



Parish and Government Review Panel

Public Hearing

Witnesses: (The Chief Minister and The Minister for Treasury and Resources)

Monday, 24 November 2025

Panel:

Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade (Chair)

Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central (Vice Chair)

Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter

Witnesses:

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

Deputy E. Millar of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity, the Minister for Treasury and Resources

Mr. A. Hacquoil, Group Director, Strategic Finance

Mr. P. Wylie, Chief Officer, Cabinet Office

[11:03]

Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade (Chair):

Okay, thank you very much. Good morning, everybody. This is the public hearing for the Parishes and Government scrutiny panel with the Chief Minister and the Minister for Treasury and Resources. As usual, the hearing is being recorded and streamed live, and a transcript of the entire hearing will be published on the States of Jersey website at a later date. Please could everybody ensure that electronic devices are switched to silent. We will start with introductions. I am Deputy Helen Miles, I am Chair of the panel.

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

Deputy Catherine Curtis, I am the Vice-Chair of the panel.

Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

Deputy Kristina Moore, I am a member of the panel.

The Chief Minister:

Good morning, Deputy Lyndon Farnham, Chief Minister.

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

Elaine Millar, the Minister for Treasury and Resources.

Group Director, Strategic Finance:

Andy Hacquoil, the Group Director of Strategic Finance.

Chief Officer, Cabinet Office:

I am Paul Wylie, Chief Officer in the Cabinet Office.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, thank you very much. We have set aside one hour for the hearing, we may or may not need that, and we are trying to divide questions between the both of you, so some of them will be for individuals but some of them we would a comment on from both of you. As you know this Scrutiny Panel was set up to examine the relationship between the parishes and the Government with the intention of by the end of the year really coming up with a body of evidence to show exactly where we are in 2025. This is an issue that has not been looked at seriously for over 20 years. Just to start really, Chief Minister, could you just give us your general views on the parish system and tell us how well you think it meets the needs of our community?

The Chief Minister:

The parish system, I think, it underpins our community, it supports our democracy and many social aspects of Island life. The parishes are historic and embedded, I think, in our culture. I think the system generally works well. Through the rating system, while there is some differences in the way parishes deal with that, I think the rates and the services provided by the parishes present exceptionally good value. The parishes are the focal point for many Islanders, parish meetings and all sorts of structure ... they provide structure that underpin the community. I think sometimes it is disappointing to see small turnouts at Parish Assemblies but, of course, when you get the important issues or issues that the community engage with that can be quickly reversed. They provide many key local services to Islanders. Honorary Police play a central part in community work and policing. The community provides support to the States Police. I think that provides a good balance and I am

pleased to say we enjoy a very strong relationship between the States Police and Honorary Police and that has been prevalent now for some years. So, in summing it up, I think parishes are the grassroots of our Island life. I personally, and as a Deputy and the Government, remain fully supportive of the work they do but we are always looking and keen to explore ways we can improve things.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, do you think there is scope for the parish system to evolve?

The Chief Minister:

It all depends how we define evolve in relation to parishes because there is one argument they do evolve but there is also an argument that they stayed fairly traditional over the years and I think that could be one of their strengths and, of course, as we all know as Members of the States, Constables, I think the parish and the success of the parish is underpinned by the administrative and permanent staff that we have. But often the leadership will stem from the Constable who is running the parish at the time and we see different levels of evolution, shall we say, depending on that.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

You said that there is always room for improvement. What is your vision for that improvement? Do you have one?

The Chief Minister:

Well, I am generally quite happy with the way things run at the moment. As I said before, I think parishes work well and when things work well we should perhaps leave them alone, but it is right to explore and take a look ... like you said we have not looked at this for over 20 years. There might be improvements that can be made that we have not identified yet so all I was doing is saying that we are open-minded and if anything comes up as part of this investigation then we would be pleased to look at it. But I cannot really think of anything off the top of my head that needs improving.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Do you think the current parish system is ... we are in 2025, the parish system is over 800 years old do you think it is sustainable in the medium and the long-term?

