at all in Jersey's interest.

4.1.6 Deputy K.F. Morel:

As I am sure the Senator is aware, Northern Ireland now benefits from the situation that Jersey had before the Brexit arrangements were put in place in that it is within the European Union for goods, which is where Jersey was previously. Given that the Senator has just said that the conditions are not satisfactory, could he explain to the Assembly what he will do to ensure that Jersey does get a settlement that is in its interests and that removes that friction at the borders for our goods?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Of course, the Deputy knows that the situation in Northern Ireland is not equivalent to the situation that Jersey had under Protocol III, and there are arguments in Northern Ireland, which are very live, about where the border is. Is it down the North Sea? What is happening on the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland? We also know, of course, that special dispensation was, to a large extent, provided to Northern Ireland because of the Troubles. I, for one, think that every Member of this Assembly would think that special dispensation should be given so that those troubles do not repeat themselves. The action that I am taking - and I have been very strong not only in London but also, importantly, in Brussels - is ensuring that we are part of the reset that the U.K. is seeking to deliver. We have made that absolutely clear to senior officials and to commissioners in Brussels. We have made it absolutely clear to Cabinet Ministers and Cabinet Office Ministers. In fact, I have been making the case for the Youth Experience Scheme when U.K. Ministers have been sitting in front of me saying: "It is virtually impossible." I have been able to triangulate from what I have been told in Brussels about what the European position is to what the U.K. needs to do, because that is in Jersey's interest. That is our best hope of removing the friction that we currently experience, in my view.

4.1.7 Deputy L.D. Carpenter of St. Helier Central:

As the candidate will know, the Jersey Finance *Time to Win* action plan highlighted within its implementation part multiple changes that could occur prior to the election, including streamlining K.Y.C. (know your customer) processes and allocating responsibility for K.Y.C. to all selection to Digital Jersey. Could the candidate please confirm whether these changes have been implemented?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Many of them have. If I just pick up the Digital Jersey point - I think it is - the director or the C.E.O. of Digital Jersey emailed me only at the weekend to give me an update on where they were and what has been agreed. Members will understand I have been concentrating on preparing for this morning, so I do not have the details of it, but I know that good progress in that regard is also being made.

4.1.8 Deputy L.D. Carpenter:

Could the candidate please spell out which of the report's recommendations he will seek to prioritise during his first year as Minister?

[11:00]

Senator I.J. Gorst:

As the Deputy knows, the first part of forming the Government is taking place today and tomorrow. The next job of the Government is sorting out its Common Strategic Priority, as well as sorting out a budget, neither of which tasks are necessarily straightforward, as we all know. I am going to be making the case and I am hopeful, from what I have heard on the election hustings roadshow, that all

Ministers will support the delivery of the *Time to Win* programme as a priority in the Common Strategic Priority, and that is the thing that I will be arguing for.

4.1.9 Deputy V. Li of St. Helier North:

Jersey's fintech and digital finance ambitions depend on a local skills base. How is the Minister going to link the financial service strategy to education and training, so the talent pipeline is grown here, not just imported?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

The Deputy asked a good question, which I think in theory we, as an Assembly and as a community, understand. The effects of technology and A.I., upon us as individual Islanders but also right across our economy, is going to be fundamental over the course of the next 4 years. What I do not think is necessarily fully worked out or that we have a roadmap for is how we are going to upscale/rescale those Islanders whose jobs are going to be affected and, more importantly, how we are going to cross-scale when those people come to Jersey who have got A.I. skills. We do have some really first-class firms in Jersey doing A.I. and providing agentic A.I. support services to other businesses. We have some senior lawyers who are running A.I. provision from Magic Circle firms. I think we have got a really exciting opportunity, but that will not just be the Minister responsible for the economy or financial services. It will have to be right across Government because the challenges we face are affecting all of our economy, whether that is A.I. or it is the cost of bureaucracy. Therefore, we need to fight them and deliver a plan in partnership. I look forward to working with the new Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, particularly in regard to skills and training and the Scrutiny Panel that will be making sure that we act on it as well.

4.1.10 Connétable A.N. Jehan of St. John:

I was pleased to hear the candidate speak about the importance of both sport and twinning when it comes to relationships. Actions speak louder than words so could I ask what the candidate will do differently this term to ensure that both sport and twinning are given the support they deserve?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

A fair question. Firstly, when it comes to sport, I think that one of my Assistant Ministers will need to be allocated to attend sporting events and to liaise with sporting organisations. What I found in the last term was that we had international teams either visiting the Island and I was already booked, or Jersey teams were going across the globe to ventures and we, in Government, were not supporting them and tying it in with that diplomatic opportunity. Therefore, I think the allocation of someone either within my department or the Assistant Minister responsible for sport. We have to move away from this idea that everything just happens in Jersey. Yes, of course, it is easy to get to the events when they are happening in Jersey, and we have not done as much as we should there, but if these events are happening around the globe, we should proudly be supporting our sports teams, travelling with them and building diplomatic ties where they are taking part and not always be just worrying how it will look in the media. When it comes to twinning, I have got to say, and I know the Constable will understand this, I take great care in treading on what I think is something that belongs very much to the Parish, to the municipality and to those committees but, having spoken to at least one twinning association chair over the last week, the indication there was that it would be quite welcome that we supported. That might be officials, it might be Ministers and also, importantly of course, meeting those French mayors as well when either they are on Island or we can travel with those. I am not seeking by suggesting that to say that Government knows best or should do everything, rather we should be making ourselves available as a supporting presence as and when the Parish twinning associations desire it.

4.1.11 Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Jersey's Sustainable Finance Action Plan was published in November 2024; 10 specific action points and a delivery timetable running to 2026. Can the Senator say if the action plan is on time and what would he do differently to ensure that all those action points are delivered as soon as possible if they are not on time?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I did have some statistics in my paperwork, but I seem to have mislaid them. I think basically good progress has been made: 50 per cent, I think, have been implemented, 40 per cent have been put into, in effect, business as usual and the 10 per cent around legislating for disclosure is still open to discussion.

4.1.12 Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Part of this action plan, there was no mechanism to be able to see the progress. I was wondering if the Minister would commit to publishing a public progress report so that we could see the details? Especially about those business as usual, the ones that have been integrated, so that they do not get lost within business as usual, but you can see that there is progress for sustainable finance in Jersey.

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I thank the Deputy for the length of her question because it has allowed me to turn to the right page. The 40 per cent of actions that have moved into business as usual are around environmental crime, data, international engagement and market access. I will certainly double check, if we have not published a progress report, that if we could do one quite easily, then I am all in favour of it.

4.1.13 Deputy K.F. Morel:

Very quickly, what will the Senator do to ensure that the work of External Relations and the relationships that are built up are shared among the Assembly, particularly in terms of succession planning? Relationships which only exist within Government mean that they cannot be continued when there is a change of Ministers.

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I know I am getting old. I did not know it was quite that obvious to the Deputy **[Laughter]** but obviously it is. He makes a very good point, which has been on my mind throughout this election period. If one looks around the Assembly, dare I say, we are in the majority of a certain age and we are not going to be here indefinitely, and yet it is something that in the political realm it is not always straightforward to mentor and support those people starting out. It is something that I am very mindful of, and I will be aiming to do throughout the course of the 4 years. Of course, I also alluded in my opening comments about working with the A.P.F., working with B.I.P.A., and working with C.P.A. to ...

The Bailiff:

We have had the 20 minutes now. Do you want to bring this to an end?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

... support the very issue that the Deputy is referring to. Thank you.

The Bailiff:

Thank you very much, Senator. That brings the period of questions to an end, and I can confirm that Senator Gorst has been selected for appointment as Minister for External Relations. **[Approbation]**

5. The Minister for Social Security

The Bailiff:

I will now move on to the Minister for Social Security. Deputy Farnham, would you wish to make your nomination?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

Yes, Sir. I am very pleased to nominate former Minister for Treasury and Resources and former Minister for Social Security for the role of Minister for Social Security in the next Government.

The Bailiff:

Thank you, Senator. Is the nomination seconded? **[Seconded]** Are there any other nominations? There are no other nominations so I invite Senator Millar to speak for up to 10 minutes, after which there will be up to 20 minutes of questions.

5.1 Senator M.E. Millar:

Firstly, I would like to thank the Chief Minister for his nomination of me as Minister for Social Security. I held that role from July 2022 until January 2024 and will be very pleased to return to that portfolio. In its broader sense, social security with its associated responsibilities is one of our most important departments. We often talk about front line services. Social security is very much a front line service, and it is no less important than the ones that normally fall into that bracket, like health, education and the emergency services. It provides benefits and pensions to thousands of people every year and the team there deal with dozens of Islanders every day. The department pays pensions to our older citizens and a wide range of benefits from short term sick pay to long-term incapacity, benefits on bereavement, on the birth of a child, Pension Plus and the Community Cost Bonus. It helps people with the cost of G.P. visits and prescriptions and deals with student finance. Income support helps those on low incomes with the cost of living in our Island. The department receives social security contributions and carries out a range of administrative functions. Social security, income support and the related benefits provide an essential safety net for many Islanders at all times of their lives. Is it perfect? Everyone will have different ideas but probably not. No system that serves so many people will get it right every time, although that should always be our intention. We need to think constantly about the gaps, look at where things are not working and how to address them. That may include services and practical support or changes to laws rather than just financial benefits. We always need to pay attention to how we communicate and make it clear and consistent. If appointed as Minister for Social Security, my priorities will be firstly ensuring that our systems continue to provide effective and targeted support to Islanders who need it most with the cost of living and in day-to-day living generally. In reviewing the long-term funding of all our social security funds, including the Health Insurance Fund and the Long-Term Care Fund, considering aspects of social security contributions to ensure they operate effectively, recognise those who have a full contribution record and do not hinder the growth of new business. Next, implementing a secondary pension savings scheme, completing the Transform I.T. (information technology) programme and ensuring that stakeholders are appropriately consulted in all areas relevant to them. Social security is at the forefront of providing help to Islanders with the cost of living. It is important that we continue to support the households that struggle most with the cost of living, and I will aim to do that in a way that ensures that help is targeted where it is most needed. I will also work with stakeholders to understand what those needs are and to find the most effective way of providing support. Previously I heard concerns in this Assembly about the cost of G.P. visits and took action to reduce the cost of going to see the G.P. I heard the voice of pensioners and increased access to Pension Plus benefit and also to deal with cost of living, I doubled the Community Cost Bonus, which remains at that level now. We know that one of the biggest costs facing families is childcare, and I will continue the work to see how we can provide more help with that cost. If that enables parents to return to work themselves, it benefits the family and our economy. I would also like to investigate replacing child tax allowances with a similar benefit payment which will increase visibility and ensure that funds are focused on children. That, of course, may be controversial, and the key word here is

“investigate”. The Minister is also responsible for setting the minimum wage. The Employment Forum is currently consulting on the next increase, and I will take their views into account carefully in proposing the next increase to the minimum wage. During this term we, as an Assembly, have to make some big decisions about social security and its funds. The previous Minister has instructed the regular actuarial reviews of the social security funds, the Health Insurance Fund and the Long-Term Care Fund. Overall, the social security funds are very healthy. Once we have the actuarial reports, we will have to consider the future funding of the social security funds and how that will work into the future because we cannot just think about how we pay benefits and pensions today. We have to think about the long term and ensure fairness for today’s younger generations as they reach older age.

[11:15]

We know that the Health Insurance Fund now pays for much more than was originally intended, with more funding to help with cost of G.P. visits and payment of prescription costs, and that has caused it to diminish. It does not make sense for a Government’s relationship with doctors and pharmacists and primary care funding to sit in social security while secondary care sits in health. I would support primary care and its funding moving to the Health Department. That will allow a unified strategy for our overall healthcare system and for funding to be harmonised and centralised as part of the future funding model for health. I will be very happy to work with the Minister for Health and Social Services and his team and all relevant stakeholders to ensure that funding for primary care continues in a way that supports Islanders best. There are, of course, numerous ways in which primary care can be funded, and it is important that we consider those options carefully to ensure a sustainable model is identified. We know also that there are concerns with the payment of social security contributions. While we have a contribution period of 47 years, there are people who have a full record that because they are still in work, they are still paying contributions, which they feel is unfair. This is one aspect that I would like to review once we have the actuarial reports. The 47-year period itself may benefit from review, but we have to remember that contributions pay for pensions and most of us are living for significantly longer than previous generations did when pensions were introduced. Another aspect is the way we calculate contributions. It cannot be right with modern recordkeeping that we calculate a person’s contributions on the basis of their earnings 2 years ago. This, in particular, can hinder entrepreneurs who may be asked to pay contributions based on a salary they no longer have. I will be reviewing the business startup scheme for social security to ensure that it operates effectively and does not restrict creativity, innovation and economic growth by limiting new business. We also need to seek the views of stakeholders in the business community. In long-term care, we have a benefit system that supports many older Islanders enabling them to obtain the care they need, whether that is in their own home or in a care home. It is likely that long-term care contributions will require review once we have the actuarial reports. Both the funding model and the benefit itself will need further consideration as we look to the future to ensure it is available for those who need it in years to come. That was highlighted in this year’s budget. In talking about pensions thus far, I have referred, of course, to the States old age pension. That pension is, in comparison to some of our neighbours, more generous than others but it is, at best, a safety net. Like most state pensions, it was not designed to replace a working-age salary in its entirety. Where we fall short of some of our neighbours is in not having a secondary pension scheme that allows people to save effectively for their retirement throughout their working life. I worked on this over 2022 and 2023, and those plans were understandably deferred, but this is a vital piece of work that I intend to pursue over this term. If we can enable people to build a separate pension pot to draw on in retirement that will avoid the embarrassment some older people feel in having to seek income support. It is important that we structure a scheme that works for Jersey, that does not seek to copy something that operates in a much bigger country, or which establishes expensive and burdensome bureaucracy and systems. Simplicity, ease of operation and effectiveness will be key to introducing a new pension scheme. I am under no illusion that this may be another controversial proposal, but I

will work with all stakeholders to ensure we can deliver a scheme. I believe this would be a real legacy for this Assembly that is genuinely a matter of clear, long-term strategy which will support Islanders into the future. Many Members will be aware of the Transform project, which will replace the existing social security and income support systems with a new system. It is long overdue and, as these projects so often do, has taken longer than we would have liked to deliver. It is essential that we complete that work as soon as we can to create a better interface and better experience for Islanders. Lastly, we need appropriate, effective liaison with stakeholders. There are numerous stakeholders in social security, and we need to make sure we speak to them and, indeed, to the public about how best to develop our systems. It is impossible to comment on everything the department does in a relatively short speech, but I am happy to take questions. Thank you. **[Approbation]**

The Bailiff:

The first question is from Deputy Andrews.

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

Can the candidate confirm whether she supports reintroducing a full States grant for the 2028 Budget?

Senator M.E. Millar:

I believe that is what the current Budget says, and no doubt I would support that. As I did mention, however, actuarial reviews are underway at present. When we have those reviews, we will be able to look, from an informed basis, of what we do regarding funding the scheme going forward. The social security funds are very healthy. We have considerable amounts of money in reserve, and we need to think about the wisdom of continuing to put funds into a fund that may not need it. That is an ongoing piece of work which will happen when we see the actuarial reviews.

5.1.2 Deputy M.B. Andrews:

In the last Government Budget, between £42 million to £45 million of forecast investment income from the reserve was going to be used to supplement the Social Security Fund. I want to know whether the Minister supports me on this, that such investment income should be withheld in its entirety?

Senator M.E. Millar:

Sorry, Sir, can I ask the Deputy what he means by “withholding it in its entirety”?

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

So the investment income will be retained in the reserve, and it will not be used to supplement the Social Security Fund.

Senator M.E. Millar:

I think the Social Security Reserve Fund as a whole may be used to supplement the payment of social security. The Social Security Reserve Fund was designed years ago to help us deal with the increasing population. We are in a position where we have a smaller number of people paying in potentially and a larger number of people seeking pensions so the fund, as a whole, will have to be used and I think to carve out investment returns may not be possible.

5.1.3 Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

The Minister mentioned that there is significant spend on the Transform programme, currently about £30 million allocated. Given the cross-cutting impact of Transform, how will she work with other Ministers to ensure that this significant spend in digital provides wider improvements for digital across the Council of Ministers in Government and is not just a siloed project.

Senator M.E. Millar:

The system is designed to address, I believe, social security and income support contributions in those related functions. To the extent the system can be enhanced for use in other departments, then I would support that. It makes complete sense to do that. I think the social security system captures information about very many ... in fact, there are very few of us who will not be on that system in some capacity. It is sensible that we use it to its best advantage within the scope of Islander expectations about the information Government holds and how it is used but, yes, in principle, that is something that we should be looking to do.

5.1.4 Deputy A.F. Curtis:

I think one of the common challenges facing digital investment in Government has been that improvements and change stop at the end of a project or a programme. How will the Minister ensure that in the case of Transform and other projects that there is a move to continuous development and improvement in digital and that the systems do not freeze the moment funding and capital ends?

Senator M.E. Millar:

I think that is an ongoing issue for Government as a whole. I absolutely accept that, and not just Government, many businesses put in new systems and then think: "Hurrah, that is it." He used the word, I believe, "continuous" improvement. I absolutely agree. We should always be seeking to look for improvements and enhancements in all of our systems, in all of our practices, and I.T. systems should not be exempt from that general principle. I would certainly support continued work to make sure our systems are as good as they possibly can be.

5.1.5 Deputy M.R. Ferey of St. Saviour:

I was very encouraged to hear the candidate mention workplace pensions or autoenrollment, as it is known in the U.K., and that that would be a legacy of her tenure. When does she envisage such a scheme coming into force?

Senator M.E. Millar:

I have been trying to avoid the term "autoenrollment" because it causes terror in the hearts of employers, but it may or may not operate in that effective way. Given the work that was done already, I would like to see that coming in before the end of this term. I had hoped that it would start in January 2026, and I would certainly hope we could see it coming in before we all head off in 2030.

5.1.6 Deputy M.R. Ferey:

Does she see such a scheme being match funded between employer and employee?

Senator M.E. Millar:

I think the reality is that without contributions from employers and employees, the scheme will not reach critical mass quickly enough. It would be, I would envisage, a relatively slow and timely period in which contributions start because clearly it will have an impact on employees. The transition into that scheme will have to be relatively slow and very careful but it will need both sets of contributions to become economically viable in a reasonable time.

5.1.7 Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South:

I seem to have missed if the candidate mentioned about the living wage in her opening speech. Does the candidate for Minister support the transition to the minimum wage being a living wage?

