

2.4 Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement of the Chief Minister regarding the cost-of-living crisis (OQ.37/2026):

Will the Minister advise how the cost-of-living crisis is being addressed by the current Government and explain which groups of Islanders, if any, are benefiting most from Government interventions and in what way?

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

As Members will know, Jersey has limited options to control the cost of living because more than 95 per cent of what we consume is imported. This means global economic pressures and geopolitical instability feed quickly into local prices, and inflation elsewhere soon appears across our economy. Despite these constraints, the Government is taking clear and targeted action to support Islanders where it can across wages, housing, healthcare, childcare, food and energy, aimed predominantly to the lower income households, although some support is not means-tested and available to all Islanders. We have established a living wage programme. Income support has been increased by 8.6 per cent in 2024, 4 per cent in 2025 and a further 4 per cent in 2026. The Community Costs Bonus has increased significantly over the last 4 years. We continue to promote competition and value across the economy by working with and supporting and funding the Jersey Consumer Council. The First Step assisted ownership scheme has been launched with £12 million of Government funding, helping 65 households to go into home ownership. The Government subsidy for G.P. (general practitioner) appointments and home visits have been increased, as has the subsidy for appointments with nurses, allied health professionals, and for G.P. telephone consultations, thus reducing the cost of primary care. Additional support for pensioners now covers eye tests, glasses, lenses, dental treatment, dentures, chiropody for households with tax bills up to £1,000. Fifteen hours a week of funded nursery education during term time has been extended to all children aged 2 and 3. This can save families up to £6,000 a year. The scheme is now open for applications. Nutritious hot school meals are being provided across all Government-funded primary schools at a cost of £2.50, with free meals for eligible households. Government fees and duties and charges have been kept as low as possible, usually no higher than 2.5 per cent. Tax allowances have been increased with the standard allowance of now £21,250, which is significantly higher than the equivalent in many other comparable jurisdictions. Child allowances have also been increased. We have continued to control and bear down on public spending because stable public finances keep prices at steady. Taken together, these measures ...

The Bailiff:

Your answer has been very long. Is it going to come to an end quite soon?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I am sorry, we have achieved so much, you see. It took a bit too long, I do apologise. I wanted to get through as much as I can, but I will give way on the last paragraph.

2.4.1 Deputy K.M. Wilson:

I will not be as long. I thank the Chief Minister for detailing his achievements, but the fact is that cost of living still remains the number one issue for Islanders. At the latest opinion survey, 88 per cent of under-35s mentioned this, as did 80 per cent of over 55 year-olds. So having introduced all of those wonderful interventions, can the Chief Minister explain if any detailed analysis has been undertaken on its cost-of-living measures, and if so, will he publish this analysis rather than just report policy intention?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

We have a number of surveys that monitor how the economy, how Islanders are doing, including Statistics Jersey, Business Tendency Surveys, Opinion and Lifestyle Surveys. I understand that the cost of living is still the number one priority, and this Government is doing as much as it possibly can, given the limited

levers we have to deal with. We have a cost-of-living group chaired by the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development, which is also working on other areas and other considerations of how we continue to bear down. But the fact is we are largely at the mercy of the global economy and geopolitical instability, which quickly finds its way back on to our shelves. However, we will continue to do as much as we can to reduce the burden on Islanders, and although with our cost of living, the R.P.I. (retail price index) now is running at 2.8 per cent. Cost of living is slightly different to that. That is why we are targeting to the lower income households. We have to try and find ways of doing more to help Islanders and give Islanders more confidence and continue to bear down as much as we can. But there are no easy answers.