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

What do you think Government needs to do to nurture and protect the parish system?

The Chief Minister:

Mostly to stay out of the way I would have thought. Provide support where we can, engage with them, as we do, on many issues in relation, especially in relation to the infrastructure of the Island and I think it generally runs very well.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

As parish Deputies, you are not part of the municipality of the parish, do you think that parishioners understand that that is the case or do you think that they think you should have a greater role in parish affairs? I am interested in your views.

The Chief Minister:

Having served as a Deputy in the old system, then as Senator and then in the new constituencies, I think generally we understand that as Deputies but I have worked with Constables that have been much more inclusive than other Constables. We are not part of the parish administration but generally we are, I find, welcome to participate in certain aspects of that. A lot of that can depend on the Constable and the way they like to work.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Yes, do you think that is problematic?

The Chief Minister:

I have not experienced any problems with that and, all in my experience, I have always been being included and being able to participate. I would not want to get involved with the parish administration.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

But if a parishioner is bringing something to you as the Deputy and they expect you to represent them, and you cannot make any headway because you are not part of municipality, is that an issue?

The Chief Minister:

Well, I have not found that an issue because just as they can speak to the Deputies, they can speak to their Constable as well. When they have spoken to me on parish issues, I have been able to talk to the Constable and generally find a resolution. So I have not found that to be a problem.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Deputy Millar, what about you?

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

Well, I have to say I do not think I have had many enquiries from constituents that are particularly parish-related. There may be the odd thing, there has been once or twice a constable has come to me and said: "Can you help this parishioner because you have specific knowledge that may be helpful here?" I think we understand, and again from a multiparish constituency, I mean I know that I can vote when I go to Trinity, I am not part of the municipality but I can vote as a parishioner, but when I go to any assemblies in St. John and St. Lawrence you cannot vote in those, and I do not think people necessarily understand that, but I have not found it to be an issue. However, I agree with the Chief Minister that it comes down to the Constable. I am invited to various parish events, they are always pleased to see you at Parish Assemblies. We get invited to things and we participate to the extent that we can.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, thank you.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Could you give some examples that would demonstrate how effective the collaboration is between Government and the parishes?

The Chief Minister:

The Comité's access to the Government, to the Executive, is a valued and important maintenance. So from an officer level there is a lot of collaboration, especially around such things as planning applications, infrastructure matters, transport, road works, licensing, various types of other administration, Honorary policing. Of course, the Chair of the Comité attends Council of Ministers.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Do they have a vote?

The Chief Minister:

No, they do not vote at the Council of Ministers but they attend, because they are technically not part of the Government. They attend for an information sort of sharing practice.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Do you see any areas where there could be greater collaboration?

The Chief Minister:

Well I think we have ... I say greater collaboration, we have a system ... I mean for example the Dangerous Dogs Law is an example, in point, that is quite ...

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Do you think that has been an effective result? Has that demonstrated an effective system?

The Chief Minister:

Well, on the grounds that Scrutiny have picked up on that and scrutinised that, and the scrutiny process will do what it is meant to do and improve the legislation. They found areas where they would have liked to see more consultation, so it generally works very well. So I cannot immediately identify any major problems, of course there are probably things ...

Deputy K.L. Moore:

As the Head of Government, do you not think it is a problem that the Comité did not speak to the police, for example, with regards to the Dangerous Dogs Law, as you are using that as an example?

The Chief Minister:

If I could just finish my last sentence. I am not aware of any serious or major concern there has been with the way the parishes and the Government interact. I think there could be always areas where we could improve, and I think we are open to that. In relation to that specific case, I do not really want to comment too much on it, but I support Scrutiny's ...

Deputy K.L. Moore:

But as the Head of Government, it is your role to ensure that there is a good working relationship and surely you would have a view about the failure to interact and engage with the States of Jersey Police.