Senator M.E. Millar:

The minimum wage has increased dramatically over the last 4 years. In 2022, I increased it to £10.50, which was a little more than the recommendation of the Employment Forum at that time. Since then, it has been increased by a further £3.09. I think it has reached two-thirds of median, which was what this Assembly was seeking to do. Clearly, a living wage has lots of supporters and we all want people

to have good wages, but the States Assembly proposition said we had to be aware of economic conditions. The increases that we have seen were supported by investment of £20 million over the last 2 years by this Assembly into both farming and fishing to enable them to pay those higher wages and into the economy generally to help support employers. We always have to be aware of economic situation. The last thing we want is to increase the wage to the level that nobody can afford to pay it and we see people having hours cut and possibly even losing jobs. Any increase has to be taken very carefully, and we have to make sure that all stakeholders are consulted, but in principle, yes, a move to living wage is a good thing. Whether we can deliver that in every case is a question mark that needs very careful thought.

5.1.8 Deputy T.A. Coles:

Does the candidate acknowledge the connection between employees having enough money to contribute to a secondary pension if their initial wages do not cover their cost of living and therefore, they are being supplemented by Government through income support?

Senator M.E. Millar:

Yes, indeed I do. That is why I said the pension will be controversial. We have to think about how we enable that. Every money adviser you speak to will tell you that the sooner you start saving into a pension, the better it is. We are not well-placed in Jersey to enable people to do that. I think there is only something like 30 per cent of employees - it certainly was 30 per cent - have formal workplace pensions, pensions from their employers, and those who have private pensions, it is generally people who have higher earnings. The more we can do to enable people to save for their older age, the better. I do accept that will be challenging and we need to think carefully about how we do that.

5.1.9 Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

The outgoing Minister worked with the Health and Social Security Panel to find a way forward on an amendment to the last Budget which committed the Minister to provide options for those who have achieved a full contribution record prior to reaching pensionable age to ensure a fair deal for the individuals affected and to bring forward proposals in 2026. Will the Senator endorse that commitment and commit to bringing forward those options in short order so that a solution can be found?

Senator M.E. Millar:

I think I touched on that in my speech the fact that there are people who have a full contribution record because they started work at a young age, they have continued work and they are still in work. Some people do like to work beyond retirement age, but even before it, so there are people exactly in that bracket.

[11:30]

Yes, I am sure options are in train, and that I will be presented with those options. Yes, absolutely, I will consider those. As I say, we do need to think about them in the context of the actuarial reviews and the future funding of the scheme but, yes, absolutely in principle when people have a full contribution record, it does not feel right asking them to keep paying.

5.1.10 Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

I am grateful for that response. Does the Minister have a timeline when she may expect to bring something forward, bearing in mind the decision was within 2026, and how quickly does she think that action could follow that proposal?

Senator M.E. Millar:

As I say, I have not seen what work has happened in the last 6 months. I am sure the options will come with their own complexities and timeframes. I am sure each will have an implication

financially for the fund and for timing, and I will seek to reflect what the Assembly agreed in December.

5.1.11 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour:

The Senator will be aware that the Scrutiny Panel published the Family Friendly Legislation Review near the end of last term, and the previous Minister gave a holding response. Will the Senator commit to publishing her views on the recommendations within this review - a full response - and will she make this a priority and do that as soon as possible?

Senator M.E. Millar:

Yes, if that is an outstanding piece of work then clearly it has to be completed and, to the extent the Minister has an obligation to complete work, then I will publish a response to recommendations as soon as that is possible.

5.1.12 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

One of the concerns that were raised in submissions to that review was around families living in poverty, questions that I asked of the Chief Minister. As the Minister for Social Security is in a unique position to impact this, what are the Senator's plans to address child poverty in Jersey?

Senator M.E. Millar:

As I have said several times - well, it feels like numerous times during the election - to address a problem we first have to understand it. I would propose to sit down with relevant stakeholders, understand where child poverty exists, what the reasons for it are, and consider ways to address it in the most targeted and effective way. I am sure the department may have considered that already in the last couple of years or more recently and I will take advice from officers and look at how we address that going forward.

5.1.13 Deputy S.J. Gleave of St. Helier South:

I was pleased to hear the Senator talk about the long-term care scheme in her speech. The long-term care scheme is poorly understood by many Islanders, particularly they do not really get to grips with this until they need to claim. Many believe that they are paying into an insurance scheme that will provide them with care as and when they need it, but in practice, those with assets when support is required can be delayed by as much as 3 years and is only then a contribution. The £419,000 asset level has not been changed since 2014. Does the Senator believe the scheme is currently fair and properly understood, and what practical steps would they take to ensure it is fit for Jersey's ageing population?

Senator M.E. Millar:

Long-term care is a system of which we should be rightly very proud on this Island. I am astonished to hear about a 3-year delay. You may be right in the sense that people do not get to grips ... people would not necessarily investigate benefits until they do need them. What I always say to people is that as soon as they have a care need, then they should start going to talk to the department. In 2022 and 2023, that was one of my priorities in trying to make sure that long-term care is communicated as effectively as possible. The department took that challenge on and have produced revised guidance notes which look at assets. It works very well. It is a universal benefit. It helps people depending on their care needs and on their finances. I think there is some confusion about it, and my understanding is basically that if you have assets you are expected to pay a contribution of up to £60,000 towards the cost of your care. Beyond that, you will then receive the benefit regardless of what your assets are at that time. The £419,000 has not been upgraded. That particular disregard was created because there was a concern at the time long-term care was introduced that there would be people who were, as we would say, asset rich and cash poor and that they have a home, but they have no income. It enabled them to take bonds against the value of the property to enable them to

pay the contribution from the asset that was not liquid. That has very rarely happened and most people who have illiquid assets also have cash assets and have been able to pay their own contribution. As I said, the whole thing needs review when we have the actuarial report. We will have to look at both the contribution and the benefit. The Long-Term Care Fund is spending more than it receives. That is not sustainable. As I say, there are some difficult decisions ahead. This was highlighted in this year's Budget. This Assembly will have to look both at how we contribute into the fund and the benefit we pay, and that is something that I expect to be bringing forward in the future.

5.1.14 Deputy S.J. Gleave

That has demonstrated to a degree the lack of understanding from everybody about long-term care. The 3 years is if you are assessed at level 1 and if you have an asset of £419,000 and over, you have to pay for your care for just short of 3 years if you are assessed at level one for 3 years. It is no longer a financial limit, it is a time limit, and then that goes down at level 2, level 3 and level 4. I think we could be introducing greater flexibility in terms of how it is spent, but would the Minister commit to sitting down with me and I can take her through it? We can potentially look at flexible decisions and a way to improve it going forward, but certainly we need to improve how it is understood by everyone.

Senator M.E. Millar:

If there is a time limit, it is not something I was aware of. It must be something that has been done in the last couple of years, but I do not understand that concern. It is not my understanding of the scheme and there are lots of misunderstandings of the scheme as to how it works on a day-to-day level. It is a very complicated beast to explain to people. That is the problem, but officers work very hard to try and do that. We have worked very hard in the past on communication, and we will continue to do that.

5.1.15 Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier Central:

Following the unanimous agreement for whistleblowing legislation which was due to be brought forward in December 2024, obviously there were delays and the previous Minister instead has presented the draft law as a report in March of this year. Will the Senator commit to ensuring that this legislation is brought forward as legislation and enacted accordingly?

Senator M.E. Millar:

The Assembly approved the principle of whistleblowing legislation. I have not read the draft law, but I see no immediate reason why I would not bring that forward.

5.1.16 Deputy C.S. Alves:

Is the Senator able to give me an idea of timing for that please?

Senator M.E. Millar:

Not at this stage, sorry.

5.1.17 Connétable S.W. Pallett of St. Brelade:

Deputy Coles mentioned living wage. While calling on St. Brelade's residents during the recent election, it became clear to me that pensioners living solely off Jersey's state pensions are struggling to meet the costs of day-to-day living. Would the Senator consider a comprehensive review of the current level of state pension to ensure it really is a living pension, a pension that gives our senior citizens a decent quality of life and are not scared to venture out because of the costs?

Senator M.E. Millar:

I think if a pensioner is struggling to live on the state pension, income support would be available to them. There are other safety nets available for pensioners. There are other benefits, such as Pension Plus. As I mentioned in my speech, pensions were never designed to replace a wage. I think in most jurisdictions pension is about a third of average wages or they are a third measured against a certain level of earnings. A massive increase in pensions would involve a massive increase in contributions, I suspect. The fund is having to pay pensions for very much longer than it might have expected, I think, when pensions were originally introduced in the 1950s in the U.K. The average person retired at 65 and died at 68. People are now living into their 80s and 90s. We have to take cognisance of that, and we also need to be fair to younger generations who are to be having to make those costs. I did say that we need to look at the funding, the nature of our fund, and how we continue to fund it going forward. Bear in mind that pensions are no longer for 3 years, they may be for 30 or more years, and we must be sure that we can pay them for everybody and not just for a small few for a small period of time.

The Bailiff:

That brings the period of questions to an end. As there were no other nominations and the question period has been completed, I am pleased to confirm that Senator Millar has been selected for appointment as Minister for Social Security. **[Approbation]**

6. The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

The Bailiff:

We now move on to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning. Chief Minister, your nomination, please.

Senator L.J. Farnham:

I am pleased to nominate Deputy Catherine Curtis for the role of Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning.

The Bailiff:

Is the nomination seconded? **[Seconded]** Are there any other nominations? There are no other nominations. I invite Deputy Catherine Curtis to speak for up to 10 minutes, after which there will be a period of questions for up to 20 minutes.

6.1 Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central:

States Members will be aware that I have chaired the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel for the last 4 years. During this time, I and panel members produced the Secondary Education Funding Review, the Online Harms Review and the Lifelong Learning Review, along with many other reports. We have been fortunate to engage with many headteachers, other education professionals, parents and young people. We have raised issues in public hearings and held many private meetings too, for example with educational psychologists and with the Jersey Early Years Association and received expert testimony from organisations such as the Jersey Child Care Trust and the teaching unions. We brought many amendments, including urgent upgrades to Highlands College infrastructure. As well as bringing up my own children, I have looked after other children too. I was a foster carer for about 5 years. I am familiar with the processes involved in the care of looked-after children, and I completed the Solihull training to the highest level. The reason I mention this in my speech as Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning is to state clearly that we must ensure that children who have gone through such difficult circumstances must be given due appreciation of those circumstances at school and may well need extra support. This brings me on to the subject of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, S.E.N.D. for short, because we have to acknowledge the extra needs that some of our children face. As we know from the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry, children have not been well-served in Jersey. There are many improvements

underway since the publication last year of the S.E.N.D. review, and the immediate priorities plan must be fully implemented. I would like to see the project for the development of Mont à L'Abbé School to expand capacity accelerated. We know there are children who are in mainstream schools who could be better served at Mont à L'Abbé. We also know that one reason mainstream schools are falling into deficit is because of the high cost of extra staff needed to assist with those children with extra needs. I would like to work with the Minister for Children and Families and the Minister for Health and Social Services to look at ways to speed up the process for assessments. Currently schools have to manage pupils with those extra needs while waiting for assessments to take place and therefore the extra funding for S.E.N.D. and records of needs could be implemented more quickly. While S.E.N.D. is a complex subject, the point to always keep in mind is that every child deserves an education that is appropriate to the child's age, ability, and aptitude and, indeed, this is prescribed in the Education Law 1999. While many families and children are happy with their school experience, we could benefit from more data collection and publication.

[11:45]

Evidence-based assessment would assist in making improvements to the curriculum and pedagogy. Regarding further education, as Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, I would be checking up on the current situation regarding V. (Vocational) Levels due to be implemented in the U.K. in September next year and how they are carried out because, as a small jurisdiction, we may not have the ability to source placement requirements. As for universities, I, myself, have worked with Nottingham Trent University and Portsmouth University on 2 different business projects, so I am familiar in engaging with universities and involving them in projects. I am aware of the many problems that Jersey students have when studying in the U.K., from my own family experience and from hearing from the Student Loans Support Group and from other students directly. There are relatively small things that Jersey could do to assist our students studying in the U.K. For example, the fact that many of them have to pay a guarantor perhaps around £80 per month to rent their student homes because Jersey-based guarantors are not normally accepted. I would like to see if we can sort that problem out. We do need to think more carefully about student finance more generally and its sufficiency. Currently, only students with a parental income at or below £52,600 receive a full maintenance grant. A family income above this level means they can only study if they have a very supportive family and/or if they can work extra hours around their study time. It is not easy to get employment in the U.K. right now. At least students studying in Jersey now have access to the maintenance grant, so it would be good to also extend the subject opportunities here at degree level. Of course, not all young people want to study a degree, and some are much more suited to apprenticeships. While chair of the C.E.H.A. (Children, Education and Home Affairs) Panel, we completed - with the addition of Deputy Tadier - our Lifelong Learning Review in February this year. We received submissions from young people, parents, organisations and businesses, and we had an expert review as well. I intend to follow through with the recommendations and will be seeking the support of the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development to bring the recommendations to action. It is imperative that Jersey does not hold back on investing in skills. Although there is more cost upfront, it is essential to our economy to have skilled workers. It is also another reason for young people to stay here, that they have more opportunities. We need to invest in people to reskill too. As the job market changes due to A.I., Jersey will be ahead of the game if we have multi-skilled workers. While there is much good work carried out by Highlands College and Skills Jersey, as well as our schools, I would like to broaden the scope of some of these organisations to ensure that barriers to learning are removed, awareness of opportunities improved, and that there are many more vocational opportunities for young people within the school curriculum and more business involvement. Now I am happy to move on to an apparently very contested subject: the development of a new school on the Gas Place site. This was proposed by the Government in 2022. It was not a Reform Jersey project as publicised by certain people during the elections. The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture, in 2022, described the town school project as, and I quote: "Absolutely vital that children in town

have access to modern, high-quality facilities and outdoor play areas.” I do not think any States Member would disagree with that. St. Luke’s, Springfield and La Passerelle School infrastructure still needs improvement. Four years on, that situation has not changed. Clearly though, the numbers may have changed, although this is more likely to affect schools in the countryside. The Education Law 1999 requires the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture each year to assess the current and future requirements for a provision of school places by reference to the ages and numbers of the children of Jersey. That is the law. So, I will be looking at those figures in the light of the declining birth rate. Of course, if there was a better way to provide the necessary improved school facilities in town rather than building on Gas Place, then that would be a good outcome. However, all previous research shows that the new school on the Gas Place site is likely to be the best option. One very immediate priority is the matter of excessive heat in schools. Due to climate change, this is unlikely to be a problem that will go away. Therefore, there will have to be a centralised action plan in place for all schools to manage this issue so that everyday education is not disrupted. Now, I would like to mention some of the recent successes. The extended nursery provision enabling parents to have more choice about work or staying at home and the well-known benefits to young children. Although there were some concerns around the funding and payment processes, overall, it has been a big success and there have been great pilot projects too. The changes in the school leadership structure also are very interesting and I think will prove to be very beneficial. The limits on mobile phone use in schools have been welcomed by families, teachers and children. This was implemented by the Minister during the ongoing work on online harms by the Panel. The school meals programme is a wonderful outcome to some very diligent work undertaken by officers, States Members and schools. I would encourage all States Members to visit the schools. It is lovely to see children sitting at the table together, eating good quality food. Finally, a surprising point is that this is not the first time I have been nominated as Minister for Education. I am sure we are all aware of the good work that has gone into teaching children at school about political systems. Many years ago, when I was in prep 4 - as it was then called - at F.C.J. (Faithful Companions of Jesus Primary School), we learned about U.K. politics and held mock elections. I was nominated as Minister for Education. **[Laughter]** So not the first time for me, but I hope I will be able to fulfil actual improvements this time. I thank the Chief Minister for his nomination. **[Approbation]**

The Bailiff:

The first question is from Deputy Morel.

6.1.1 Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

During the election, it was unfortunate, but I was approached by 2 parents who did not know me and I was not knocking on their door. They approached me in the street and also in the hustings. I was asked a question about special educational needs. One of the parents asked me the question: “What proportion of those parents who complained about special educational needs provision was subsequently investigated by Social Services?” Of course, I did not know the answer. They said 100 per cent. I do not know how correct this is, but I would like to know what the candidate will be doing to understand the veracity of this statement. If it is found to be true, what is her opinion of that?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

During my time on the Panel, I did not shy away from meeting parents who were very concerned about how they were being treated in this way and tried to assist them to work things through as best as possible. Partly with raising many concerns around this and other people’s concerns, that is why the S.E.N.D. review was looked into and published last year. It is one of the reasons why. I think one of the really important priorities in that review is to involve parents in regular discussion meetings with teachers and the headteachers and the department. I know that there is ongoing independent checking up on the procedure of how the review outcome is going. I will be keeping a close eye on that.

6.1.2 Deputy K.F. Morel:

If correct, such statements suggest a very vindictive attitude within the Education Department. Does the candidate believe that that attitude may exist? If so, what will she do about them?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

It is very hard to know how something which one person has complained about is broadly there. There have been changes in some of the top areas in the department already. There have been new people coming in and so it is quite a new broom, in a way. I think that could solve any of those potential problems. But like I said, it needs checking up on.

6.1.3 Deputy M.R. Ferey of St. Saviour:

I was encouraged, in the candidate's speech, to hear her mention play spaces in schools. We have some wonderful play spaces in schools which unfortunately are not available to many children and young people when the schools are closed. Will the candidate commit to seeking to make those play spaces in schools as available as possible to all children and young people at all times?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, it is a good question. I think part of the problem so far has been that a lot of the school buildings are not very well designed to allow for outside people to come in when there might be still be children using the school, even after school time, due to safeguarding concerns. I would like to see if there is a way to progress any of the work that has been going on so far, to see how there are workarounds around that problem. Any new build will include that aspect of being a community school at the same time, but the current buildings that we already have are not always very easily accessible, as I said. But there must be ways to improve on that.

6.1.4 Deputy M.R. Ferey:

Will the candidate commit to working with other Ministers to implement the recommendations in the play strategy, which was implemented within the last Government?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I am very much supportive of the play strategy and would really look forward to working with the Minister for Children and Families and any others to support that.

6.1.5 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

The Minister referred to the fact that the recent heatwave had shown issues at schools where the working temperatures were far too high for the teachers, staff and pupils. Does she agree that, in some of these cases, this is a good example of a false economy where schools have been historically forced to choose between ventilation - for example, windows that cannot open - versus other spending in the school and that we are reaping the consequences of this poor planning and false economy now?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes. Unfortunately, there has been an awful lot of misinformation over the years about the effects of climate change. It is unlikely this is just a one-off or 2-times-off heatwave so far this year. I think it has to be acknowledged now. It could have been acknowledged earlier but it was not perhaps considered well enough. There are a variety of things that schools can do to counteract the heat in schools but clearly headteachers and the other professionals in the school ... schools already have a job to do, and it is the responsibility of the department to bring about a full strategy for this.

6.1.6 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Minister accept that these problems pre-date modern climate change concerns? That what we are seeing here is often at the building stage, in order to keep cost down, certain things have been scrimped on, not done, i.e. ventilation, which has a consequence in the future. Will she resist any

such suggestion that any future schools that are built or anything in the portfolio should be done properly to avoid these kinds of scenarios happening again?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, it is a false economy to not do things which need correcting at a later stage. It is much cheaper at the new build stage to do something than later on to try and put it right. That is not economic good sense anyway. It is also disruptive to pupils and the staff.

