Deputy Helen Miles,
Chair, Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel
By email

6th October 2025

Dear Chair,

Proposed Budget 2026-2029 Review

Thank you for your letter of 23rd September and the confirmation that the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel has launched its review of the proposed Budget 2026-2029.

The Council of Ministers continues to prioritise realistic budgets, while curbing expenditure growth and focusing resources where they are most needed in essential, front-line services. Accordingly, the proposed Budget does not include any other new revenue expenditure or projects in the Chief Minister's portfolio. Instead, it focuses on the continuation of the three essential Digital Services projects outlined below, the delivery of the Legislative Programme and other workstreams within existing budget allocations and savings.

Specific responses to your questions are as follows:

- **Progress reporting on projects and/or workstreams agreed by the States Assembly as part of the Government Plan 2025-28:**

The Capital Programme in the Government Plan 2025-2028 included three essential Digital Services projects. These are progressing into 2026, as below:

Programme / Project	Description	Status	Rationale
Cyber Programme 2.0	The project seeks to ensure that Government is able to adequately respond to the increasing complex cyber threat, which has grown in recent years due to the challenging geopolitical risk landscape.	Continuing into 2026	N/A
IT Major Upgrade and Replacement	The programme is intended to upgrade Government's aging digital infrastructure, simplify digital systems and improve the reliability of the IT network across government.	Continuing into 2026	N/A
Digital Government Platform	The project will deliver a common online services platform across Government where existing and future services can be operated from. This will initially focus on supporting the Transform Programme.	Continuing into 2026	N/A

The Replacement Asset and Minor Capital referenced in the Budget document is not a single capital project; it provides the department with funding to replace key operational equipment on an annual basis to ensure assets are maintained at an appropriate standard for the ongoing delivery of public services.

None of the capital projects in the Budget for 2025-2028 have been delayed or cancelled from the Chief Minster's portfolio.

- **An outline of any changes in policy direction or delivery for 2026 and the impact thereof:**

A detailed update of the progress of the Legislative Programme will be provided to Scrutiny shortly, once it has been approved by the Council of Ministers. This is a live document and variations to individual legislative projects are to be expected throughout the year, as priorities change and the complexity of the subject becomes more apparent.

I have also made a commitment to share with Scrutiny the list of items within the 'Development Pool', as these could be actively progressed during any periods of reduced activity, such as during the pre-election period in 2026.

In summary, the following legislative projects were added to the programme during the course of 2025:

- Amendments to Criminal Procedure Law
- Cyber Security (Jersey) Law 202-
- Elections (Senators) (Jersey) Amendment Law 202-
- Shipping (IMO Conventions and Codes) (Jersey) Amendment Law 202-
- Jersey Capital Investment Fund
- Road Traffic Law (Drug Limits) (Jersey) Amendment Regulations 202-
- Trawling, Netting and Dredging Regulations

The following items were removed from the legislative programme during the course of 2025. In some cases, these have been placed within the Development Pool instead:

- Amendments to the Public Finances (Jersey) Law 2019 – Regulations – role of Fiscal Policy Panel
- Assistance in collection of UK Tax Debts
- Exchange of Tax Information – Regulations
- Powers of Attorney (Jersey) Law 1995
- Adult Safeguarding Law
- Cultivations Regulations for Medical Purposes
- Health Funding Reform
- Medicines Manufacturing Licensing Regulations

- **An outline of any changes to staff posts and restructuring within your department and the anticipated resultant savings and impact on service delivery:**

The Common Strategic Policy includes a commitment to curb growth in the public sector, and Ministers have ensured that commitment is reflected in the proposed Budget. The combined savings target for payroll reduction across the Cabinet Office, Digital Services and People Services is £1.8m for 2025. A further £2.7m of savings is planned in 2026, broken down as follows:

- Cabinet Office £1.3m
- Digital Services £1.0m
- People Services £0.4m

The budget has been removed for the roles saved, and unfilled vacant posts have been taken out of the system. Vacancy management will continue on a monthly basis as part of the wider approach to reducing public sector expenditure.

Cabinet Office

The Cabinet Office headcount in FTE has reduced from a budgeted 196 in 2025 to 173 in 2026. These savings have been achieved primarily through application of the external recruitment freeze. Budgets in 2027 and 2028 are currently planned for 173 FTE.

During the first quarter of 2025, the Public Health and Health Policy teams transferred to Health and Care Jersey so those staff numbers are not included in the196 figure provided for 2025.

Digital Services

The proposed Budget includes over £1m in role savings in 2026, which will be met through reviews of the organisation structure and through vacancy management.

People Services

People Service restructured in Q4 2024 to ensure that budget savings would be made. There has been prioritisation of staff in line with the People Services Business Plan and a focus on fundamental core areas and high risks. Decision-making processes have been strengthened by applying a structured approach to risk management, and there are regular reviews of workforce planning and resourcing.

- **An update on the efficiencies and other savings for the Cabinet Office to be delivered in 2025 and how these were achieved**:

Cabinet Office

The £1.681m saving target allocated to the Cabinet Office in 2025 was achieved, and the department is forecast to have a further underspend. The savings in 2025 were achieved by maintaining an external recruitment freeze on all non-essential roles and those above Grade 11, avoiding spend on external consultancy unless it is for essential technical services and prioritising the department's requests of Digital Services.

Digital Services

Saving targets allocated to the Department in 2025 included Office Accommodation Property savings and roles savings targets which have all been achieved in full, recurringly. The Department's role savings target has been met through a review of the vacancy position.

People Services

Saving targets allocated to the Department in 2025 included Office Accommodation Property savings and roles savings which have all been achieved in full and will be recurring. The Department's role saving target has been met via a review and restructure of the People Services staff model, from which a number of vacant roles have been removed. In addition, People Services made some minor compulsory redundancy payments in 2025 to reduce the number of long service Fixed Term Contract workers.

- **A progress update on the review of a Public Services Ombudsperson/complaints mechanism workstream, a copy of the proposals considered by the Council of Ministers and detail on where funding is allocated within the Proposed Budget 2026:**

The Public Services Ombudsperson budget for 2026 is £398,000. This is recurring funding and falls under the Cabinet Office budget.

Having considered proposals for an Ombudsperson on 16th September, the Council of Ministers has now commissioned a financial assessment – including a cost benefit analysis – which will be examined before a final decision is taken. If agreed, it would be possible for proposals to be lodged before the end of this year. Finalised proposals will be provided to the Panel accordingly.

Yours sincerely,

Deputy Lyndon Farnham
Chief Minister
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