The Chief Minister:

No, I am not going comment on that at this hearing. I think that specific case is not relevant to the broader picture.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I think it is actually quite a good example of how parish matters interact with Government. Certainly, Mr. Wylie, you will know yourself, if somebody from Government is bringing law, there is a very distinct process to follow, processes in writing, around policy development, around consultation, around law drafting, around submission and the like. I think what the panel are interested to know is how that particular structure is communicated to the Comité des Connétables so that they follow it to make sure that you get good law.

The Chief Minister:

Paul, do you want to take that in first instance?

[11:15]

Chief Officer, Cabinet Office:

Yes, you are absolutely right. There is a finite amount of legislation you can do in any one session, and in devising the Council of Minister's legislative programme and reducing that from its initial 129 items down to 59, we were very mindful that States Members, the Comité and individual Constables can and should submit their own legislation. So we kept that kind of headroom in the legislative drafting office and the Law Officers' Department to be able to respond to that. Of course, if the Comité des Connétable wanted to talk about how the government policy officers devise their policy submissions and go through that process, more than welcome to do that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

In this particular case, did they do that?

Chief Officer, Cabinet Office:

Not to my knowledge, but I also would not criticise them for that. I think we are in a glass houses situation. There are many examples of Government not always following the right processes so I would not necessarily criticise anyone for that.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Just about your comments about Scrutiny picking it up, Scrutiny are expected to be a critical friend. I do not think scrutiny expects draft legislation to come to us which is not fit for purpose, so I think that there is something going wrong there.

The Chief Minister:

For example, I am not sure how many pieces of legislation the Comité have bought in this term, but it is not too many. But I think if we are talking about this particular point, I think that highlights an area for improvement. I think these are questions you should address to the Comité if you have not addressed it already as part of this. But it did highlight, I think, a gap where something went to the States, was picked up and ultimately because there were conversations and I understood the Comité decided to stand their ground and proceed. That led to the Scrutiny intervention.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Our next question is about barriers in that collaboration. Listening to your answer there, perhaps communication and lines of communication between Government and parishes appears to be a bit of a barrier to performance?

The Chief Minister:

No, I do not think so. I think that generally works very ... well, the Comité are their own entity, they make their own decisions, and they are not part of the Government. We can give them our comments and vice versa.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

But this legislation does not come forward from them, as you have just said, very often, and there has been a lack of communication, which appears, from this side of the table, to be a barrier.

The Chief Minister:

When you say lack of communication, you are talking about the consultation? I do not think there is been a lack of communication between the Comité, Scrutiny and the Government but there has certainly been a lack of consultation, communication with, for example, J.S.P.C.A. (Jersey Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) and the police in that matter, but that is a matter for the Comité.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Yes, which is part of your Government. Do you see any other barriers?

The Chief Minister:

Not off the top of my head. I think communication is key to everything and lessons have to be learned. In this case, I hope that lessons have been learned that communication and consultation is important. We, as a Government and former Governments, I think we never stop learning lessons about that.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Thank you. In terms of the Treasury, do you see any areas where savings could be driven by greater collaboration with the parishes?

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

It would depend what you want to do. Going back to the question earlier about evolution, the parishes, we have 12 parishes providing services. There could be in terms of ... and I think Government does not fund the parishes, the parishes raise their own funds through the Island-wide rate, they then decide how to spend those. Again, I think that is a matter ... because I just think, going back to your previous question, there is an issue about how Government cannot really impose itself on the parishes because the parishes are independent. I would expect there would be a degree of resistance to Government coming in saying: "Well, we want you to do this" because each