6.1.7 Deputy L.D. Carpenter of St. Helier Central:

The U.K. Government has recently announced a ban on social media use for children under the age of 16, following a similar ban introduced in Australia. Would the candidate consider such a ban appropriate for Jersey?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

As I am sure all States Members know, the panel produced the Online Harms Review. We started that in 2024. The purpose of that was to try and raise the issue, make it much more of an awareness with Government and to set out the basic premises of the problem. Since that time, we have watched closely how things like the U.K. Online Safety Act are proceeding. The Online Act in Ireland, for example, which has brought quite a number of cases against the big tech companies and fined them quite a lot of money.

[12:00]

Unfortunately, none of these things have managed to curtail the violence and illegal nature that children are exposed to online. I always considered a complete ban for all under-16s of social media to be a backstop position. But I think it is one that we may have to do because expecting the online big companies to take any notice of us, or even bigger nations, is probably not going to happen.

6.1.8 Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

Deputy Carpenter has just touched on the harms and the dangers of digital. Turning to digital education and skills, these will be essential in our schools to create a digital and skilled workforce. From her experience, will the candidate provide her assessment of our current digital education syllabus and model? How will she ensure that the policies, teaching and skillsets remain up to date in such a fast-changing domain?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Unfortunately, it seems like the digital education strategy has not progressed as I thought it would. Certainly, digital is a big part of our world now and everyone needs to know how to use it. I would like to speak to Digital Jersey more and other knowledgeable people in the area. Parents do not want their children on screen for too long during the day, so we have to consider that. Certainly, as children get older, they need to know an awful lot about digital and how to use it safely and intelligently, so it is one area where I think things have fallen behind a little bit.

6.1.9 Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Digital education also extends to lifelong learning, which is in the candidate's title. Does she see an opportunity for more and different delivery of digital skills to equip our existing workforce? If so, how does she plan to work with other Ministers, including the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development with responsibility for Digital Jersey and Jersey Business, to ensure that the Council of Ministers has an aligned holistic direction on digital?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, there are certain problems which are, I would imagine, not quite straightforward to solve. For reskilling, a lot of people might want to take up some digital training. Unfortunately, at the moment,

to get their skills grants they have to apply for a grant training that is within the area they are already working in, so I think that is a definite thing that needs changing. I would be very happy to work with the other Ministers to progress this, and I think it is very important that we get on with this work.

6.1.10 Connétable A.N. Jehan of St. John:

Building on Deputy Ferey's question, would the candidate support a proposition for the use of all government-owned school facilities to be used for sport and community use outside of school hours under a centralised booking system?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, of course, except it has to be possible and practical. So, we have to overcome those difficulties and set out how it can be done while children may still be on the premises.

6.1.11 The Connétable of St. John:

I know the Deputy takes a solutions-based approach, would the candidate agree that many schools already have C.C.T.V. (closed-circuit television) and that with small investment in C.C.T.V. then outside play space could be open across a school estate after school hours?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, of course, and I would be happy to talk to the Connétable about it more.

6.1.12 Deputy V. Li of St. Helier North:

The October 2025 Island S.E.N.D. review set out clear failings in provision. Which of its recommendations will the Deputy implement in her first year?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I want to continue with all the priorities that were set out to be implemented. I do not know yet which ones are the easier ones to implement more quickly; I will have to work on that. The one that I think is the most important is the participation of parents with the department and the headteachers and teachers because I think the parent voice has not been acknowledged sufficiently in the past.

6.1.13 Deputy V. Li:

The panel also produced the Priority Delivery Plan; if so, will she publish a delivery timeline that the panel can hold her to?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I think as soon as it is possible to do so, it would be a good thing to set out the priorities and, in a timeline, if that is possible, yes.

6.1.14 Deputy G.A. Raimondo of St. Brelade:

Could the Deputy speak to her thoughts on adapting the structure of the P.S.H.E. (Personal, Social, Health and Economic) curriculum to include standardised teaching in areas such as sexual education, financial skills, violence against women and girls, and also Jersey's political system?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I will need to check on the current curriculum around P.S.H.E. I think that a lot of these things are already covered; perhaps they can be done more or in a better way. It is certainly something that I need to check on more at this stage. The Curriculum Council is responsible for putting these things together, so the whole curriculum I am willing to have a look at.

6.1.15 Deputy G.A. Raimondo:

Would the Deputy push for additional hours moved towards the P.S.H.E. curriculum and also, again, standardising that system so that we have the same teaching across schools in the Island?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

It is a very interesting point because I know that some schools do like to take their own approach a little bit more. I know there are also many people who want a more standardised way of this happening across all schools. At this stage, I can only say it is something I will look into.

6.1.16 Connétable I. Gardiner of St. Helier:

We agree with the candidate that children of St. Helier deserve a modern school. Saying this, we also need a green space. The Gas Place site was secured in the Bridging Island Plan following the amendment from Deputy Ward in 2021; since then, other sites have become available. Would the candidate consider to look at other options to secure that both priorities for St. Helier can be delivered? As an example, Apollo Hotel site that was proposed for the housing, but nothing was built or many other sites that might have become available since 2021.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, as I have already said, it is part of the Education Law that the Minister must look each year at the numbers and the placements for schools. Many people I have spoken to during the elections wanted the school to go ahead very much; there were other people who do not want the school to go ahead on Gas Place. I think it is my duty as Minister to look at the numbers again. I think an awful lot was looked into before, as the Connétable will know, but I am happy to look at it again, bearing in mind that it is part of my duty to do so.

6.1.17 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Would the Minister commit that whatever decision will come forward will be discussed at the Assembly and the community will fully be involved as to how the place is developed as a community asset, even on the Gas Place site, or any other sites in proximity to the place?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I am always for sharing of information and getting feedback from the community on what they want. I will have to look how the normal ministerial processes have unfolded before this time as well and what is expected there.

6.1.18 Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and St. Mary:

As I am sure the candidate will be aware, in the next year or 2 the 3-year pay settlement, which was set at an R.P.I. (Retail Price Index) plus one pay settlement, will come to an end. Given the rhetoric in the elections about ensuring we get to grip of costs in government, I cannot believe that there will be an inflation-busting pay rise again for the pay settlement, but we have seen a great deal of union strike action from teachers in the past few years when it comes to pay. Could the candidate please explain how she would manage a potentially disgruntled workforce if such an R.P.I.-busting pay settlement is not delivered again this time?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

My way to try and manage anything like that is to invite people in and talk to them as much as possible, which is what we did as a panel over the disagreements between how the nursery funding should continue. Having not long ago spoken to some of the teacher unions, their main concern has been around the allocation of the planning and presentation time; that was agreed they will be able to have the extra marking time available instead of teaching. The funding has been put with the schools, but the schools can only put it into practice once they have extra staff to cover that time. So it is rolling out slowly; that has been the main concern that has been raised with me so far.

6.1.19 Deputy K.F. Morel:

From that perspective, does the candidate feel assured that there is not going to be such strike action by teachers in the coming years?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I do not know what they are going to do in the coming years. I have not heard anything raised about that; I can say that.

6.1.20 Deputy G.A. Raimondo of St. Brelade:

As the Deputy is in support of possibly introducing an under-16 social media ban, how would she work with the schools to ensure that 16 year-olds who are in their G.C.S.E. (General Certificate of Secondary Education) years are not affected with an introduction of social media?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Well, pupils at school at the moment are not permitted to use their mobile phones. The social media ban would be for 16 year-olds and under, so when young people are studying at school, they are not likely or should not be using social media at the time. I cannot go into detail how this will occur because it is something hypothetical and into the future.

6.1.21 Deputy G.A. Raimondo:

As we know, during G.C.S.E. periods 80 per cent of studying tends to be done outside of school and yet the schools have a large amount of influence in what happens. It would be incredibly important for something to be done within schools and with students who are ultimately about to sit exams that will affect the rest of their life.

The Bailiff:

Your question at the end?

Deputy G.A. Raimondo:

That will be, what will be done? Because it is important and we cannot neglect those students.

The Bailiff:

All right. You have got a few seconds left to reply, Deputy Curtis.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I am not sure about the meaning of the question. People will try and get past any limits on social media. This has happened in Australia, but what we have also seen is that the younger people are learning a way to go ahead without using social media every day.

The Bailiff:

The question period is now at an end, and I can confirm that Deputy Catherine Curtis has been selected for appointment as the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning. **[Approbation]**

7. The Minister for Children and Families

The Bailiff:

I now move to selection of the Minister for Children and Families. Senator Farnham, can we have your nomination?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

Yes, watching the World Cup last night, I noticed they have a hydration break now and again. Wondering if we do not get the air-conditioning fixed, we might need one of those later. I am very

pleased to nominate Connétable Richard Vibert of St. Peter for the role of Minister for Children and Families.

The Bailiff:

Is the nomination seconded? **[Seconded]** Are there any other nominations? There are no other nominations, and I invite the Connétable of St. Peter to speak for up to 10 minutes, after which there will be a question period of up to 20 minutes.

7.1 Connétable R.P. Vibert of St. Peter:

Firstly, I would like to thank the Chief Minister for my nomination. I seek support of Members for my re-election as Minister for Children and Families. I was appointed Minister in February 2024, having previously served as Assistant Minister for almost 3 years. During that time, I had the privilege of working alongside dedicated professionals, carers, young people and families who share a common goal ensuring that every child in Jersey has the opportunity to thrive. This portfolio carries responsibility for some of the most vulnerable members of our community, children in need of protection, children in care, care leavers, children with complex needs, young people experiencing mental health difficulties, and also youth services that help prevent problems before they arise. When I became Minister, I made a commitment to focus on delivery of long-term reform and improving outcomes for children and young people. I believe that commitment has been honoured and I am proud of the progress that has been made to date.

[12:15]

One of the achievements of which I am most proud has been the modernisation of Jersey's family and children's legislation. We abolished the concept of illegitimacy in law, ending a form of discrimination that had no place in modern society. We updated family legislation to reflect the reality of modern family life, including same-sex parents, fertility treatment and surrogacy. We also introduced parental responsibility agreements for step-parents. These reforms recognise a simple principle: every child deserves equal status, equal protection and equal recognition under the law. Alongside these changes, we strengthened children's rights. Independent advocacy is now a statutory right for children in care, care leavers and children with additional needs. We have continued the important work of embedding the U.N.C.R.C. (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) across Government, public authorities and the Parishes. These measures help ensure that children, particularly the most vulnerable, have a stronger voice in decisions that affect their lives. Legislation, however, is only part of the story. Real improvement also depends on strong services and a skilled workforce. When I became Minister, one of the most significant challenges was workforce instability. Too many children and families were experiencing changes in social workers and carers. Consistently, relationships which are critical for vulnerable children, were interrupted. We have therefore invested significantly in recruitment, retention and workforce development. We have reduced our reliance on agency staff from something like 65 per cent to 30 per cent and strengthened our permanent workforce. There is still work to do but we are moving in the right direction and providing greater continuity for the children and families who rely on our services. As a corporate parent I have focused on improving the care provision for children who cannot safely live at home. We have strengthened the Corporate Parenting Board and opened an additional children's home, improved governance arrangements and begun long-overdue investment in our residential estate, including the transformation of Greenfields secure home. Importantly, we also secured £22 million for a Children's Services Improvement Programme representing the most significant investment in children's services for many years. This programme will enable us to create services that are more responsive, more joined up and better able to meet the needs of children and families. Mental health has been another major priority. Demand for support has grown, both locally and internationally. Despite that pressure, C.A.M.H.S. (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) continues to perform strongly. Routine mental health assessments are completed on average within

32 days. We introduced 24-hour crisis mental health nursing support, expanded diagnostic assessment capability and completed record numbers of A.D.H.D. and autism assessments. We have also delivered Jersey's new all-age mental health strategy providing a clear framework for future improvements. I firmly believe that these achievements demonstrate the value of keeping C.A.M.H.S. within the Children and Families portfolio where vulnerable children receive the focus and visibility and the priority that they deserve. Prevention has been central to my approach as Minister. The best outcomes are achieved not only by responding to crises, but by helping families and young people before problems become entrenched. Last year alone more than 3,600 young people engaged with the Jersey Youth Service programmes while over 2,100 received targeted one-to-one support. These services play a vital role in keeping young people connected, supported and engaged in their communities. I am also proud of the progress we made on the new Ann Street Youth Centre. This represents one of the most significant investments in youth provision that Jersey has ever undertaken. It will create opportunities for generations of young Islanders and provide a modern, welcoming space where young people can develop skills, confidence and aspirations for the future. We must also recognise that many families continue to face significant financial pressures. The rising cost of living affects family stability and ultimately children's well-being. While some of these pressures are driven by global factors beyond our control, the Government has taken practical steps to support Islanders, which I have supported. Income support has increased, the enhanced Community Cost Bonus has been maintained, the minimum wage has continued its progression towards a living wage, and the cost of G.P. appointments has been reduced. We have expanded childcare support, introduced affordable hot school meals in primary schools, increased access to social housing and supported first-time buyers through the First Steps scheme. These measures are not simply economic policies, they are investments in children and families. Children thrive where families have stability, opportunity and confidence in their future. Of course, challenges remain. Demand for services continues to increase, recruiting foster carers remains difficult, placement sufficiency remains a significant challenge and workplace pressures persist in some areas. Leadership is not all pretending that challenges do not exist. Leadership is about recognising them honestly, addressing them openly and putting in place the measures needed to achieve improvement. That is the approach I have taken throughout my time as Minister, and it is the approach I will continue to take if re-elected. My priorities for the next term are clear. First, I will deliver the £22 million Children's Services Improvement Programme, bringing services together around the needs of the child and strengthening early intervention. Secondly, I will increase foster care and residential capacity so that more children in Jersey can receive the support they deserve. Third, I will complete the transformation of Greenfields and continue investing in specialist residential provision. Fourth, I will further reduce our reliance on agency staff and continue building a stable, highly skilled and well-supported permanent workforce. Fifth, I will reduce waiting times for neurodevelopmental assessments, strengthen support for neurodivergent children and fully implement the mental health strategy. Sixth, I will ensure the successful opening of the Ann Street Youth Centre and continue investing in prevention and youth services. Seventh, I will strengthen support for care experienced young people through improved housing, education, employment opportunities and the Care Experienced Fund. I will also work closely with colleagues to address the growing challenge of online harms affecting children and young people. This is an issue that concerns many parents, teachers and young people themselves. Recent discussions have highlighted strong concerns about harmful content, cyberbullying and online safety. At the same time, young people consistently tell us that digital platforms help them maintain friendships, access support networks and stay connected. Our response must be balanced, proportionate and informed by evidence. Most importantly, it must involve those affected. I will ensure that parents, young people, schools and experts all play a central role in shaping Jersey's future approach to online safety. Finally, I will be championing children's rights across every area of government, ensuring that the voice of children and young people remain at the heart of public decision making. Members, over the past few years I have demonstrated I can build consensus, deliver legislative reform, secure investment and drive meaningful change. The

foundations have been laid. The next term must be about building on that progress and turning reform into lasting transformation. This is the work that I have begun, and I wish to continue and complete. Members, I thank you for your support. **[Approbation]**

The Bailiff:

We now move to a period of questions, and the first question is from Deputy Feltham.

7.1.1 Deputy L.V. Feltham of St. Helier Central:

Both in his speech and previously, the Minister has described an effective crisis in the availability of beds for children in care, and the budget currently recognises that children's services are at a critical turning point. Will he commit to opposing any savings target, efficiency measure or budget decision that would slow down the expansion of residential care, weaken safe staffing or reduce support for foster carers?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

I certainly will. We have to complete the work that we have started. We have a number of premises: one has been completed; there are others at the planning stage. Likewise, with foster caring, we have introduced a new scheme called the Hive, which means that people group together to provide support. I do not wish to see any cuts in those initiatives so I would fight any cost savings in these areas.

7.1.2 Deputy L.V. Feltham:

I thank the Minister for his answer. My supplementary question then is that if the Minister for Treasury and Resources were to ask for savings from Children's Services, will the Minister say today that children in care, residential standards and foster care support are not the place to find them?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

I certainly would because for 10 years I think we struggled with the outcome of the Care Inquiry and in fact not a great deal of progress was made. We have secured £22 million. There is about £15.7 million in capital funds and the remainder in revenue. If we have that commitment, we cannot look to those areas for savings.

7.1.3 Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

Jersey is sending more children than ever before off-Island, and this did happen under the candidate's previous tenure as Minister for Children and Families. Obviously recognising the risks of grooming and the pervasive and persistent harm of being removed from everything and everyone you know, does the Minister predict this trajectory to continue or will he improve the situation of not sending children off-Island?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Thank you for that question. We certainly do not choose to send children outside the Island for other than very specialist reasons. We have overall reduced the numbers, although I do agree that I believe in the last 12 months we have seen an increase. Some of those are due to specialist needs, others because we have been hit with a crisis in the residential field in getting staff to staff our residential premises. We have a review of terms and conditions; unfortunately, as yet we have not been able to implement those improvements. That has not been our doing that we have not been able to do that; that has been external influences. I would say though that we are talking of a very small number of children sent to the U.K. I certainly think the number that has been sent in the last year is definitely in single figures and certainly below 5, so we are talking very small numbers. In the vast majority of cases, they are for very specialist reasons where it would be unhelpful for the child's well-being to remain in the Island.

7.1.4 Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I thank the Connétable for raising that there have been some difficulties within the system to help keep our children on-Island. If the Connétable could say, not only those challenges, but how he will overcome those challenges as soon as possible so we do not see any increase in trajectory to have more children going off-Island because we will not have staff to support in accommodation or in fact families who are willing to foster as well.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

It is a little difficult to speak about the reasons why we have not been able to implement the terms and conditions review. Prior to being selected for nomination for Minister, I did raise the matter and saying, irrespective of whether I was re-elected or not, that this was to be treated as a priority to resolve the issues that are preventing us implementing those improvements, because residential staff had not had a review for over 10 years and had slipped significantly behind other staff. You can clearly understand why we have had problems in recruiting those staff. I want to see a very quick end to that, and I can say that I am already treating it as a priority. I raised it before even my nomination came forward.

[12:30]

7.1.5 Deputy L.D. Carpenter of St. Helier Central:

The Children's Plan recognises that children's well-being depends on decent housing, enough food, and families being able to cope financially. Will the candidate commit to challenging any Council of Ministers' decisions that increases hardship for families with children, even if the decision formally sits in another Minister's portfolio?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

I think as Minister for Children and Families it is my duty to do that. Children's needs will come first. I think that in a way my position as Constable puts me in a position where I am very close to understanding about those families who find themselves in financial hardship. Even this morning, an email, a type of email which I receive probably a couple of times a week, was from a family who are now struggling. They are not on income support, but they are just below the threshold. They have had a 10 per cent increase in their childcare fees and they cannot meet those payments. I am very aware of the needs and I will challenge those.

