STATES OF JERSEY

PROPOSED BUDGET (GOVERNMENT PLAN) 2026-2029 (P.70/2025): SEVENTEENTH AMENDMENT (P.70/2025 AMD.(17)) – COMMENTS

Presented to the States on 4th December 2025
by the Council of Ministers

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

The Council of Ministers asks States members to reject this amendment as it would reverse planned efficiency savings within the Office of the Children's Commissioner for Jersey (OCCJ).

The draft Budget 2026-29 provides the OCCJ with a budget of £954,000 and 8 FTE staffing, which the Council of Ministers deems sufficient to deliver its important independent advocacy work.

Whilst the Council of Ministers supports the Office of the Children's Commissioner for Jersey and will seek to ensure the office is adequately funded, the CSSP proposal would divert resources from other priority areas.

Since the formation of this Council of Ministers, the Cabinet Office has saved almost £3.6 million as part of an overall drive to curb the growth in government spending and to ensure that resources are priorities for front-line departments. This includes nearly £7.6M of additional money for Children's Services improvements and £12M for 'loving homes' residential care.

On a like-for-like comparison, the Cabinet Office has reduced by 32.6 full time equivalent staff to a new total of 173.7 FTE, a 16% reduction. As such, any further reductions inevitably will have consequences for the delivery of its work.

Background

Amendment (17) lodged by the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel (CSSP) to the Draft Budget 2026–2029 would have the effect of removing the existing requirement for the OCCJ to reduce spend by £61k during 2026.

The Council of Ministers has committed to ensuring that the OCCJ has sufficient support to meet its statutory obligations under the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Jersey) Law 2019.

Rationale for Rejecting the Amendment

The Budget 2024-27 included a requirement for the OCCJ to contribute savings of £38k in 2024, £41k in 2025 and £61k in 2026. In total, that is 1 fewer FTE over three years.

The CSSP amendment proposes to reverse the final year of savings, £61k, and for this to be found from an unspecified area of the Cabinet Office head of expenditure.

Ministers are also content to continue to work with the OCCJ such that if their budget allocation proves insufficient to deliver essential projects, access to additional financial support could be provided up to a maximum of £61,000 as a one-off payment for 2026. This has been communicated the Children's Commissioner, seeking to provide comfort over their important project work while simultaneously seeking to maintain a reasonable expectation that best endeavours will be made to deliver savings (as they are in other areas of the Cabinet Office).

Conclusion

The Council of Ministers urges Members to reject this amendment in line with the Government's commitment to efficiency and fiscal responsibility.