Constable may have a different view on how that thing is to be achieved. So I think it is really for the parishes. There are probably things they could do in terms of centralising, I have not thought about it in great detail, but in terms of centralising record keeping, driving licences, computer systems, if you get a computer ... I do not know if they have a computer system that they can all access or if they all run parish by parish, but I think they each run their own affairs independently. It is that very independence that probably would make it difficult for Government to come in and say: "We do not like what you are doing, we want the 12 of you to do something differently." I think that itself could be problematic unless that was something was framed carefully and Government was saying: "Well, as a matter of policy, this is what we would like the parishes to do." But I think the parishes themselves and the Constables would have to decide among themselves how to do it.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Thank you. In terms of raising revenue, obviously, there is already the Island-wide rate, have you considered looking and discussing with the Constables opportunities for raising revenue through the rate system, say for the waste charges that you are currently looking at?

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

I have not been involved in that. The waste charge proposal is being driven by the Minister for Infrastructure, so I would expect that that is something that he would consider. But I do not know what his thinking is on that and it may be that the parish rate is a way to do it, it may be it is not appropriate. In fact, I think there has been something recently about it and people have not liked the idea.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, I have questions on the parish rate system, which I expect Treasury Minister will probably answer but Chief Minister and officers may have something to add in. Do you know how the Island-wide rate is set and what factors influence this process?

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

It is not something I would be closely involved in. I think if it is increased, it is increased in consultation ... I cannot remember when we last increased it. I think I would probably have a recommendation made to me to the extent we have to do that and it will then be passed on to the parish. I have not had a great deal of involvement with the parishes in my time as Minister for Treasury and Resources.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, so does anyone know how it is set? Who makes recommendations, for example?

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

Do you know that?

Group Director, Strategic Finance:

I do not know, unfortunately. The current rate is 94 pence per quarter for the Island-wide rate that was set for 2025. The exact mechanism unfortunately is not in the notes I have been provided with, but I believe it is revalorised on an annual basis, broadly in line with inflation.

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

Yes, I think there is a broad inflationary increase.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

What does the Island-wide rate get spent on?

Group Director, Strategic Finance:

So the Island-wide rate is paid into the Consolidated Fund as part of general revenues, so it is not ring-fenced for any particular purpose, it is just another revenue line alongside income tax, corporate tax and other elements. I cannot remember exactly, I think when it was established there were other elements of expenditure that were brought in, I think it was to do with the welfare system, but it was before my time. But it is not ring-fenced in a particular way, so it just does form part of general revenues.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Can anyone say who would decide on any changes to it apart from the annual normal increase?

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

If there were changes to it apart from the normal increase that would come to me, I would imagine. If it the Island-wide rate that comes here.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Who would make the recommendation and why?

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

I would expect Treasury would make the recommendation.

Group Director, Strategic Finance:

So I believe that Treasury would look after it from a policy point of view, so our tax policy colleagues would be the people considering whether there should be changes to the Island-wide rate and

making recommendations. The exact mechanism ... I am very sorry I do not have the information with me but we can certainly come back to you afterwards with the exact way that would be done. I would assume it may well be legislative so we would need to bring a proposition to the Assembly to change it. I will confirm that after the hearing, if that is okay.

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

Yes, I would expect any decision to change the nature of the rate or to increase it significantly would come to me through the process.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I guess the question is: is 94p too much? Is 94p too little?

Group Director, Strategic Finance:

It depends on which measures you are looking to, whether it is the right amount. Any changes to the Island-wide rate to reduce it would have to be compensated by other revenue measures in wider Government revenues. It could be changed but it would involve raising the money somewhere else. Similarly, if you put it up, it could be used to pay for certain things, so it is a lever that could be used by the States Assembly to pay for services but that would have to be taken in the wider context of how you wish to raise money to pay for services.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

For example, just to divert a little bit, obviously we are bringing amendments to the budget at the moment, would it be acceptable for Members to put in an amendment that the Island-wide rate is raised in order to fund a particular service?

The Chief Minister:

I simply do not know the answer to that question.