7.1.6 Deputy L.D. Carpenter:

The candidate may have already answered this perhaps, but does he accept that child poverty is not only a Social Security issue but a Children and Families issue for which he must be an advocate inside Government?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Absolutely. I think people are well aware that we, as Parishes, see gaps in the social security scheme. It is an extremely good scheme but there are some things where there are gaps. The Parishes, I think all of them, will assist people where they fall in those gaps. It is a subject I am very close to. I understand it and one which I put my whole heart into trying to do something about.

7.1.7 Deputy S.J. Gleave of St. Helier South:

There is an ongoing concern about the attendance or the lack of attendance of children at La Passerelle and the risk of grooming that those children face when they are not at school. I was wondering how the Minister would work with the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning to help address that.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

I certainly have heard of this, and I think I will have discussions with the new Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning about how our staff, who are experienced in dealing with areas such as grooming, can assist. I am more than happy to do that.

7.1.8 Connétable I. Gardiner of St. Helier:

The court have repeatedly warned that children in our care go missing; we have missing behaviours from the care. Sometimes this missing behaviour is collated into secure care and some cases removed from the Island. What specifically will the candidate do differently this term to ensure that missing episodes will be decreasing, and it means less children and young people will go into secure care?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

I think I have a statistic that no other Member of the Assembly would be aware of. Last month the numbers of missing children had fallen by 94 per cent. I know the Police Chief is going to look into some of those figures more closely, but I think we are doing the right things at the moment. I have got a lot of faith in the staff, and certainly the number of reported missing had fallen by 94 per cent, which is a tremendous achievement. I do not think that is necessarily going to be that we will not see a slight rise again, I think that was perhaps a one-off, but the trend is downwards. We are working with young people to find out why they go missing and using measures to divert them from doing that. We appear to be having success, so I think I would continue doing very much what we are doing at the moment.

7.1.9 The Connétable of St. Helier:

I am very pleased to hear these numbers, and I hope it will not be a one-off and it will be a continued trend of reducing missing episodes. In this case, because we were not aware about the statistics for the last months, would the candidate also let the Assembly know about the stability of the placement because we had previously instability in the places and often changes of the placement for children. Were these changes reduced as well and, if not, what will the candidate do to ensure stability of the placements?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

There have been 2 factors that have affected stability of placements. One has been the lack of permanent staff, and we are working on that in the residential area. As I say, we have been frustrated in not being able to introduce the improvements we wish to improve in the package for those residential staff. The other has been, of course, the lack of suitable residential premises. For many years the properties that were allocated to Children's Services were often that which the Government had available, sometimes for fairly short terms. Of course, when we had to close premises because they needed them back, we then had to move the children again. We are bringing that to an end with our current project, and £15.7 million of the £22 million is being spent on what is now a 4-year plan 2026-2029 of creating permanent children's residential homes, each of which takes around between 3 and 4 children. We are happy that we will have sufficiency for the future; those are 2 initiatives combined. The terms and conditions review and the property review I think lay the foundations for a lot more stability.

7.1.10 Deputy V. Li of St. Helier North:

I am very delighted to hear that the Children's Service Improvement Programme committed a significant sum to invest in the service now, but the figure has never been the question. It is about whether that funding reached the children or not. What measurable improvement in outcomes for our most vulnerable children will the Constable be able to show?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

I think one of the main improvements that we will see, which I have touched on, is the fact that we will have permanent residential homes. There is nothing better for a child than a stable and loving

home. For those children who find themselves in a position of, in some cases, not having parents or not being with their parents, it is absolutely essential in the long term that, in effect, they feel that they are part of a family. That is what we are trying to achieve through our Loving Homes programme, so I think that is one of the major parts. The other is that there is stability with the staff that are in those homes, so we touch on that again in that those people are that child's family. If they are in the home for a number of years, it is very important that there is that sort of family atmosphere or family group. I think those are the 2 main things that I wish to deliver.

7.1.11 Deputy G.A. Raimondo of St. Brelade:

Can the Minister talk to if and how he would plan to support families and parents with transgender-identifying children?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

I recognise the challenges that that can present because very good friends of mine, who are foster parents, fostered a transgender child for many years. It was only through their caring that that child really had a successful outcome. It is an area that I think we possibly need more specialism, and it is one that I would like to look at further, having seen the experience of that family and the challenges that were presented as that young person grew through various stages of life.

7.1.12 Deputy G.A. Raimondo:

Following on from that, would the Minister support increasing the age threshold for young people wanting to access gender-affirming care?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

I am not going to make a commitment on that in this Assembly because I would want to see research, but I am completely open. At this point I have not got any set view about it, so let us see the research and let us see what that indicates we should do.

7.1.13 Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement:

I am aware that there are ongoing concerns about the grooming of children at La Passerelle. Could the Connétable explain what he would do to address those concerns and what he would also do to address the concerns of those children who are coming back into the Island who are subject to grooming and exploitation?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Well of course I do not think it is just these children, there are a much larger number in total. There are children being groomed throughout our Island, sadly. We have resources, we have people that specialise in that, and it is a problem. Yes, there is a particular problem in La Passerelle, and I have said we will work with the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning to understand that, but this is an issue that goes beyond just those 2 groups of children. We saw last year in a case that was in court that 43 children have been groomed as part of a gang which nobody knew of prior to that. I think that indicates just how big a problem this is and how we possibly need to look at how we can become aware at an earlier stage. Of course, children are very reluctant to talk about this. I had somebody who contacted me very recently about a child of theirs that had been groomed into criminal activity, a matter which I obviously passed on to the police so that they were aware of it. Establishing who is being groomed and when it is happening is a difficult task, but it is one that I think we can do more and we need to look at how we do that.

7.1.14 Deputy K.M. Wilson:

I wonder if the candidate would consider setting up a special piece of work to get to the heart of what is going on here. This kind of activity is affecting some of the most deprived areas of our community and I think it needs a dedicated focus. Will he commit to doing some work on this more so, please?

The Bailiff:

It will have to be a very short answer; we are on 20 minutes.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Yes, it will have to be a very short answer. As I said with a previous question, I am happy to look at evidence and look at a review committing to ...

The Bailiff:

That is long enough, surely?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Yes. Thank you. [Laughter]

The Bailiff:

That brings the time to an end. I can confirm that the Connétable of St. Peter has been selected for appointment as the Minister for Children and Families. [Approbation]

LUNCHEON ADJOURNMENT PROPOSED

The Bailiff:

Are Members content to adjourn now? The Assembly stands adjourned until 2.15 p.m.

[12:44]

LUNCHEON ADJOURNMENT

[14:17]

8. The Minister for the Environment

The Bailiff:

The next matter is the appointment of a new Minister for the Environment. Senator Farnham, would you wish to make your nomination?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

Yes, I do. I would like to propose Senator Mary Le Hegarat for the role of Minister for the Environment.

The Bailiff:

Is the nomination seconded? [Seconded] Are there any other nominations? Accordingly, I invite Senator Le Hegarat to speak for up to 10 minutes, after which there will be a period of questions for up to 20 minutes.

8.1 Senator M.R. Le Hegarat:

Firstly, I would to thank the Chief Minister designate, Senator Lyndon Farnham, for the nomination to serve as your Minister for the Environment. Having served as a Minister for the last 2½ years, I deeply understand the implications of the ministerial responsibility, how to manage complex departmental resources and what it means to be directly accountable to the public. Furthermore, I recognise the vital importance of fostering a productive, collaborative working environment with Members across this Assembly. This comes having chaired the Health and Social Security Scrutiny Panel between 2018 and 2022, making a significant difference to Islanders' lives, along with having done a second term between 2022 and 2024 on the Infrastructure, Housing and Environment Scrutiny Panel, as well as with departmental staff and our wider stakeholders. My connection to our countryside, our soil, our water and our rural economy is not merely theoretical, it is a long-standing

and central part of who I am. As a child working on a family farm, I assisted with managing cattle and growing a variety of crops and flowers. This early experience later followed by professional employment at Howard Davis Farm with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. An important feature of the environment portfolio, as highlighted in the Chief Minister's announcement on Friday, involves structural changes designed to optimise this role. It has long been recognised that there are inherent potentially conflicting pressures in processing planning matters, while simultaneously enforcing environmental protections. Housing both elements under one ministerial roof is not optimal for supporting either our economic aspirations or the Island's conservation goals. At this juncture I would like to acknowledge, as I am sure many in this Assembly will, the considerable work undertaken by the former Minister for the Environment, Deputy Steve Luce. **[Approbation]** By transferring planning policy and building control to a dedicated Minister for Planning and Regulation, this Assembly is empowering the environment portfolio to concentrate cleanly on protecting Jersey's natural environment, agriculture and marine sectors. This separation does not mean we are building independent silos; far from it. It lays the foundation for a more robust system of checks and balances. While the new Minister for Planning and Regulation will focus on reducing unnecessary bureaucracy, lowering costs and accelerating development timelines, the Environment Department will act as a statutory consultee and the environmental conscience of our Island. During the immediate transition period before the formal legal order establishes the new Ministry on 14th July, the designated Minister for Planning and Regulation will serve alongside me as Assistant Minister and sit on the Council of Ministers. Collectively, we will seek to create a unified framework where future developments meet both environmental aspirations and climate-resilient standards. This transition will be seamless. I bring 2 separate terms of experience serving on the Planning Committee. I am not stepping into this role in isolation purely on environmental mindset, I understand the operational realities, the technicalities of the Bridging Island Plan and the immense pressure our development sector faces. This background ensures that while the environment portfolio will act as a firm statutory consultee, it will do so with a pragmatic, constructive and legally informed perspective. With this dedicated focus, my work will be structured across 4 main areas. First, environmental protection. This Ministry is tasked with monitoring our Island's air quality, safeguarding our pressure water tables and mitigating statutory nuisances. This is critical work on the water quality and safety programme, while navigating the financial and technical aspects, ensuring our Island's long-term health is legally protected without causing undue cost spikes to local families. Second, upholding the rural economy, animal welfare and biosecurity. Jersey's farming heritage is a vital driver of our diverse, vibrant economy. This portfolio covers our agriculture and plant health inspectorates, oversees official veterinary services and ensures high animal welfare standards. To support our agricultural sector, my immediate priority is ensuring that our local farming industry remains financially viable amid shifting export dynamics and rising input costs. I will continue to review our rural support schemes, to reward sustainable land management and soil health. Third, marine and fisheries stewardship. Jersey is the custodian of 800 square miles of territorial waters. This demands a careful balance between the financial realities of our commercial fishing sector and the ecological need to safeguard vulnerable marine ecosystems. I propose continuing the positive work commenced by Deputy Luce and Deputy Morel in relation to dealing with our fishing community and matters which have arisen since Brexit. This programme needs to continue with pace. Finally, pragmatic climate and energy policy. We are charged with driving the Island's decarbonisation pathway as set out in the Carbon Neutral Roadmap. The Independent Climate Council progress report explicitly stated that our current trajectory, Jersey's 2030 interim carbon targets are unachievable. We need to consider this and what long-term financing strategy is required. Members of the States Assembly, the challenges facing our environment, our agriculture and our marine sectors require a steady hand, clear structural boundaries and an unshakeable connection to Jersey's heritage. By untangling planning and regulation from environment, we are creating a transparent accountable framework where progress does not come at the expense of protection. I bring the unique combination of front-line farming experience, 2 terms of rigorous Planning Committee oversight, and 2½ years of

ministerial delivery to ensure this transition succeeds from day one. I am ready to champion our rural economy, protect our waters and deliver a realistic, affordable decarbonisation pathway that respects household budgets. I ask you to trust me and support me in this Minister for the Environment role. Thank you. [Approbation]

The Bailiff:

We now move to 20 minutes of questions, and the first question is from Deputy Coles.

8.1.1 Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South:

The candidate for the Minister touched on this about the split between regulation and the environment. Does she believe then that for that split to work properly, enforcement should sit under her portfolio, so the rule maker is not also the enforcer?

Senator M.R. Le Hegarat:

In relation to the split between myself and the to-be Minister for Planning and Regulation, there is at the moment a split between the 2 departments and the regulations will fall into the other remit. Obviously there will still be enforcement that will need to be done within my remit and that will obviously follow, so there will be enforcement in my area as well as in the area of regulation.

8.1.2 Deputy T.A. Coles:

Does the candidate not see where this might be a conflict where you are asking the people who are, like you say, setting the rule for one set of enforcement actually enforcing that rule themselves rather than if you are going to hold enforcement within the Environment Department, that that enforcement should sit separately from the regulator itself?

Senator M.R. Le Hegarat:

I am not really totally sure exactly what the Deputy is asking. I think it is quite clear that there are regulations in relation to planning matters which will be falling under the regulation so that those matters will not be enforced by me, because obviously they are planning matters in relation to housing or infrastructure. However, what will happen is, is that because we will be working together there will be a remit for myself as a consultee to be able to input into those regulations and how they will be managed by the independent Minister for Planning and Regulation.

8.1.3 Deputy A. Maltman of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

What is the view of the candidate on the countryside access scheme and, when appointed, how would the candidate Senator work with the Infrastructure Department, farmers and landowners to improve safe walking and cycling routes, while protecting wildlife crops and the natural environment?

Senator M.R. Le Hegarat:

It is long recognised that certainly the eastern part of the Island has little or no walking or cycling routes, and this needs to be addressed. In relation to working with the Minister for Infrastructure, as a Member of the States for the last 8 years, I have always worked across all Ministries and across all parties in relation to both ministerial and Scrutiny. I think it is important that Ministers work together in areas where they both mutually have issues to deal with. In relation to farming and the environment, I think what we need to make clear is that whatever access schemes there are that we take into consideration, what actual areas these are and whether or not there is cattle or grazing in those areas. That needs to be essential, that when we allow the public access to certain areas that the public are fully aware of their obligations in relation to ensuring the welfare of animals in those areas, as well as allowing them access.

[14:30]

8.1.4 Deputy A. Maltman:

That is really promising to hear that from the Senator. Can I take it then that the Senator will take a joined-up plan between Environment and Infrastructure indeed to expand safe cycle paths and countryside access routes, especially in the rural Parishes?

Senator M.R. Le Hegarat:

My intention would be to be able to work with the Minister for Infrastructure to be able to secure those routes, as I said, particularly when we look at the east of the Island, where there is none, but I would say as well that I would want to ensure that the welfare of any livestock on any of these areas was the paramount, from my perspective, prior to any of that.

8.1.5 Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

In her speech, the Senator did not mention very much about the energy strategy that needs to be developed ahead of the 2026 deadline. Could she maybe give an indication of the priority that sits within in the next few months - until the end of 2026 for her - and would she be addressing the full breadth of that energy strategy, with generation, supply, storage, distribution and the legislative framework?

Senator M.R. Le Hegarat:

Sorry, Sir, can I ask the Deputy to repeat the last part of that question?

The Bailiff:

Yes.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Yes, the full breadth of the energy sector, which includes generation, supply, storage, distribution and legislative framework.

Senator M.R. Le Hegarat:

In relation to the energy strategy, obviously 2026 is fast approaching and there is only 6 months left. As soon as this Assembly is completed, it will be a priority of mine to be able to catch up with all of those officers in relation to the matters in relation to energy to be able to bring forward what we need to bring forward in relation to this term of office.

8.1.6 Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Could the Minister maybe explain or give her thoughts on if the energy strategy should include a review of the legislative and regulatory framework for the energy market, including the role and structure of Jersey Electricity, and if not, why not?

Senator M.R. Le Hegarat:

I think that all matters need to be considered. So, from my perspective, if you are going to be creating a strategy, you need to look at all elements of that strategy, and if you are talking about energy, there are different forms of energy. From my perspective, you need to be looking at everything. I will be obviously meeting with the various energy providers. This was something that I was doing when I was on the Infrastructure, Housing and Environment Panel. We had regular meetings with the Jersey Electricity Company and others in relation - and Jersey Water - to matters that we needed to bring forward, so it would be my view that, if I am elected today, I will be looking at those, and with those meetings, they will be fairly early doors.

8.1.7 Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

Re-declaring I am a field owner for this question. The candidate will recall the debate on field-mounted solar panels raised the topic of the use and enforcement of the Agricultural Land (Control

of Sales and Leases) Law. Will the Minister outline how she plans to use this law and other laws in her responsibility to support the agricultural industry?

Senator M.R. Le Hegarat:

It will be no surprise to the Deputy that in actual fact I declined - or did I say rejected - solar panels on both the east of the Island and of the west. From my perspective, I think that we need to take a better look at managing the Land Law 1974 because at the moment it is my feeling that we are not always doing it or delivering it to the best that we should be. From my perspective, we need to be looking at what the law has said, and it is quite explicit that land should be used for those that are bona fide agriculturalists or those ... if they are not bona fide agriculturalists, then they need to be leasing that land to people who are. In relation to the solar panel question, we were asked this previously and I do feel that we need to look at what other opportunities are there. Of course during the Senatorial elections there was much debate about whether or not some of the derelict glasshouse sites could be used, but also as well there is the opportunity to use roofs. That will obviously come in with the Minister for Infrastructure, because we obviously need to do that on States buildings. But also as well there are all sorts of other opportunities that we can do, and solar panels is not everything that we can be doing in relation to this. From my perspective, I would want to look at that law, as I have done in recent years.

8.1.8 Deputy A.F. Curtis:

I thank the Minister for that response. Just for the avoidance of doubt, if she could commit that she will use those powers in the law to protect land for farmers and give particular thought to the dairy industry, who have needs of contiguous land parcels. Conversations in recent years have highlighted their struggles to secure that, especially to those who are not farmers, who are buying it for, in essence, what acts like a larger parcel around their property but is causing real trouble for the dairy industry.

Senator M.R. Le Hegarat:

I thank the Deputy for the question. It will be no surprise that during my first term of office, and during the 2022 debate on the Bridging Island Plan, that I brought 3 propositions in relation to land which was used by a dairy farm at La Grande Route de Mont a l'Abbe, and we secured the prevention of that being used as a housing site. However, unfortunately the land was removed from that particular farmer, and it was one that was used for organic farming. We were also successful in one in relation to St. Ouen as well. So, I do think that we need to consider how we are going to implement these laws, because I am uncomfortable, as an individual, where we have large quantities of land being bought outside of those that are within agriculture. I do accept that there is a balance here, in that people need to be able to sell their land at a price that they want, but I think we need to be really mindful. But I think it is the Environment Department's remit to ensure that when land is being sold and transferred that all the rules are applied.

8.1.9 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

Does the prospective Minister believe that climate change is real, that climate change is being caused and exacerbated by manmade causes? If so, does she believe that Jersey has a responsibility - a moral responsibility - to do its part, like other countries, to mitigate carbon emissions?

Senator M.R. Le Hegarat:

I absolutely do. I sit somewhere in the middle. I am someone that identifies that it is clear to me that there is a climate emergency. However, as I think everybody is aware, we have found ourselves in a position where the cost of doing everything we were going to be doing is unaffordable, but I do think that we still need to work to be moving on that journey. I believe that we need to look at what we are going to do and what we can achieve as an Island in a positive way, so I am fully supportive of that.