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

I do not know the answer to that. I would imagine, yes, someone could do it but just to do things like that on the hoof without understanding what the impact would be ... because it would affect every Islander and it might be viewed by Islanders as a tax increase.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Yes, so you said that the ... sorry, I will leave it.

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

I think the Island-wide rate has existed for some time, I believe, and it has a mechanism that has existed for some time.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

How much revenue does the island wide rate bring in per annum currently? You said it is 94 pence per quarter, so actually how much money does that put in the Consolidated Fund?

Group Director, Strategic Finance:

So I think it is about £17 million a year.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

£17 million?

Group Director, Strategic Finance:

Yes, 17. That is from the notes, I can double check from the budget because it will be included.

The Chief Minister:

I think you better just double check the figure, Andy, to be sure.

Group Director, Strategic Finance:

I will.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

At the moment it is the Comité that is setting the increase each year, is that right, Comité des Connétables?

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

I do not believe they set the Island-wide rate, I think each parish sets its own rate.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Its own rate, yes.

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

For the parish rate. I think the Island-wide rate, I think because it is central, I can only imagine ... I think that is done centrally.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

By the Comité des Connétable?

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

No, by Government, because the Island-wide rate comes into Government's general revenues, so I think the Island-wide rate is set by Government.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Maybe we can follow this up in writing.

Group Director, Strategic Finance:

We will. I am very sorry that we do not have that information prepared for you. Just to confirm though, the Island-wide rate, it was £17 million in 2024, the estimate for 2026 in the Government Plan is £18.2 million, and it increases in inflation through the period.

The Chief Minister:

Paul has figures there he would like to share.

Chief Officer, Cabinet Office:

Just to confirm that the Island-wide rate increases each year by the change in the R.P.I. (Retail Price Index) and looking at the figures back to 2014, it has increased from 2018 onwards, a degree.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

But the base rate has never changed since it was established in 2003.

Chief Officer, Cabinet Office:

No, and it would not make sense, therefore, it is the R.P.I. that is increasing it.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Yes, not the base rate.

Chief Officer, Cabinet Office:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So now talking more about the different parish rates, should there be clearer standards or guidance for setting parish rates to ensure consistency and transparency?

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

Again, I think that is a question for the Constables. It would sound like a logical thing for everybody to pay the same rate but if everybody is going to pay the same rate to the parish you wonder what the point of the parish system is. Each parish, in my understanding, on what I have seen in 3 parishes, is that each parish proposes their own rate depending on what they need to raise and each parish will have different requirements for funding, they will have different reserves and have different resources so each parish decides on its own rate. If you were going to centralise then you think well what is the point of the parish rate? Why do we have a parish rate run by each parish, if you are going to make it consistent and the same, then you would think that the logical thing for that to do is for that to be centralised. All the Constables have to decide among themselves whether they all want the same increase. It is a function of the parish system that they have different rates.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So my next question just leads on from this. Do you believe the current rate system is fair given that it is based on parish needs rather than property characteristics? For example, a 3-bedroom house in a parish, say Grouville, could pay more or less than a similar house in St. Peter. Does this raise any concerns about equity?

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

Well, I think each parish have their own rates assessors, I believe. It is done on the nature of property. I think once a property attracts a rateable value, so if you have a 3-bedroom house you are assessed on that property within your own parish. If you do an extension and stick another bedroom on then your rateable value will change when you notify that to the parish. There are differences but it is a function of the parish system and if we wanted everybody to be the same then we would have to re-rate every house across the Island. That would have to be done centrally and I would have thought that would have to come out of the hands of the parishes. I am not sure how that then speaks to the independence of the parishes. I have no idea how much owners of 3-bedroom houses pay, because one 3-bedroom house can be very different from another, regardless of location.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Bearing that in mind, you might have one with exactly the same attributes in one parish to another parish, but because the parish rate is set higher, because the parish might have done a lot of their own roadworks or something, then one householder pays a lot more.