8.1.10 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the candidate agree that it is a bit like saying: “Your house is on fire, but we cannot quite afford the water to put the fire out on the house, so we are just going to leave it burn”? Is the Minister not concerned she will be the Minister for the Environment, without the encumbrance of planning if the Chief Minister has his way, that there is a direction of travel from this Government which says that Government have been moving too fast and therefore they are phasing out their requirements for petrol and diesel cars to be stopped from a certain date? Is that the kind of policy that she supports or will she push back against that?

Senator M.R. Le Hegarat:

As an individual, I would want to support something that we are moving forward with. I fully accept that we need to reduce our carbon emissions. I also feel that we need to show alternatives in relation to people being able to have alternatives to using the car. One of the previous questions was talking about cycle routes and walking routes, but I also think that we need to look at other things as well, and maybe the bus is an alternative as well, because I think we focus very much on getting people to either cycle or walk but maybe not everybody is able to do that. Therefore, if we are going to encourage Islanders out of their cars, we need to give more alternatives. So, for me, I think that the bus is potentially one of those things that we should consider spending more money on in order that we are able to get people out of their cars.

8.1.11 Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

In the last Budget discussion in the previous Assembly, it was very clear that the Natural Environment Department, which is the department the Minister will be taking over, is mainly funded through the fees from the regulation. Has there been a discussion about how the budget for her new department will be funded and how does she see that kind of ... making sure that is sustainable for all the different works that need to happen there?

Senator M.R. Le Hegarat:

In actual fact that has not been part of the discussion, but one would make the assumption that those fees that came from regulation will still be sitting with Environment, because one assumes that that will happen. But if it does not, then obviously I think it will be no surprise to the States Assembly that around the table I will ensure that there is funding for what I need to do. I have done it in the past and I certainly will do it again.

8.1.12 Deputy H.L. Jeune:

One of the big discussions at the end of the term was of course P.F.A.S. (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) and water quality and the fact that there will need to be a lot of money needed to come potentially to tackle the issue of P.F.A.S. Has the Minister had any discussions with other Ministers on the issue of P.F.A.S. and where that sits within priorities of the new Government?

Senator M.R. Le Hegarat:

As yet, I have not had those discussions. However, having worked at the airport myself from 1979 until 1986, and living in the district as well, I am fully aware of the implications of P.F.A.S., particularly in relation to the airport runway and what was on there with the foam. I think as an Assembly we need to ensure that P.F.A.S. is still on the table. We need to make sure that we can afford to do what we need to do. I think we need to move forward. I am a bit uncomfortable with the price tag of anything between £120 million and £240 million, but I think we do need to look at because there is a large number of people that are affected by it and I think, as a health issue, we need to make sure that we fund it right and that we move forward. So what decisions we make, I will be looking at that whole P.F.A.S. again line by line to see where we are. I need to also speak to Jersey Water obviously to continue that work in relation to that particular matter.

8.1.13 Deputy G.A. Raimondo of St. Brelade:

I would like to ask the Senator if she would support legislation requiring new builds to include cost-saving energy measures, such as solar panels, air-source heat pumps and better insulation.

Senator M.R. Le Hegarat:

I think as an Island, this is something that we will need to do. I genuinely think that any new builds should start to look at all of these things. I think with new builds as well, we need to make sure that when we are looking at our structures of them it does not only affect the environment, but we also need to make sure that we are consulting with everyone else where these new builds may have an impact. When I talk about that, I am talking about the Fire and Rescue Service, because I think all of those consultees should be really more embedded than they already are. So, from my perspective, we do need to be looking at solar panels on all new builds. We need to make sure that everything is as good as it can be in order that we can deliver, bearing in mind that that will probably cost more, but we need to work out how we are going to pay for it.

8.1.14 Deputy G.A. Raimondo:

Would the Senator also look into the possibility of grants for retrofitting solar panels on to current existing houses?

Senator M.R. Le Hegarat:

I think at this stage we need to look at all sorts of aspects of how we can deal with these matters, because in relation particularly to solar panels and these other things, what we need to make sure is that whatever we do in relation to funding for any purpose in relation to saving energy, P.F.A.S. and everything else, we need to ensure that what we are doing is properly targeted to those people who cannot afford to do it themselves. Because quite often we do things when, in actual fact, those people we are giving that funding to can fully fund it themselves. So, I think we need to be very careful when we put anything like that into place, that those people are genuinely not able to afford to do it themselves.

8.1.15 Connétable R.D. Johnson of St. Mary:

The candidate will recall that towards the end of the last Assembly, the States approved the draft Animal Welfare (Jersey) Law, which among other things enabled the Minister to make provision for a licensing system for any activity by order.

[14:45]

The concern of the Scrutiny Panel of the day was that these activities could be issued by order rather than by regulation. My simple question is: in the absence of an emergency, will the Minister - or proposed Minister - commit to consulting Scrutiny before introducing orders of that kind?

Senator M.R. Le Hegarat:

Having spent 2 different terms on 2 different panels, it is my feeling - and it is my commitment - that I would always consult with Scrutiny and have that liaison. I found in my first term in particular I had an exceptionally good relationship when I was the chair of the Health Panel with the person at Health. They advised me of all of the things that were coming forward, and so therefore for me that commitment to Scrutiny will always be there, because I think it is essential that we have a 2-way street.

The Bailiff:

I do not think in the 20 seconds left there is time for any further questions. So, in the circumstances, I can confirm that Senator Le Hegarat has been selected for appointment as Minister for the Environment. [Approval].

9. The Minister for Housing

The Bailiff:

I now to move to selection of the Minister for Housing and ask Senator Farnham to identify his nominee.

Senator L.J. Farnham:

I am pleased to identify Deputy Malcolm Ferey for the role of Minister for Housing.

The Bailiff:

Is the nomination seconded? **[Seconded]** Are there any other nominations?

Connétable A.N. Jehan of St. John:

Yes, Sir. I would like to propose someone who has got a good deal of experience in housing, as both a private and commercial landlord, both here and in Europe, someone who has practical experience of housing in the third sector and someone who successfully scrutinised Housing in the last Assembly. I would like to propose Deputy Jeune.

The Bailiff:

Is the nomination seconded? **[Seconded]** Are there any other nominations? In accordance with Standing Order 117(6), I will invite the candidates to speak and answer questions in the order in which they were nominated, starting therefore with Deputy Ferey. Candidates will speak for up to 10 minutes and then face up to 20 minutes of questions. The Greffier will ring the bell to signal that time is up and so on. When the first candidate is speaking and answering questions, the other will have to withdraw from the meeting and they will be escorted to a quiet room *via* a member of the States Greffe staff and stay with them until it is their turn to come back into the Chamber. So, then I therefore invite Deputy Jeune to leave the Chamber for the period of questions and address from Deputy Ferey.

9.1 Deputy M.R. Ferey of St. Saviour:

As well as thanking the Chief Minister designate for his nomination, first, I would like to thank the previous incumbent to this role, Deputy Mézec, for his diligence and attention to detail in all his workings over the last 2½ years. I expected a little approbation **[Approbation]** from the Reform benches. I will begin by reminding Members of my background before I entered the States Assembly. After spending the early part of my career in the finance industry, advising on pensions, investments and life insurance to a large portfolio of Jersey-based clients, I went on to spend 11 years working at the then Social Security Department. I began as a visiting officer, calling on people who were signed off sick and offering solutions, to remind them of the help and support which has always been available from the Department and the wider community network. I later went on to become the leader of the compliance section, having responsibilities for fraud investigation and compliance with the social security legislation by businesses and insured persons. I left the Social Security Department - now called Employment, Social Security and Housing - to become the C.E.O. of Citizens Advice Jersey in 2010 and stayed there for another 11 years before briefly working at Headway Jersey, a brain injury charity, before being elected to this Assembly in June 2022. These roles taught me so much about the challenges our community faces, particularly in relation to housing, and I completely understand how difficult life is for some people living in this Island. During my previous roles, I have worked with many of the charities to support people who have issues with their accommodation, and there is no question that there are people in this Island who are worried about whether they can continue to pay for their day-to-day living costs. If appointed as Minister for Housing, I will support Employment, Social Security and Housing in their ongoing work to ensure that Islanders can access the help they need, including the assistance of the Housing Advice Service. We need to keep our population legislation and criteria under which residential status is

achieved under review to ensure that they are meeting the needs of our community and the ever-changing fluctuations in our economy and demographic workforce. I want to live in an island where average people on ordinary incomes can aspire to the dream of home ownership. I want to live in an environment where this is actively encouraged and government support for home ownership is prioritised and facilitated and where people do not get trapped in their first purchase, finding themselves unable to move up the housing ladder. This is an ambition which I will deliberately seek to create, and I will work with all relevant stakeholders to find better solutions, while not letting go of the fact that many people want to rent their home. It is important to ensure that we have homes that meet the needs of our population both now and in the future. It is therefore prudent to marry population with housing so that we can work towards a more coherent approach to a long-term housing and population strategy. The Island Plan tells us about the homes we need. The Jersey Opinions and Lifestyle Survey tells us about the homes that people want. We have the opportunity to co-ordinate housing and population policies to align our housing supply with our population demands, helping us to tackle affordability and respond effectively to demographic change. One of my responsibilities as Assistant Minister for Children and Families has been to support children and young people in loving homes, but this can only be achieved if people feel that the property in which they reside is a home where they can feel safe and secure. In the first ½ of the last Assembly, I worked with the then Minister for Social Security, who was Deputy - now Senator - Elaine Millar, to whom I also pay tribute. The work that we did to create better outcomes for people on low incomes, such as increasing the minimum wage in 2022 more than the amount recommended by the Employment Forum, reducing the cost of G.P. visits by £20, doubling the Community Costs Bonus and increasing the availability of Pension Plus and the amount of the pension benefit were fantastic examples of how alleviating pressure on family finances can pay dividends. I also want to improve the way that we communicate with Islanders to ensure that communications are clear, accurate and accessible. During some of my meetings with the public, I have observed that our communications can still be a source of stress and are sometimes viewed as heavy-handed. I would like to work towards being a government that listens to people so that we can provide the help they need in an efficient and sensible way and in language that can be easily understood. It is important of course that we continue to support older Islanders by ensuring that there are arrangements for domiciliary care to enable people to remain in their homes for as long as possible, should they so desire. As part of the long-term objective of responding to the challenges of an ageing population, I previously presented to the Older Persons Living Forum and Age Concern. I would be proud to continue working with these groups to achieve better outcomes for our senior citizens, particularly in terms of housing solutions. Working alongside Deputy Ward, I have been chair of the Diversity, Inclusion and Advisory Group, inculcating the early Embrace Our Difference events, which have been a great success in showing that people who are living with disabilities are supported, listened to and helped to thrive. This is particularly relevant on how people can be supported with adaptations to their homes. I think we need to reboot the relationship that Government has with landlords and work more closely with Andium, private landlords and social housing trusts to improve outcomes for both landlords and tenants. I will close with a strapline: when we seek to raise the living standards for the most vulnerable members of our community, we all rise. I ask Members for their support in order that I may embark upon this, our great work, and I am obviously now happy to take questions.

[Approbation]

The Bailiff:

The first question is from Deputy Carpenter.

9.1.1 Deputy L.D. Carpenter of St. Helier Central:

The candidate voted against the principles of the Residential Tenancy Law. If elected Minister for Housing, will he commit to implementing and defending the renters' protections agreed by the previous Assembly or should tenants expect him to revisit, weaken or delay them?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

I thank the Deputy for that question. It is highly relevant. My view is the will of the Assembly is paramount. Yes, I did vote against the principles. I softened that stance when some of the work around the Scrutiny Panel knocked some of the edges off the legislation, in particular the rental cap being set at 5 per cent. So, there were some small elements that made me soften my approach, but the Chief Minister outlined in his answer to his questions last week that he would be not wanting to do anything with the Residential Tenancy Law until we see where the land lies. The market is constantly changing, and we have to be cognisant of that. So, I would not seek to immediately reverse what has happened. I do not think that is good for the Island; I do not think that is good for us as an Assembly. The Assembly was a democratic decision to bring in the Residential Tenancy Law. I will work with that going forward, while looking at the landscape in the next few years and seeing where the changes lie.

9.1.2 Deputy C.D. Leck of St. Saviour:

Would the candidate extend support to first-time buyers so they can buy any property home, rather than a designated first-time buyer's home, which you then have to sell on to another first-time buyer?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

I thank the Deputy for that question. Yes, indeed, I think the problems that I am seeing is there are first-time buyers and there are second-time buyers and I think both of those groups of people need help. At the moment we do have a large amount of first-time buyer properties that are available. They are not always accessible; they are not always affordable. We have got the First Step scheme, which is a shared equity scheme at 25 per cent. I think we need to raise that equity stake to 40 per cent and I think we need to move that forward so that second-time buyers can have access to that same scheme, because the way that equity scheme works is if the property increases in value, the Government gets a share of that when it is paid back. If the property decreases in value, which is highly unlikely, but still possible, then that 25 per cent equity stake remains. So, in short, when the householder benefits, the Government benefits, and that has to be a good thing for all of us.

9.1.3 Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

The candidate highlighted the role of population in the Ministry from now on, so does the candidate consider it will be important to set a strategic view as to where our population is and should be heading, and does he support the view that our long-term population should not be increasingly increasing? Simply put, we do not want an Island with a population of 120,000 or so due to impact on our infrastructure and the pressure that causes on housing.

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

I think the last census indicated that the population was not climbing quite as fast as we thought it was in the first place, so I think where we are with the population at the moment is about where we need to be. I think we always have to be cautious, and we have to consider what are the skills that we do need to bring to the Island and how do we look after those people as best we can. We have got a new hospital to build. There are going to be more people that need to come to the Island to achieve that, so we need to make sure that skilled people are in the right places and in the right accommodation while always being careful and cautious about the balance of migration against inward migration.

9.1.4 Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Does the candidate agree that it will be important in this next 4 years to set that strategic agreement, that we may not want an increasing population, and that the benefits of doing so, although maybe short term will be hard, will be less pressure on housing supply and an ability to live within our means?

[15:00]

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

Yes, I think the population strategy needs to inform the housing demand, and I think that joined-up approach would produce better outcomes. So broadly, yes, I do agree with the questioner's stance.

9.1.5 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour:

I am going to be asking the same question to both candidates, as I am still undecided on this one, and my decision will rest on the response to this answer. During the election period, it became apparent that many Islanders are living very separate, kind of isolated lives and not able to support each other with things like care, sharing resources and building social connections. If elected, would the candidate agree to set up a co-housing action group to bring together Islanders with various different skillsets and different ideas to try to find some solutions to this and maybe get some pilot schemes up and running to help Islanders live more closely together and build those social connections at the housing level?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

I do think that is a great idea. I think that grassroots type of approach can only be good for longer-term outcomes. Getting people working together has to be a positive outcome, so I do not think there is anything that my fellow St. Saviour Deputy has just said that I would disagree with.

9.1.6 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Can the candidate confirm he would be happy to set up such a group and invite people with varying different skillsets to be members of that and to run some pilot schemes?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

Just for complete clarity, yes, I would be happy to look at the feasibility of doing such a thing.

9.1.7 Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

Housing costs are known to be a key driver in declining birth rates. What policies would the candidate pursue to address those challenges, recognising they are complex and will require co-ordinated working with other Ministers and the community more generally?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

Yes, I think we need to work more collaboratively as the Government. We need to work closer together with other Ministers to address that particular issue. I think there are solutions in the toolbox. It is going to take a concerted effort of working together to achieve the right outcomes. These are big challenges and they are not one that necessarily can be answered off the cuff, but in general, the way forward to address these issues is by working together to find more appropriate, sustainable solutions.

9.1.8 Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Would the candidate support widening the assisted purchase home ownership scheme criteria to allow Islanders to buy a family home before they have children or while they are growing their family, as opposed to only supporting them to buy for their needs at the time of purchase, as is the current policy? If so, would he commit to actioning that intention? Previous Ministers in this role have said they would do it, but then not done anything about it.

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

Yes, I do not think people should have to wait until they have a family. If it is affordable for them, they should be supported in purchasing a property earlier on. I have already indicated that I would like to see the shared equity scheme increased from 25 per cent to 40 per cent. I think that is

achievable. I think that would make more homes available to more people and people could start to purchase their property at an earlier stage. I have already had emails from people who reside in one-bedroom flats and they have since had one child with another child on the way, and they are now keen obviously to move up the housing ladder but find themselves in that situation that I described earlier, where they do not have access to the next step because it is out of their reach. We need to support both first-time buyers and second-time buyers, extend the shared equity scheme to give people the support that they need to move up the housing ladder.

9.1.9 Connétable I. Gardiner of St. Helier:

Is the candidate aware that emergency accommodation is provided through charity or hotels? What is the candidate's view on this current approach, and if elected, what practical steps he will take to ensure that people are not moved from one night of emergency accommodation to the next without a clear route into safe, settled housing?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

In fact, yes, I have spoken to the Housing Advisory Team, which any candidate could have done, and we addressed this very issue. First, it is incredibly expensive to keep people in short-term hotel accommodation. It is not desirable, it is not a home, it is not what people want and it is not what the Housing Advisory Team want, but there is stock available and we need to make sure that people that have those housing needs, particularly in band 1, are got into those properties as soon as possible. Part of the problem is there are people who are in band 1 and they want to downsize, but what prevents them from downsizing is we have an 80 per cent rent policy, and most of them realise that if they downsize their rent is going to increase because the 80 per cent rent policy applies to new entrants to the scheme or if people change properties. So, there is a resistance, naturally, from some tenants to want to move properties because they know it is going to cost them more. We need to unlock that because what that means is people are under-occupying some of the properties that they are residing in. If we unlock that problem, we will have more properties available for people in band 1 and emergency accommodation, and it will save us spending quite so much on hotels, which is not desirable and is more expensive.

9.1.10 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Thank you for the answer. What practical steps the candidate will propose for residents who are more than 5 years, for example, in Jersey but still are not qualified and then do not have access to social housing?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

I was just on a hydration break. No booing, please. No, I think what we need to do there is ... sorry, could the questioner repeat the question?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

We all recognise the problem of homelessness and the candidate described options to go into the social housing accommodation, but we do have lots of residents, especially in St. Helier, who are not qualified and they can become, from today to tomorrow, homeless. What would the candidate propose as practical steps to address their emergency accommodation needs?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

Yes, the people who have been here for 5 years, I think generally we need to review that qualification and make sure that it works for the demographic and the type of people that we need to attract to the Island and the type of people that we want to stay here, with the right skills. We need to look at that approach, because if that is preventing people from having a long-term future here, contributing to our economy and enjoying their lifestyle in Jersey, I think that is something we do need to keep under review.