[11:30]

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

Because they live in that parish and the parish has done the roadworks. So if the parish in Grouville are doing road works, it means that parish rate has got to go up, then there is also an argument that it is fair that the parishioners who get the most benefit from the roadworks should pay for them rather than people in St. Ouen, for example, who are generally not getting the benefit. So, to my mind, you either have to centralise everything, make everything identical and take it out of the parishes or you have to accept that there are differences depending on which parish you live in.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, maybe not everything but some things. Should there be an independent body or professional oversight to advise on rate setting and the methodology behind it?

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

I do not know a great deal about how they set rates but I think that would be sensible. There would be a cost to doing that but I think the parishes could pay that. I think there may be some disparity. It is a problem that they have in other countries, for example the U.K. (United Kingdom), rateable values have not changed for a very long time. The question is always how do you get consistency and fairness both within a parish and across parishes. I think more guidance would be useful certainly. Perhaps somebody they could go to for advice might be useful. I would imagine they do that if they have particularly difficult issues, well I do not know if they can do that with difficult issues. I have not been involved in how you assess rates.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Are you responsible for the Rates Law?

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

I do not know. I have not read it, I do not know.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, now that we have the Rented Dwellings Licensing Scheme in place, do you think there is scope for joined-up working between the parishes and that scheme which holds information on rental properties?

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

You would like to think so. The notion of 12 parishes going away and setting up 12 different registers is quite absurd so, to me, you would like to think a central system would be a good idea, that information can be held in a central place. That, to me, would be logical and efficient for that to happen. But, again, it comes back to ... and I cannot remember what the law says about that, if the

law applies specific rules to each parish or each Constable, then they may have their own views as to how they implement that. Consistency and coherence is always useful.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. I think this will be my last question on this. Rates can be considered as a revenue raising mechanism so does the Minister for Treasury and Resources believe the relationship between parish rates and broader taxation policy has been properly understood and communicated?

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

I would think that people understand there is a difference between parish rates, that you pay income tax on your income and you pay parish rates which are linked to your property, whether that is owned or let, and where you live but parish rates are there to provide services, to fund the services provided by the parish. I do not think the 2 are necessarily linked. It is set by the parish at Parish Assembly. They, I think, have to run a budget the same way as everybody else does. If a Constable decided that they wanted to re-tarmac a road and to do that they had to raise the parish rates significantly, they would have to have the parishioners approve that. I think it is issues about the rate and the raising of rates that can be controversial at parish meetings. It has not happened when I have been at them; they have been accepted, rates. But the parish accept the rate and I think that is one area, going back to, I think, the Chief Minister mentioned sometimes quite low turnouts at parish meetings. I think that is why I think that the parishes, if they are going to do significant increases, I would have thought would be well advised to make sure parishioners are aware of that so they can come to the Assembly to vote on it. Because if you have a small number of people voting to increase the rate and everybody else is blissfully ignorant, until the bill arrives or the assessment arrives that is not positive. But I think they are quite different creatures, if you like, and they are dealt with separately and I think people understand they are dealt with separately through the parish.

The Chief Minister:

Just going on that because rates are levied in accordance with the properties relatable at quarters determined by the properties' attributes and that is where I think there is some confusion around parishes, how they rate the attributes of the property may vary slightly. The total amount includes the parish, the occupier, the Foncier and the Island-wide rate and then they multiply that by the number of quarters. If you tried to formalise a system for agreeing the property attributes which was similar across the Island because a parish then work out what the rate will be in line with the expenses they need to run the parish. If all the attributes were the same, then they could still amend the degree, how much the quarter would be.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

I think that was the reason for the question about the licensing scheme because that is gathering evidence about a property's attributes and, therefore, there is some crossover. Because you have got 2 bodies in the Island or 13 bodies in the Island that are all collecting information about the same properties.

The Chief Minister:

Yes, yes, that is a good point.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Where there is a duplication of effort.