9.1.11 Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South:

I think the candidate just touched on the question I was about to ask, considering retention and recruitment of some key workers, skilled workers, and also just general workers to the Island. We are still faced with a 2-tier rental market with the quallies and non-quallied system. Does the candidate commit to reviewing that if he is then in charge of population as well?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

Yes, it will be a similar answer to the one that I have just given. We do need to look at the people that come to the Island and how they can have a future here. There is a 2-tier system, and perhaps that has worked in the past. Is that working going forward? Personally, I do not think it is. I think we need to review that so that people have a fair crack at getting a good life here, getting better accommodation here, because after all we need to get the right people in the right places going forward.

The Bailiff:

Supplementary?

9.1.12 Deputy T.A. Coles:

Yes, though the supplementary will take a slightly different tack, if that is permitted, regarding ... because he mentioned earlier about the 80 per cent that Andium charge in rent for the resizing. Does he feel that that is hamstrung by the fact that Andium still have to make a solid return of that £30 million to Treasury every year?

The Bailiff:

I am not sure that is a supplementary to the question you asked though, is it?

Deputy T.A. Coles:

No.

9.1.13 Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

The candidate has a number of times referred to housing for older people and I, in the election, came across many hundreds of older people who feel that they are trapped in their homes and would like to move into smaller homes, but there is no option to do so. Would the candidate please explain to the Assembly what he would do to try to give people the option of moving into different housing, smaller housing, and therefore free up family homes for families, rather than building family homes?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

That is a great question. I think what we need to do to unlock people who want to downsize, we need to be a bit creative. One of the things that we could look at immediately is perhaps have a stamp duty holiday for people that particularly want to downsize. I think if you look at someone who is selling a £750,000 house, just as an example, and buying a smaller property for say £600,000, the stamp duty alone is £30,000, so when you are downsizing, you hopefully want to create a little nest egg that will go towards either your retirement or your ongoing costs, and if that nest egg is shrunk considerably by the cost of stamp duty, that in itself is the reason why people do not want to downsize, so we need to unlock that. I also think we need to make sure that the properties that people do move into are future-proofed, so they have proper adaptations in place. Because people who stay in properties that are no longer suitable for them as they get older and perhaps are not so mobile, they find that either way they have to move down because the property they are residing in is no longer suitable for their needs, and then there is an urgency about it and it does not produce such good outcomes. Let us find a way to unlock the reason why people are not downsizing, produce more

properties that are future-proofed so they can move into a safe environment, and I think that will produce better outcomes for our senior citizens.

9.1.14 Deputy K.F. Morel:

I thank the candidate for his answer. While he spoke about the difficulty in buying, I would also like to explore the difficulty in building. At the moment, there are very few opportunities available for downsizing because there are no homes available. We have some good schemes, and I referred to these a lot in the election, Maisons Cabot in Trinity and Maison de Vesconte in St. John, really excellent schemes that people love living in, but we have so few. What will the Minister do to encourage the building of such schemes?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

Yes, I think we need to look at more sites. We need to look at the right sites, but as I explained earlier, we need to drive this by population, so to make sure that we are building the homes that our population needs. I know anecdotally we do have lots of evidence to suggest that, but I think going forwards, if we align population with housing, that will give us the answer to the homes that we need and it will give us the answer to the type of properties that we need to be building.

9.1.15 Deputy S.J. Gleave of St. Helier South:

I think Deputy Morel began to touch on this question. I think we need to be looking at supported living communities. It is a real gap in the market. If we want to encourage people to downsize, it is not just about making sure their property is well equipped, it is also making sure that there is 24/7 support available for them and that they are also living in a sociable community. I have lost count of the number of elderly I met, isolated at the top of big blocks of flats, not being able to get out. Would the candidate support looking at supported living schemes in the future?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

There are already some really good examples of exactly what the Deputy has described. In my own parish, there is Lillie Langtry, and that is a great example of a home which is built with adaptations, has got someone onsite at all times, where people can have access to and they feel safe and secure. There is L'Hermitage in St. Peter, which fulfils a very similar function and something similar in Grouville. I think we have got some really good models that we can build upon, but we need more of those type of properties, and as I have just explained to Deputy Morel's question, if we build those type of properties, it will make it easier for people to downsize into. If we unlock some of the barriers, some of the financial barriers to downsizing, that will make it even easier and more attractive for people.

9.1.16 Deputy S.J. Gleave:

So, I think the Lillie Langtry one, I do not believe that there is anyone onsite anymore. I am not sure about the one in Grouville. You are right about L'Hermitage. Would the Deputy consider changing the brief for the old St. Saviour's Hospital site, which is currently targeted for affordable housing, but could be quite an innovative scheme for the Scandinavian-type communities, where it is affordable housing plus retirement communities?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

I think there could be a shared scheme there; there could be a bit of both. I would not want to totally commit one way or the other, but in principle that sounds like the direction that we should be going in.

The Bailiff:

We have got one minute left. I am going to go to the next Member who has not asked a question before, Deputy Raimondo, with a short question.

9.1.17 Deputy G.A. Raimondo of St. Brelade:

Yes, I will make it quick.

[15:15]

Could the Deputy talk to how he would support young people and university graduates to leave home and move into their first accommodation/first-time buyer property?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

People leave the Island and go away to further education, which is great. I do think we need to make sure that they have every opportunity to come back and that the environment is one that they want to live in. Generally speaking, shared equity schemes would be available to all sorts of people of all sorts of ages. It is down to affordability. Someone who has just returned from university may struggle financially to fulfil that but, as soon as they are in a position to do, I think they should be assisted in the same way as anybody else.

The Bailiff:

That completes the time for questions. I now ask you to leave the Chamber and for Deputy Jeune to be brought back to the Chamber. Deputy Jeune, you have 10 minutes to address the Chamber, followed by 20 minutes of questions.

9.2 Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

Today I am asking the Assembly to support me as Minister for Housing, because I believe I bring the experience, judgment and collaborative approach that this role demands. I have been on the board J.A.Y.F. (Jersey Association for Youth and Friendship), Jersey's youth homeless charity, supporting 18- to 25-year-olds for 7 years and its chair for the last 3. During that time, I have worked with young Islanders at the point where the housing system has failed them. What that experience teaches you is that homelessness is rarely just a housing problem. Behind it is often a family breakdown, young people who have left care, someone with unmet S.E.N. (special educational needs) needs or poor mental health who never got the right support early on. Housing is where the crisis becomes visible, but it usually started somewhere else. It has given me a direct understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of our system, how people fall through the gaps, why Islanders become homeless and how our services can either help them rebuild their lives or make their journey harder. Being chair of J.A.Y.F. means I am a landlord, responsible for 29 units. Every week I work with Jersey's tenancy legislation and the wider housing support system, including social housing and income support, not as a politician reading about them, but as someone responsible for helping young people navigate them in practice. I am also a private and commercial landlord, with properties in Jersey and Belgium. Understanding both sides of a tenancy relationship is an asset. For the last 2 years, I have chaired the Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel, the most significant piece of work being the Residential Tenancy Law. When that legislation arrived before my panel, it was seriously difficult. Landlords were alarmed, tenants confused. There was concern within the Council of Ministers itself. My panel did not take sides. We took evidence from the Landlord Association, from tenant groups, from legal practitioners and from Islanders. We brought amendments, all of them accepted, and we helped deliver a law that the majority of the previous Assembly could support. I have spent 2 years holding the Minister for Housing to account and building relations across the housing system. I know exactly what this brief demands. Housing has become one of Jersey's most polarising policy areas. Too often the debate has been framed as tenants versus landlords, developers versus communities, supply versus protection. I reject that approach. None of these groups alone can solve this problem. Good housing policy only works when everyone has the confidence in it. It needs a Minister who will bring people together and bring this new Assembly together to deliver what Islanders have asked us to do. Jersey does not have enough homes. The homes we have are unaffordable for ordinary Islanders, not just to buy or to rent, but to run and call home. The Fiscal

Policy Panel was unambiguous: an average-price house costs more than 13 years of net income for the average household. When people cannot afford to live here, we lose teachers, nurses, tradespeople and young families, who make Jersey our community. This is not a standalone problem. Housing must sit at the centre of Government, because every major policy decision has consequences for where and how our Islanders live. My vision therefore is straightforward: more homes where they are needed, homes that people can genuinely afford and homes that are part of communities. The numbers from Statistics Jersey are stark. Net migration has averaged 400 per year over the last decade. At that level Jersey still needs 170 homes a year, 2,000 by 2035, but to maintain a stable working-age population, we would need net migration of around 700 per year. At that level, the housing need rises to approximately 325 homes a year, almost double what we are currently planning for. Population policy is a decision for the Chief Minister and this Assembly, but its consequences for housing are unavoidable, and I would make sure the connection is made explicitly in how the Government plans. The Bridging Island Plan identified sites. We rezoned land, but rezoned land that is not being built on is not housing. Before the new Island Plan adds more sites to that list, we need to understand and unblock what is stopping development on the land we already have: land price, viability, infrastructure, planning conditions. One ministerial office cannot fix this. Ministers must work together to find the solutions. Government cannot do this alone and they should not try. The private sector should be one of the primary delivery vehicles for affordable homes in Jersey, but that only works if we structure the system correctly. A healthy, confident construction sector is not a nice to have, it is a precondition for delivery the homes Jersey needs. Within my direct remit, I will push Andium and S.o.J.D.C. (States of Jersey Development Company) for the right mix of tenure and size, including key worker accommodation and right-sizing to free up family homes we already have. An Island with a housing shortage cannot afford to leave empty homes sitting there. I brought the amendment to the 2026 Budget to develop empty homes policy mechanisms, and I want to drive that forward. Affordability is not just about rent or mortgage payments, it is the interaction between the housing costs, household income and the wider costs of living. I will work with the Minister for the Environment and Treasury to treat energy costs as part of the housing affordability challenge. We should use the new energy strategy to actively keep household bills down. On housing policy reforms, my starting point will not be to defend the last Government's work or dismantle it. The Residential Tenancy Law, the rented dwellings licensing scheme, social housing roadmap and the social rent review are all significant changes, most of them quite recent, so before adding anything on top, I think it is important that the Assembly knows whether these changes have worked as intended, whether they are reaching the people they are designed to help, and whether there are any unintended consequences that need correcting. On shared equity, these schemes help people on to the first rung, but too many are now stuck there. The market has moved and the next step is out of reach. Our policies must support people throughout their housing journey, not just at the beginning. There is one significant friction that could be sorted. Jersey is the only jurisdiction in the British Isles that charges stamp duty on mortgage borrowing itself. I will ask the Minister for Treasury and Resources to review this. Removing a tax that falls specifically on people trying to move up the ladder that exists nowhere else in the British Isles is exactly the kind of practical step the new Government should take. Third, homes that are part of the community. We are not just building units, we are shaping how people live and feel as part of a community, whether they know their neighbours, whether children have somewhere to play, whether older residents feel connected or isolated. The new Island Plan is an opportunity to make this real: open spaces, community facilities, active travel connections built from the start, mixed tenure on every significant site, so we create genuinely mixed communities, and homes designed with shared facilities that make right-sizing attractive and affordable. New developments must also integrate with communities around it, not just sit alongside them without connecting. But the community responsibilities that fall most directly to the Minister for Housing are making sure that those who have fallen furthest are not left behind. I will ensure the homelessness strategy continues to be implemented, working closely with the third sector and social housing providers. Housing cannot be fixed with one ministerial office. It requires

working closely with other Ministers and Parishes and Scrutiny to all move in the same direction, based on evidence and collaboration. I will not have all the answers. Good Ministers succeed not because they know everything but because they bring together the right expertise and have the judgment to turn it into good decisions. I will never lose sight of the fact that behind every housing policy is a person, a family or a young Islander simply looking for somewhere they can call home. Members, I ask for your confidence today. Thank you. **[Approbation]**

The Bailiff:

We will now move on to 20 minutes of questions, and the first question is from Deputy Doublet.

9.2.1 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I am going to ask this candidate the same question that I asked the previous candidate to help me decide where to place my vote on this one. During the election period, it became very apparent to me that many Islanders are living very isolated lives, separate from one another, separate from their community and not able to support each other with things like caring for children and the elderly and sharing resources. Would the candidate support the creation of a co-housing action group to bring together Islanders with a variety of skillsets to try to find solutions to this and get some pilot schemes up and running?

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I thank the Deputy for her question. I think that is a very good idea and something I would absolutely support looking at. I think also the very important role that the Parishes have to play with this and working with the Connétables to develop maybe that kind of group that you are talking about, maybe at the Parish level and working with the Connétables to see how we can ensure that Islanders do not feel isolated. We have many different types of groups around who are trying to support Islanders on isolation issues, whether it is around ... because there is time spent in the home for childcare or because of the elderly or because they are the carers themselves. So, I think it is really important to bring everyone together who is doing that, to not have that disparity or different Parishes being supported more than others *per se*, and make sure that every Islander gets the support they need and know where to access that support as well.

9.2.2 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I thank the candidate for her answer. I agree that the Parishes could very well be involved in this, but in terms of getting some creative solutions, could we reach out to, say, local architects, community groups, play experts and try to get a creative group of people together to get some innovative solutions and run those pilot schemes?

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Yes, thank you. I think that is absolutely something that could happen, and I think that anything that is innovative and bringing together different ideas and pulling from areas out of Jersey also in what could work to ensure there is not that isolation is very welcome. It is something that the Minister for Housing, working with others, could do.

9.2.3 Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier Central:

Given that there has been talk that population will also fall under this remit, which I assume also includes the Control of Housing and Work Law which currently is where our legislation around entitled status and non-qualls and that area, can the candidate tell me what her views are on the current non-qualls policy, which historically has been to not replace any non-qualls accommodation and it may fall away either through inheritance or refurbishment?

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I thank the Deputy for her question, and I think it is a really important question to ask and something that really does need to be looked at.

[15:30]

As I said in my speech, I think building the evidence around that is really important. It is something that I have seen that people see that it is really important to look at that non-qualls accommodation. I know that lodging houses is becoming a really difficult situation. There are many on the market at the moment and nobody - landlords or future landlords - want to buy those lodging houses. We are having less and less of good quality coming on the market or being able to rent to non-qualls and that is something that a Minister for Housing should really look into. What could be done? Because everybody deserves a home and a good quality home as well in whatever situation and whichever category they fall under.

9.2.4 Deputy C.S. Alves:

I worked on the Control of Housing and Work Law in the last 2 years, and I have also encountered many constituents who do have entitled status, so qualifications but are currently living in non-qualls. One of the things that has come up during those conversations is that they are not willing to apply for the social housing, for example, because of the current 80 per cent cap rental policy that there is there, that it is cheaper for them to stay where they are in non-qualls, that they are taking up spaces for people who do not have non-qualls when they do have qualls. What is the candidate's view on this policy? Does she support the 80 per cent cap rent and, if so, would she look at exploring other options? If not, what are her stances and what would she do to encourage those who currently have entitled status, so housing qualifications living in non-qualls to move out of there?

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

There is a lot there but, first of all, maybe to focus in on the issue of social housing and the issue of the rents. The last Minister for Housing has conducted a social housing rents review; those were just published earlier this year. It was advised that the general view of social housing rents would not be changed, the model itself, but there would be elements to be able to tweak. One of the elements would be this cap of 80 per cent was definitely touched upon, especially in situations like the ones that you were describing and especially, I think it is important too, as you said, the flow between non-qualls and people taking up those very important accommodation to ensure we have accommodation for non-qualls. A residence means that we do need to think about those who are taking up that be encouraged into social housing or into other models. As that social housing rents review does touch on that, and it was an option that was decided by the Minister for Housing to go towards; I think that would be something to look at. But, as I say, evidence-based is really important and the fact that that review pulls up that already and says it means that, it is something that I would want to take forward.

9.2.5 Deputy S.J. Gleave:

Again, this is a question I asked the previous candidate, and it follows up on Deputy Doublet's point about social isolation. Does the candidate agree that we need to improve the retirement living options available, firstly, to encourage downsizing but also to allow people to stay active, social and independent for longer and that we need proper supported independent retirement communities so that we do not find people living at the top of flat blocks, lonely and never leaving their apartment?

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I thank the Deputy for her question. It is that third pillar that I was talking about, about communities and about really looking at what the Minister for Housing can do in the remit that they have but also working with other Ministers to be able to address some of these key issues around community. Obviously as there have been 2 questions already about this, isolation is a real big issue, and it had definitely also come up when I was knocking on doors as well. I think it is really important that we not just look at rightsizing and look at it from a planning perspective and where we can build

rightsizing houses, but also where and how. That is where I was talking about communities looking beyond a unit *per se*, but what is around a unit and what facilities are there to support. That is exactly what I would like to see. But I would have to be working with other Ministers with that as well. It would not be just the Minister for Housing to be able to develop new housing in that regard.

9.2.6 Deputy S.J. Gleave:

Again, the same question as to the previous candidate: would the candidate consider looking at St. Saviour's Hospital, which is currently the old St. Saviour's Hospital, which is currently being slated for affordable housing for more of an innovative ... in fact this is one of the Scandinavian schemes where it is affordable housing mixed with retirement communities?

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

It is something that would then be working with the Minister for Planning on because the Minister for Planning would be developing the S.P.G. (supplementary planning guidance) around what that site would look like. But as the Minister for Housing would be able to input into that, it would be something to look at, I think. Again, when I was talking in my speech about affordability and about communities it was looking at beyond that, just delivering a home or units or housing to fit that number of what we are wanting, whether it is 170 homes a year or 325 homes a year, depending on our population policy. But it is about what do those homes look like. I think when we are talking about a big site like St. Saviour's Hospital and that it is already designated for affordable housing, what does the mix look like? As our population is growing older, we need to look about what kind of homes we are needing to support the older population.

9.2.7 Connétable I. Gardiner of St. Helier:

The same question: as the candidate knows, most of the emergency accommodation is provided through charities or hotels. What is the candidate's view on the current approach and, if elected, what practical steps will she take to ensure that people are not moved to one night of emergency accommodation to next result, a clear road into safe settled housing?

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I thank the Connétable for her question. This is really important and of course something that I worked closely with, as being chair of a homeless charity myself and working with the third sector on this. As for the Scrutiny Panel, we constantly ask the Minister for Housing and Andium about the issue of especially families and the individuals who are moved into hotels and seem to stay there for quite a long time. I think it is really important that we make sure that hotels are only used as a last resort and really when there is no other support accommodation for them. The social housing roadmap was just changed. The criteria was only changed at the beginning of this year, that helped to support a general needs band and being able to support those vulnerable families and community. I think that is really important to see how that is working, as well as, for example, working with the Minister for Social Security to support being able to put vulnerable people into private accommodation, for example. Every vulnerable person or a family, they have a unique experience of why they are vulnerable and so it needs to be a mix of actions to support that family. I think it is really important that then the Minister for Housing is able to go to and use different tools to be able to support individual families; it cannot be one fits all. The criteria has changed so Andium is able to take more people. We know from Andium that their list is coming right down and they are able to house more on the Gateway quicker. Really looking at that vulnerable band and being able to house them as soon as possible is really important. For me, hotels is the last resort.

9.2.8 The Connétable of St. Helier:

It is good the criteria changed and Andium are ready to work with the vulnerable groups and provide more accommodation. But, as we know, especially St. Helier residents, a high percentage of them are not qualified and it means they do not have access to social housing in Andium. What will the

candidate propose if the non-qualified residents will get in a homeless situation, what will the solution be and how will they be accommodated?

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I thank the Connétable for her question. I believe that the part of the social housing remit criteria change was specifically related to V.A.W.G. There was a specific area to be able to support those who did not have qualifications to be able to support them into accommodation. I think that could be looked at further to see what are the needs and to be able to help non-qualifiers in those that are unable to be supported. But it is very important that we work closely with the third sector and also the Jersey Landlords Association to see what accommodation could be there. Because we are talking, and as the question is about when they are really in need and vulnerable and needing accommodation as quickly as possible, we need to see what are the different accommodation out there to be able to put them in short-term accommodation before we can find more long-term solutions. I think that is really important because we can be more flexible with that when we need to provide families and individuals who are vulnerable and needing a home to be able to provide them a home as quickly as possible and, then after, them finding a better solution so that they have a more long-term solution.

9.2.9 Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

Like others, I will ask the same question that I asked the other candidate. Housing costs are known to be a key driver in declining birth rates; what policies would the candidate pursue to address these challenges, recognising they are complex and will require co-ordinated working with other Ministers and the community more generally?

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I thank the Deputy for her question. I think one of the things that I have heard on the doorstep a lot is that issue of those families or couples who have been part of the first-time buyer schemes but get stuck and are not able to move up the rung or the housing ladder when they feel that they want to start a family, and they are unable to get support for that. They may start a family in accommodation that is not right for them and their family. I have heard several stories about that, where there is only one bedroom, for example, and they really want to get to 2 bedroom or more. I think one of the areas that we could look at is the Homebuy scheme. At the moment the criteria is that you are given housing and the number of bedrooms, depending on what your need is right now. Maybe there needs to be a bit more flexibility built into the system, be able to encourage couples or families maybe with one child to be able to go: "I want to be able to expand my family, but I need a bigger house" and to make that step ahead of expanding their family. I think that it is prudent for them and it is prudent for us to think about our long-term population and the fact that we have declining fertility rates.

9.2.10 Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

I have clearly bent the ear of the Deputy previously about this because my next question would be, would she commit to widening the assisted purchase home ownership scheme criteria to allow Islanders to buy a family home before they have children or while they are growing their family, as opposed to only supporting them to buy for their needs at the time of purchase, as is the current policy?

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I think I will refer to my answer, but I think I could put a bit of a caveat on that. We all know we do not have enough family homes as it is on the Island currently and we need to build more. That means that there are already ... and we see the Gateway as statistics, the biggest and longest waiting time is families for 3 to 4-bedroom houses, so there is a caveat to that. Where I think it could be important is to see how we can encourage families to be able to see ... well, not encourage families *per se* but encourage developers, encourage Andium, S.o.J.D.C., to develop the kind of housing to be able to expand within the house. To be able to maybe make houses that can expand in other ways as the

family grows as well. I know that that happened a long time ago in Jersey. I have knocked on some doors of family houses of people from a long time ago where smaller houses were able to be built, which means it is more affordable; it is cheaper to build. But then it gives that family flexibility by being able to, for example, build up into the attic, for example. Maybe there are ways of being able to build housing into the future that is more affordable for us to build right now but also give the flexibility, whether it is a couple starting out or a family with one child but want to expand, that they are able to do that by building the home that way.

9.2.11 Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

Family homes are needed, that is for sure, but of course lots of older people are living on their own in family houses or as couples in family homes suitable for 4, 5 or more people. Could the candidate please tell the Assembly what they would do to encourage the building of downsize housing for older members of the population?

[15:45]

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I thank the Deputy for his question. In the last Budget there was an amendment approved to work on a stamp duty holiday for rightsize housing. I know that work has started to be done and investigate how that could happen. It is of course one mechanism that could help encourage people to move into rightsized homes, but it is something that I would want to see as a first step is that, and a kind of incentive to be able to encourage those. Because often when we talk to people at the door when we were campaigning, for example, many felt it was too expensive to downsize. We need to make and incentivise. Earlier we were talking about making communities more interesting for people to be able to downsize within the communities that they want to and the facilities there that they would be interested in and encourage them to downsize but also incentivise them, and this stamp duty holiday could be one mechanism that would be able to do that.

The Bailiff:

I am not sure if there is time for supplementary.

9.2.12 Deputy K.F. Morel:

Does the candidate think Treasury could maybe use the property developer tax from a tax break perspective to encourage the building of downsized housing if it is less profitable for them?

The Bailiff:

You have only got 10 seconds, Deputy.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

As I have said, evidence-based decision-making is at the heart of what I do and I would like to see that that is something to look at. But being able to answer now without having looked at the evidence and making sure that that is the right way to do and encourage it and not have unintended consequences, then it would be something to look at and gather evidence on.

The Bailiff:

That brings the period of questions to an end. I invite someone to bring Deputy Ferey back into the Chamber. That will be done, will it, Greffier? Both candidates have spoken and responded to questions. We now move to the vote. I invite Members to return to their seats. As there are 2 candidates, the electronic voting system will be used. Any Member wishing to vote for Deputy Ferey should press the *pour* button. Any Member wishing to vote for Deputy Jeune will press the *contre* button. Members of course may abstain in the usual way, if they wish. I now ask the Greffier to open the voting.

Deputy M.R. Ferey of St. Saviour: 31		Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity: 16		Abstained: 0
Senator L.J. Farnham		Connétable of St. Martin		
Senator I.J. Gorst		Connétable of St. Helier		
Senator A.J.H.M. Maclean		Connétable of St. John		
Senator M.R. Le Hegarat		Connétable of St. Clement		
Senator T.J.A. Binet		Connétable of St. Lawrence		
Senator H.M. Miles		Deputy M. Tadier		
Senator M.E. Millar		Deputy L.M.C. Doublet		
Senator Sir M.J. Boleat		Deputy C.S. Alves		
Senator S. M. Kersten		Deputy T.A. Coles		
Connétable of St. Mary		Deputy A.F. Curtis		
Connétable of St. Peter		Deputy L.V. Feltham		
Connétable of St. Brelade		Deputy H.L. Jeune		
Connétable of St. Ouen		Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson		
Connétable of Trinity		Deputy K.M. Wilson		
Connétable of Grouville		Deputy L.D. Carpenter		
Connétable of St. Saviour		Deputy C.D. Leck		
Deputy C.F. Labey				
Deputy K.F. Morel				
Deputy F. G. Voisin				
Deputy M.B. Andrews				
Deputy R.E. Binet				
Deputy C.D. Curtis				
Deputy M.R. Ferey				
Deputy J. Renouf				
Deputy B. Ward				
Deputy S.J. Gleave				
Deputy V. Li				
Deputy A. Maltman				
Deputy R.J. Parker				
Deputy G.A. Raimondo				
Deputy C.J. Rebindaine				
Deputy P.J. Romeril				

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

Sir, can I just take a moment to recognise a gallant and worthy adversary in Deputy Jeune?
[Approbation]

10. The Minister for Infrastructure

The Bailiff:

We now move on to the selection of the Minister for Infrastructure. Senator Farnham, would you make your nomination, please?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

I am pleased to nominate Deputy Jonathan Renouf for the role of Minister for Infrastructure.

The Bailiff:

Is the nomination seconded? **[Seconded]** Are there any other nominations? No. Accordingly, I invite Deputy Renouf to speak for up to 10 minutes, after which there will be a question period for up to 20 minutes.

10.1 Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade:

I will start by thanking the Chief Minister for nominating me for this role. When we first started talking about the possibility of me joining the new Government it was the role I said I wanted and I am, therefore, absolutely delighted that he has put my name forward. I would also like to say a word about the outgoing Minister. He has served in the role with great energy and commitment. He had some notable challenges, and I may have, of occasion, made his job a little harder. But also, some notable achievements and he leaves a busy in-tray with plenty of projects and work to progress. I look forward to continuing to work with him in his new role over the course of this term, if I am selected. To prepare for this speech I looked back at what some of my predecessors said in their nomination speeches. As far back as 15 years ago, the following were among the issues highlighted by candidates: increasing recycling, improving relationships with the Parishes, safeguarding funding for road repairs, extending mains drains, charging for liquid waste, developing the eastern cycle route, maintaining the Government estate, and therein I think lies the challenge we face. The central issue facing the new Minister for Infrastructure, the new Government and this Assembly is that for many years too often we have ducked issues rather than sorting them out. We have underinvested. Of course, identifying a problem is far easier than solving it. Nevertheless, the public want and expect to see significant improvements, and they are right to demand better. A good start was made by the previous Assembly and Government, including the previous Minister for Infrastructure, whose good work I have just acknowledged and indeed his predecessor. We have created the Investing in Jersey programme and a ring-fenced fund, the Jersey Capital Investment Fund, to deliver that programme. In other words, we have signalled intent and we have created a delivery mechanism. What we have not done yet is to resolve the funding issues around our ambitions. The Capital Investment Fund needs funds. Let me be a little clearer about what is at stake, because it is important that the Assembly is aware of the scale of the issues with which we will all have to grapple during the next 4 years. If we look at liquid waste, we need to expand sewer capacity, not least to enable new housing developments, as has been mentioned, and that requires significant capital investment. At the same time funding for maintenance of the drainage and sewerage system is not sufficient to maintain the network. The gap between revenue and required spending is currently being covered by using the Car Parking Trading Fund. I do not need to tell Members that that is not sustainable, not least since we also need to invest in our carparking estate. A decision is looming about what to do when the Energy from Waste plant reaches the end of its life. In addition, operational costs for waste disposal are rising faster than inflation and we are running out of space to store hazardous waste. In relation to coastal defences, we have a very solid Shoreline Management Plan, which is vital to cope with the threat of rising sea levels. But just the first phase of that plan at Havre des Pas comes with a very big sticker; £160 million roughly. In terms of roads; our current funding programme is, effectively, a

default policy of managed decline, which is not a sustainable long-term strategy. It does not align with our ambition to improve road safety. It does not enable us to make progress with sustainable transport, and it is not acceptable for Jersey. Regarding sports facilities; both Les Quennevais and Springfield last had significant structural investment more than 30 years ago. We have built Oakfield as part of the decant at Fort Regent and it is a great facility. But investment at La Rocque, for example, has yet to come to fruition. If we are to proceed with plans to host the Island Games in 2035, we will need major investment. I could add in Fort Regent, the need for a new crematorium, improvements to the public realm, new hospital facilities, school development and refurbishment and so on. To put it at its most simple, both in terms of maintaining our existing infrastructure assets and in terms of investing in vital new infrastructure, our current funding does not match what we need and what we say we want to do. The job of the new Minister is going to be to examine the demands on future spending, to prioritise, to trim plans that are overambitious, to seek innovative solutions and then to come forward with options for Ministers and this Assembly to consider. We will not be able to do everything. Hard choices await. I do not know what all the answers will be. But I would be derelict in my duty if I did not say that in some way or other we are going to have to find ways to raise or, perhaps I should say, allocate more money for infrastructure spending. I want to pay tribute at this point to the very dedicated teams who keep the infrastructure show on the road. I know some of them, I meet them out and about, and I know they take tremendous pride in their work. They care passionately about the Island and the community. From top to bottom, teams in the Infrastructure Department keep the Island running and we should be grateful for their commitment and their service. What do I hope to bring to the role? A key word here is partnership. I have my own views of course about the way forward, which includes a strong focus on sustainable transport and recycling, for example. But progress will depend on co-operation and teamwork. That means working closely with ministerial colleagues, Scrutiny and the Assembly. My door will always be open. In particular, I want to work with the Parishes. Our work and our spending should be complimentary. We should lift each other up. I want to say a special word about working with the Constable of St. Helier, not only because it is the biggest Parish but because the public realm in St. Helier is of such importance to our economy and to the people who live here. There is one other point I would like to highlight, one of the most important areas of the Minister for Infrastructure's portfolio is the management of key sporting facilities. I want to say that my intention, with the Chief Minister's agreement, is to nominate Senator Kersten as Assistant Minister with delegated responsibility for the facilities part of the sports portfolio. I think this opens up an exciting opportunity to take a fresh look at the provision of sport and sporting facilities in the Island. I look forward very much to working together with Senator Kersten to drive forward a new vision for sport. One States Member commented when he saw that I had been nominated for this role: "You need to have your head examined", presumably because it is seen as something of a poisoned chalice. Well, Members may think there are many reasons why I should have my head examined. **[Laughter]** A bit too vigorous laughter there in front of me. **[Laughter]** But on the subject of infrastructure, I beg to differ. It may be a poisoned chalice to some, but to me it is exciting.

[16:00]

The decisions we make collectively over the next 4 years will help define the Island's future. That is a prospect that should inspire us all. Let me finish with this thought. Sorting out our infrastructure is a challenge that speaks to our times. Public disillusion with politicians, not just here but across many democracies, is fuelled by our inability to get things done. We need to turn that around. My impression on the doorstep was the voters were, in the main, not that interested in our ideological differences. They just wanted progress. The next 4 years are our chance to confound expectations and show what we can do. If elected, I will do my best working with my colleagues and the Council of Ministers, and with all Members, to deliver the infrastructure that this Island needs and rightly expects. Thank you. **[Approbation]**

The Bailiff:

The first question is from Deputy Morel.

10.1.1 Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

The Infrastructure Department is often blamed, perhaps unfairly although I do not think so in this case, for the kind of Anglicisation, for want of a better word, of our roads, the urbanisation of our countryside, particularly in terms of signage, road furniture, and things like this. We had to fight to keep our yellow lines because it was a previous Government that were thinking of getting rid of that because it would fit with the English way of doing things. Would the Deputy please explain to the Assembly how he will try to ensure that the Infrastructure Department keeps Jersey as Jersey rather than a part of the United Kingdom?

Deputy J. Renouf:

I thank the Deputy very much for the question. I hope he knows that I am very committed to Island identity, and the work that was begun many years ago by Deputy Labey is work that I supported. I feel very strongly that we should maintain our own identity, that that would also be the case when it came to road signage. I also do think that we should minimise road signage. Proliferations of signs and so on is not a good thing. Of course, one of the ways we achieve that is regulation and sometimes people also do not want regulation, and so I think finding that balance is important. But certainly, when it comes to generating stuff within our Department, I will be looking for the minimalist and the Jersey solution.

10.1.2 Deputy K.F. Morel:

Could the Deputy be slightly more specific about how he would like to reduce the preponderance of road furniture in our country lanes? There are 2 signs near me, one literally within 2 metres of the other, one says 15 miles an hour and the other says 30 miles an hour, within 15 feet of each other. This is an absurdity that is continued by the repeater speed limit signs that are placed down country lanes. This is all done because that is what they do in the U.K.. Would the Deputy please explain how he will specifically tackle the urbanisation of our country lanes?

Deputy J. Renouf:

First of all, in the case that he highlights there, I will be very happy to go and look at it with him and with officers and so on. What I will commit to is to look at it. I am unsighted on the reasons why there are those repeater signs, whether they are following particular guidelines of the U.K. or other guidelines. I would want to get myself fully briefed, but I accept the point the Deputy is raising and I look forward to examining further, and I would be very happy to have further conversations with him to address the issue.

10.1.3 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

I thought we were going to get a question about the good old days between 1940 and 1945 when Jersey people used to drive on the right-hand side of the road, which was very European, not like the pesky U.K., but my question does relate to transport, and to vehicles more specifically. The Minister is responsible for what used to be called transport as part of the Technical Services team, and he was quite light, I thought, when it came to matters of cars, about diesel cars, petrol cars, carbon emissions, which previously he has been very vocal on, both as Minister for the Environment and as a Back-Bencher. Does he still believe that we need to reduce Jersey's carbon emissions, and does he believe that this Government is moving too fast when it comes to reducing carbon emissions, and does he agree with their policy to delay banning importation of vehicles in those 2 categories?

Deputy J. Renouf:

Certainly, I fully support the Carbon Neutral Roadmap. I think it would be hard to say that the Government is moving too fast. I would love to say it is, that it is moving fast, but it has not actually formed yet. I think the Minister for Infrastructure has a role to make the infrastructure of the Island

future proof. The future of the Island is heading towards a net zero carbon future, it touches on lots of areas. The single biggest thing we could probably do within my ministerial jurisdiction to reduce emissions would be not to build a new Energy from Waste plant which is a significant contributor to our emissions. So, I will continue to make the case for that, I am part of a Government. I will make the case as strongly and as effectively as I can, as I am sure the Deputy would expect.

10.1.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

So, when it comes to a clean air policy for Jersey, does the Minister have any aspirations for making our roads much cleaner, free of pollution, not least because there is elevated risk of all sorts of health-related issues, including dementia for those who are exposed for prolonged periods to traffic fumes?

Deputy J. Renouf:

I have made very strongly the case in my manifesto, and whenever I am asked that the things that we do to achieve net zero in Jersey are nearly all better for us in multiple dimensions, and that is a very good example of that. The move to net zero means better air quality, and particularly it means better air quality in urban areas as we move away from the internal combustion engine. The exact details of the pace and so on that we do that are of course politically contested, but the direction of travel is surely inevitable, and it is one that I continue to support very, very strongly.

10.1.5 Deputy A. Maltman of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

For the rural Parishes such as St. Peter, St. Ouen and St. Mary, public transport does not often reflect the needs of parishioners in the western Parishes. Will the Deputy commit to a full rural bus review, including better links between the western Parishes, St. Brelade, the Enid Quenault Centre and access to the beaches along St. Ouen's Bay?

Deputy J. Renouf:

I am going to be reluctant to say that I am going to conduct a separate review into something like that. I hear and acknowledge the views that the Deputy expresses, and I heard them during the campaign as well. What I would say is that the future of the bus service should be seen as a whole. It needs to consider lots of different things. The provision of a service in one area may mean less service somewhere else. The resource is not infinite. What I would absolutely commit to do is meeting with the Deputy, and indeed with any other representatives from the Parishes who want to discuss that issue, but I would put it in the context of the bus service as a whole rather than isolate it on its own.

Deputy A. Maltman:

Just to say that I will really look forward to meeting with the Deputy to discuss the bus service as a whole.

10.1.6 Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South:

The candidate made the reference to it in his opening speech about waste recycling, both domestic solid waste as well as liquid waste. Will the candidate outline his view of user pay charges?

Deputy J. Renouf:

Yes, I said in my speech that we are not spending enough, and that something is going to have to be done about that. At this stage, I am not going to commit to a particular route to solving that problem. User pay charges are certainly a leading candidate, but the Deputy will probably be aware that other routes have been suggested, including the Island-wide rate and including indeed general taxation and so on. The new Council of Ministers has not yet met. I need to see that conversation in the light of other conversations with Ministers, but I have made it I think very clear in my opening remarks that if we are to solve these problems, we are going to have to spend more money. All, as Minister, I could do is bring forward proposals, first of all to ministerial colleagues, and then hopefully to the

whole Assembly, and recommend and advocate for something. It will be ultimately for this Assembly to decide what the best route is or what route will be chosen for that, but certainly I think that has to be on the agenda as a consideration, yes.