The Chief Minister:

What we have to remember is the parish is an honorary system. All this work around the parish is done by people who give their time freely to do it. If we start going centralising it, expect more cost to follow.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I just think the word centralisation has been mentioned quite a lot in the last half an hour.

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

Probably by me.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

There is certainly no intention ...

The Chief Minister:

Good.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

It will sit in the terms of reference. This is absolutely not about centralising parish systems.

The Chief Minister:

Understood.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

But it is about understanding the impacts of having 12 different systems and understanding the equity across the Island because everybody is a citizen of Jersey, regardless of the parishes. I just wanted to make that clear.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Also, if you have volunteers giving of their time to deliver a service for the public, it would be a better use of their time and they could be more effective in other areas if they were not duplicating effort with some Government services already collecting information about property, for example. Earlier, Minister for Treasury and Resources, you mentioned the waste collection and the idea that there may be some benefit to looking at collaboration across the Island for refuse collection. Are there any other particular services or functions where you can see that some collaboration might benefit delivery?

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

I am not sure. As I say, I do not know how the waste charges are going to go. I think we also need to remember that not every parish provides the same services. I think a lot of what each parish does depends very much on the needs of the community, what the community wants, what the community needs and also I think the nature of the Constable. I think the Constables themselves, the Constables' own interests where they see the level of need, where they want to promote things. The Constable is a very big player in that, for example, the Constable of St. Martin is very engaged with the issue of play and availability of play equipment for children. Others have different focuses. They may focus more on the older communities in the parish. Also, just going back to the waste charges, I think one area where that is different is that not everybody has mains drains. You could be asking people in places like Trinity, for example, to pay a waste charge when they do not have mains drains. I think there are difficulties with that. It still comes back to there are centrally-provided services which have to be funded by Government and services provided by the parish. We have to take it for a good reason. I think the only real example I can probably think of something being taken centrally is the welfare system where for very good reasons I understand the welfare system was taken from the parish and put into properly run, professional, clear, consistent income support system and that came away from the parishes. The parishes still have funds that they can pay out if they wish; they have charitable resources. But I have not seen something that I would say you could take that away from the parishes. I cannot think offhand of something that ...

The Chief Minister:

The same, I think the balance is pretty good.

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

I do, yes.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Do you think that the parishes have a role in helping to deliver the common strategic priorities of the Government?

The Chief Minister:

It all depends if some of that overlaps into the work they do as a parish.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

For example, recycling or putting children first, delivering parks.

The Chief Minister:

I am just trying to think of our 13 Common Strategic Policies. I think, as I have said, the parishes operate as independent to Government. They are not obliged to operate alongside the common strategic priorities. But in practice we find they generally adhere to those policies.

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

Yes, yes. The Constables are all Members of the Assembly. The Assembly accepted the Common Strategic Policy. But, again, as I say, I think it does come down to what each Constable thinks is the greatest need. If the Constable thinks, for example, that the greatest need is with the older community, they may focus on that. If they think the greatest need is with young children, they may focus on that. That is where the Constables can really look at the needs of the community in that particular parish, which are all different.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Thank you. Do you see any areas where there could be greater engagement with parishioners and the parishes?

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

It is quite difficult to say. I probably did not get involved in the parish at all until relatively recently because it was there. I went there to vote but otherwise I would not have gone to the Parish Hall very regularly. I paid my rates, I knew what the rates paid for. As a parishioner, a citizen, I did not engage very much with the parish at all. I think there are clearly lots of people who are very similar. They do not engage with the parish because they have no need to. I think a lot of the Constables are trying to make the best use of the Parish Halls. They have got mother and toddler groups, they have got classes, exercise sessions and trying to use the Parish Hall for community purposes. Again, I think that comes to the Constable to try and drive that. This is absolutely a personal opinion, it seems to me having observed in 3 parishes over the last few years that what the parishes really, really need is to try and get younger people involved; younger people involved at a much earlier stage. It is an honorary system and the parishes often rely on the elected positions, things like rates