10.1.7 Deputy T.A. Coles:

Will the Deputy acknowledge and admit at least that user pay charges both negatively affect those on lower income households worse than they do on those in more higher income households due to lowering hygiene standards due to worrying about the cost of showering, flushing the toilet, and even disposing of their waste through normal refuse collections?

Deputy J. Renouf:

I think it depends very much how they are structured, whether other mitigating measures are brought in at the same time and so on, but of course I accept that a badly designed or a charge that was designed in certain ways could have that effect, and that would not be something that would be very desirable.

10.1.8 Connétable I. Gardiner of St Helier:

First of all, I am grateful for the candidate that he recognised the importance of St. Helier and that we will be working hopefully in collaboration. My question is about free bus passes for senior citizens. It was indicated previous to him that the free bus passes for senior citizens should be reviewed. Would the candidate indicate if he would be looking to restrict or freeze bus passes for senior citizens, or he will be willing to look into extend and maybe make it from 60 years-old to ensure that more people use public transport?

Deputy J. Renouf:

I think there is no question that obviously we would like to make bus transport available at a low or free cost to as many people as possible, but it is not free, it is paid for somewhere. It is paid for either by services that the bus company cannot run because they have to pay to subsidise that, or it is paid for out of taxation and so on. I am afraid my answer to the question will be that, as I indicated in an earlier question with regard to the bus services, that it will need to be reviewed in the context of the whole service, and that I think is the only honest answer I can give at this stage. I do not know what the implications of lowering the age of qualification for the bus pass would be in terms of the bus company's operations, and I do think that any Infrastructure Minister has to at least have that in mind as well.

10.1.9 The Connétable of St Helier:

I completely recognise it is very difficult to commit to extending this service. Can the candidate commit that he will not reduce the current provision?

Deputy J. Renouf:

I am not going to make that commitment. I think that the only logical conclusion of saying that I would want to review the whole service would be to say that I cannot make any firm commitments at this stage, but I recognise the importance of the current scheme. I recognise the importance of the concessionary arrangements for young people and for old people, and so, in an ideal world, of course one would want to protect that. I am also mindful though that it does go to people, not all of whom need it, but as I say, I am not prepared at this stage to commit either way. I think, as I say, my strong preference would be to keep it, but I cannot commit.

10.1.10 Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

The candidate will know the challenges around waste storage and he referenced hazardous waste, and he will know that the mound at La Collette, so referenced by one States Member as Jersey's Table Mountain, formed without permission because of the department of the day did not push back

on the receipt of that material. Given that there is no other site for hazardous waste, will the candidate be strong and commit to saying no if those who turn up with copious amounts of waste for that site do so when it is not essential?

Deputy J. Renouf:

It conjures up an interesting image of me standing at La Collette with my hand up saying: “Stop, stop.” I think it may be slightly beyond my powers to say no, but I do think that the question of hazardous waste is a very serious one the Island has to face up to. We are bound by international treaties and rules that say that we cannot just decide to export hazardous waste. We have to get licences for that and the first port of call, so to speak, for hazardous waste is you are supposed to deal with it in your own jurisdiction.

[16:15]

We have to do a very serious piece of work to try and make sure that we are minimising the provision of hazardous waste. I think some good work has already been done in this area. The existing storage facility is nearly full but the rate at which it has been filling up has reduced significantly over the last few years. I think the whole business sector realises the challenge, and it is in everybody’s interest to do that. So, I am not going to talk about a ban, but I do think there is a very big piece of work to be done there.

10.1.11 Deputy A.F. Curtis:

Will the candidate go away and review what his powers and his department’s powers are to say no? It is my understanding that it is a facility they run and they have the choice as to what to receive. The reason we are in the mess we are with the mounds down at La Collette is because there was a lack of people standing at the gate saying no and waving their hands.

Deputy J. Renouf:

As in so many areas, I bow to the Deputy’s knowledge of the detail so, yes, I do commit to making that review.

10.1.12 Deputy S.J. Gleave of St. Helier South:

Apologies to the candidate because this is yet another bus question, but we need to look at this in the whole. As Jersey Lifts is about to be illegal, we need to look at how we support the St. Helier evening economy and make sure that it continues to thrive or support it to thrive in the first place. Those with less income need to be able to get home and a lot of evening bus services on many routes are non-existent. For example, the last bus to L’Etacq goes at 6.20 p.m. I would say that this is vital for our economy that we do look at this.

Deputy J. Renouf:

I completely acknowledge the issue the Deputy is raising and, as in my responses to the other questions, I am very happy to meet and discuss those issues, not just with the Deputy but with other town Deputies and the Constable. Every new Minister gets a chance to pull a few levers and one of the things to look at, quite clearly, is the provision of bus service. We have had a new contract, so I need to get appraised on what that contract allows and how much flexibility it allows. But my impression of the bus contract and the way it is operated is that we have a very good operator, we have an operator that wants to help the Island, and I would hope that we would get a very positive response to those kind of questions.

10.1.13 Deputy S.J. Gleave:

I would welcome the opportunity to sit down and talk to you about that. Perhaps we could also talk about the timetables and the fact that often LibertyBus seem to occasionally just miss out stops, sometimes because they are running behind. We are getting a lot of complaints from my constituents

who rely on it to get to their work. It is not because the bus is full, the bus just does not stop, so if the candidate could help me with those conversations with the LibertyBus I would appreciate it.

Deputy J. Renouf:

I am certainly happy to.

10.1.14 Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

Would the candidate give his view on the effectiveness and operational performance of Jersey Property Holdings?

Deputy J. Renouf:

There have clearly been some questions raised about Jersey Property Holdings. I have not been close to those questions, and I would expect to examine the question when taking up office. I think there are also discussions to be had at ministerial level about the allocation of parts of the Minister for Infrastructure's portfolio, and it may be considered that some of those responsibilities might move elsewhere as well.

10.1.15 Deputy K.F. Morel:

Would the candidate please expand on his last phrase about some parts of the portfolio moving elsewhere? What does he know about this?

Deputy J. Renouf:

I am very unwilling to do so until the Ministers have sat down. It is an area that has been discussed for many years, the possibility of moving some aspects of Property Holdings' responsibilities elsewhere, and I think that is something that will emerge, if it indeed emerges, over the next few weeks.

10.1.16 Deputy G.A. Raimondo of St. Brelade:

As the Assembly and the Deputy will know, many people in Jersey do not have a car and they rely on alternative transport. Often it comes up when I speak to young people and people in general, the issue of e-scooters and what is happening there. Would the Deputy please talk on the possibility of introducing legislation to allow e-scooters?

Deputy J. Renouf:

My recollection is that they are allowed but you do need to have a licence and helmets and so on. I will put it another way; you are allowed to use electric bikes that are more powerful than standard electric bikes, but only if you have the relevant insurance, helmets, and so on. I think it is worth looking at. There is also considerable disquiet about the use of fast electric transport in places where it is considered inappropriate, so I think it would need to be looked at in that context as well.

The Bailiff:

That completes the time for questions, and I can confirm that Deputy Renouf has been selected for appointment as Minister for Infrastructure. **[Approbation]**

11. The Minister for International Development

The Bailiff:

We now move on to the selection of the Minister for International Development. Senator Farnham, would you like to make your nomination?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

Yes, I am pleased to nominate Deputy Carolyn Labey of Grouville and St. Martin for the role of Minister for International Development.

The Bailiff:

Is the nomination seconded? **[Seconded]** Are there any other nominations? If there are no other nominations, then accordingly Deputy Labey has up to 10 minutes to speak and then up to 20 minutes of questions.

11.1 Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville and St. Martin:

I would like to thank the Chief Minister for his nomination. I stand here today to ask Members for their support to continue serving as Minister for International Development; a role I remain deeply committed to and immensely proud of. It hardly needs stating that we live in a world of growing global instability driven by conflict, climate shocks, and widening inequality, which are driving humanitarian need on an unprecedented scale. Yet in this increasingly fragile world Jersey continues to demonstrate something remarkable; that a small Island jurisdiction can be a serious, credible, and respected force for good. That says much about who we are as an Island and the values we stand for. Jersey Overseas Aid is undoubtedly one of our Island's success stories. Since I first became Minister the organisation has been transformed from an informal, grant-giving body into an internationally respected development agency delivering impact far beyond its scale. In saying that, I want to acknowledge my dear colleague, Simon Boas, whose contribution to that transformation was immense **[Approbation]** and whose loss 2 years on I continue to feel today. At the heart of the transformation was a strategy I introduced in 2022 focusing on Jersey's own strengths and identity, and today 3 flagship programmes demonstrate that vision - Dairy for Development, Financial Inclusion and Conservation Livelihoods - areas where Jersey contributes not just funding but genuinely adds value through expertise, innovation, and experience. Our Financial Inclusion programme has helped more than ½ a million people, predominantly women, to gain access to savings, credit, and digital financial services; building resilience and reducing poverty. Conservation Livelihood's programmes have been developed with Durrell and now supports over 350,000 people to build sustainable incomes while protecting the ecosystems on which they depend. Our Dairy for Development programme is perhaps the clearest expression of Jersey's heritage creating global impact. By sharing Jersey genetics and expertise we are helping smallholder farmers across Africa and Asia improve productivity and strengthen food security. The Jersey cow has become far more than an icon for our Island; she is now increasing milk yields in countries on a regional basis and lifting thousands of people out of poverty. These are not just short-term interventions, they are long-term investments tackling the root causes of poverty for generations to come. Alongside this we have strengthened Jersey's humanitarian response through trusted partners - including the United Nations and the Red Cross - ensuring assistance reaches those who need it most, quickly, effectively, and with maximum impact. As a result, Jersey's international reputation has grown significantly. Last year we hosted a major United Nations humanitarian working group, the first time a non-U.N. (United Nations) member state had ever been invited to chair it. We now work alongside the United Nations, the World Bank, and other leading international organisations, helping shape policy as well as delivering programmes. That international recognition benefits not only our own programmes but Jersey itself. I have signed a memorandum of understanding with Zambia, and if re-elected I will continue developing long-term partnerships that strengthen both development outcomes and Jersey's international standing. In an increasingly competitive world Jersey benefits enormously from being recognised not only as an international finance centre but as a responsible, global citizen with expertise, integrity and values. International development has become an important source of Jersey's soft power, which should never be underestimated. Just as importantly, I have always believed that this work should not feel distant or abstract; it should belong to Islanders. That is why we expanded volunteering opportunities. Last year, having record participation in our community work projects, we also engaged 1,500 young Islanders through schools and outreach. Since being Minister internships are now offered with international N.G.O.s (non-governmental organisation) on an annual basis, and placement with the United Nations and leading humanitarian organisations are given to Islanders, forging real pathways into careers in international development. Behind the

scenes I have led the transformation of the organisation itself from literally a kitchen table operation to a professionally staffed donor agency. From an internal audit rating stating urgent improvement was needed, to achieving a perfect score, and latterly becoming the highest rated government body in Jersey for employee satisfaction, rating us as world class. These are some of the achievements under my watch which provide strong foundations for the future. But you may ask yourself: "What for the next 4 years? What will that look like?" Well, our first 5-year strategy concludes this year, and I have commissioned an independent evaluation which will inform and shape the next strategy. I will oversee the next phase of J.O.A.'s (Jersey Overseas Aid) evolution, building on what has already been achieved, while responding to new global challenges. I will focus on long-term sustainable development, ensuring Jersey remains at the forefront of effective international development. I will ensure full transparency of funds, maintain robust monitoring and evaluation of our programmes, and continue my commitment to delivering high impact, cost-effective development assistance on behalf of the people of Jersey. I will expand opportunities for Islanders, I will strengthen education and public engagement, and I will promote the development of Jersey's reputation as a centre of philanthropy and experts in dairy, conservation, and finance.

[16:30]

The work of International Development also complements other aspects of my responsibilities. As lead on the Island Identity Project - and latterly Assistant Minister for External Relations - it all helps to present a consistent, outward facing narrative about our Island on the international stage. Since becoming Jersey's first Minister for International Development, I have worked extremely hard to build a modern, professional, and internationally respected aid programme that reflects the very best of our Island. I am immensely proud of what my fellow commissioners, the J.O.A. team, and I have achieved together and I believe the results speak for themselves. I ask Members for their support to continue this work and deliver even greater impact in the years ahead. Thank you. **[Approbation]**

The Bailiff:

We now move to a period of questions. Are there any questions?

11.1.1 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

Would the Minister talk in more detail - if she has not fully developed it already - about the international benchmark and standard for where Jersey should be at compared to European counterparts in terms of its giving budgets?

Deputy C.F. Labey:

The U.N. international goal is 0.7 per cent of G.V.A. (Gross Value Added). We currently give 0.3 per cent of our G.V.A. It will not surprise Members to know that very few countries reach the 0.7 per cent; I think some of the Scandinavian countries do and a couple of others, but most fall well below that. The U.K. used to achieve 0.7 per cent but recently cut its aid budget to 0.3 per cent, so right now we are on a par with the U.K. One thing I would say is this is the financial support that, as I alluded to in my speech, we feel that we give more than just the finance. We offer the expertise, the genetics, the expertise at Durrell, and obviously our financial support.

11.1.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

I am aware of the very good work the Minister and her department do but I am sure that all countries would argue that they give more than just the money. Can the Minister confirm that Jersey is a wealthy Island? It did not have to spend any of its budget on defence, like some of the bigger countries are, and that is how they are justifying cuts in their overseas aid budget, to divert towards an increase in their defence budgets. Does the Minister think there is a moral case for Jersey working towards that 0.7 per cent, even if it is only aspirational?

Deputy C.F. Labey:

I think it is something that we always monitor and look to. We are in a cost-of-living crisis, as are most other countries. I am not using that as an excuse, but I think we have been going up by 0.01 per cent to reach the 0.3 per cent target, which I am quite happy with. Obviously, there is a need in the world, there is more and more need than the giving that is provided but, yes, it is something that we monitor all the time.

11.1.3 Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier Central:

As I am sure the Minister and Members are aware, there have been some devastating earthquakes in Venezuela, and my thoughts are with those in our community who have contacted me and who have lost family, friends, and work colleagues. Can the Deputy comment on whether aid or support is being arranged in order to support some of the losses that have happened in Venezuela?

Deputy C.F. Labey:

I thank the Deputy for her question, and I echo the sentiments she has just expressed about family members here who have been affected by the devastating earthquakes. In my inbox just this afternoon we are looking at some emergency humanitarian aid. I was just waiting to be appointed because the Commission are not quorate at the moment because I lost 2 States commissioners in the election, one retired and one lost his seat. So as soon as we are quorate again, I am mindful to agree with this giving. We are thinking about allocating £250,000 - £100,000 to Save the Children and £150,000 to British Red Cross - who are there on the ground ready to assist. I did notice that some people are looking to give physical goods here. I would counsel against that; not wishing to be ungrateful to people that want to and feel the need to physically do something, but there are issues with transporting goods, the customs fees, and the time lag in getting the goods there, and you never really know if it is going to end up with the right people. So, we prefer to channel monies through our agencies that we have done due diligence on, and they are on the ground and are aware of exactly where the needs are.

11.1.4 Deputy C.S. Alves:

I appreciate the Deputy explaining the complications that may arise with people that may want to physically donate clothing or other items. Can the Deputy give the public some indication of where and how they could donate if they wanted to donate financially if this is a possibility?

Deputy C.F. Labey:

We are the Government aid agency, and we do not accept monies because we are not a charity. Sometimes with large appeals you, Sir, have the Bailiff's Fund, and we sometimes use the Side By Side to collect donations of that sort. But that would need to be a co-ordinated effort between yourself, Sir, and the charity, and we would advise where then to send the monies.

11.1.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

There have been some suggestions, and there is a school of thought - I do not necessarily subscribe to it - that said that the work that is done by the Minister in her department used to be done before there was a Minister and before there was a Ministry, and it was done very well. They have questioned if and why we need a specific Ministry for International Development. What would her answer be to the value that she and her Department brings to the ministerial table.

Deputy C.F. Labey:

That is a really good question. I think it aligns us with the E.U. and O.E.C.D. (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), and by having a Minister it means that I am far more accountable, I am accountable to the States Assembly, there is questions without notice, we are then scrutinised for the monies that we give. So, I would say from a transparency point of view it is far better to have that representation. Also, when we did not have a Minister, the budget was declining on an annual basis, and it was only when I was appointed, we fixed it to be aligned with G.V.A.

Also, when I am travelling and going into countries like Malawi and Zambia, if I have got to go and meet with the High Commissioner to explain what we are wishing to do in the countries, it is far better if it is Minister to High Commissioner rather than just a chair of an agency. So, it does open doors and I believe it gives it the transparency and accountability that is needed.

11.1.6 Deputy M. Tadier:

I also take the fact that there is a lack of questions to mean that Members are very satisfied with the good work of the department, but does the soon to be re-elected Minister believe that there is enough understanding from some of her ministerial colleagues - especially the new ones - and will she make sure that there is sufficient opportunity given to all new Members to be fully appraised of the good work and the opportunities that arise from her department and her partnerships?

Deputy C.F. Labey:

Indeed, and I used to describe Jersey Overseas Aid as Jersey's best kept secret. There are opportunities for Members to get involved in a practical way. I have already described the community work projects and if anyone wants to go and get their hands dirty in Nepal or Malawi - I am looking at you, Chief Minister - you can get involved that way, certainly. But we will be making presentations to States Members to explain in detail what we do, and after today, if I am elected by this Assembly, I will be putting out a call because I am looking for 2 States Commissioners. If Members are not aware, we operate with 6 commissioners, the chair, and 2 other States Members and 3 independent members. So, I will be looking for 2 other States Commissioners after this. I will explain it in an email later.

The Bailiff:

Are there any other questions for Deputy Labey? If there are no other questions, then I close this period and I announce that Deputy Labey has been selected for appointment as Minister for International Development. **[Approbation]**

Senator L.J. Farnham:

Sir, before we move on, I thought I might test the mood of the Assembly as it has been a long, hot day and we have all day tomorrow. I understand there is to be a contested election for the next position, which will take us past 5.30 p.m., and then we have a final nomination for Minister for Treasury and Resources. I think it would be unfair to break halfway through, and I would be minded now, as we are going to require the whole day to finish off tomorrow, to propose the adjournment and let Members decide accordingly.

The Bailiff:

The adjournment is proposed. Is that seconded? **[Seconded]** Does anyone wish to speak on the proposal that we adjourn now until tomorrow at 9.30 a.m.? Are Members content to adjourn now until tomorrow at 9.30 a.m.? In that case, the Assembly is adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9.30 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

[16:44]