assessors and all those parish roles, they are heavily relying on the older community. In many ways that is a good thing but I think in terms of modernising, evolving, doing things differently, getting some younger people in to cast fresh eyes over what each parish does would be a good thing. That is to say we are very reliant on older communities and younger people I think do have a lot more to offer. How we engage younger people with the parish I think is an ongoing challenge. I think the Honorary Police are doing very well in that, they seem to be getting some younger people going forward; that is a good thing. But I think as an Island, as an overall community, the more we can get younger people engaging with the municipality, then the more likely the parishes are to evolve and modernise. I think I would use the word “modernise”, rather than “evolve”. It is the same word really, is it not?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Thank you.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you. You just made me think then when you said about young people but obviously we have got our Youth Assembly, perhaps we should have a Youth Comité.

The Chief Minister:

I like that idea, yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

That would be good. That would be quite interesting, would it not? Yes, a bit of reverse mentoring.

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

I think they all have youth clubs, they all have youth clubs.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

They do, they do, yes.

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

I think they all have youth clubs and youth provision.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Yes, they do, they do indeed, yes. Yes, they all support that, yes. I just had some questions about sustainability.

[11:45]

It was really about what we see as the main pressures affecting the sustainability of the parishes, be that financial or operational.

The Chief Minister:

You are talking about financial sustainability or ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Both really and operational sustainability.

The Chief Minister:

Operational, yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

To be able to continue doing what they are doing into the future.

The Chief Minister:

I think they seem to be well resourced, well financially managed. All, if not most, of the parishes have got good reserves; they run tight teams. If anything I think it would be the other way round. I think Government could perhaps learn from some of the ways they operate. We have seen a huge increase in our head count. Maybe we should take a leaf out of the parishes' books in some areas. I think from my experiences as an Islander, as a citizen, I have always been very happy with the parishes and the parishes I have lived in. I have never had a problem. I have always felt we had good value for the rates. We do not notice it but maybe when we come back from being abroad or in the U.K. we just realise how clean our roads and country lanes are kept. I think it generally works very well. There is no evidence to suggest the current system is not sustainable.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, thank you.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I have some questions about the parishes' financial reporting and management. We received a written submission which raised concerns about how parish accounts are reported and that some parishes, the accounts are not currently prepared using G.A.A.P. (Generally Accepted Accounting Principles) standardised accounting framework. Do you have any views on this approach?

The Chief Minister:

I think I agree that using G.A.A.P. is a good practice and that should be encouraged. It is a matter for the parishes. The key thing I think is that their accounts contain all of the information and detail that the parishioners need if they want to investigate their parishes' expenses. Obviously St. Helier is a little bit different just because of its size and scale.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, and St. Helier does use that.

The Chief Minister:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

In your view, should Treasury have a role in offering guidance or setting minimum expectations for parish accounting practices?

The Chief Minister:

I think we should perhaps offer assistance or guidance if it is required but I will leave that you, yes.

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

I think each parish has its own administration. I think certainly the 3 parishes that I am involved in do seem to have ...

The Chief Minister:

The Procureurs of course, yes.

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

... administrative resource that is very capable. The accounts I see, each parish, the accounts are audited and I think audited accounts are important. I have not seen a set of accounts where the auditor has raised any concerns. The accounts that you see are very detailed, very, very detailed. I think they are all similar in the sense of what you might call Heads of Expenditure. We spent this on cleaning and lighting, it is every single line; you get the profit and loss account income and expenditure are very, very detailed. The observation, if I was going to make one, again, it comes back to the resourcing within. Treasury is not there to provide accounting advice. I am sure we would do if there was an issue. But if you wanted us to advise all 12 parishes, then I probably would have staff to do that because they are ... you are busy, are you not? But I think going forward what the parishes could possibly benefit from is perhaps setting out clearer rules around governance in terms of once people are in those roles. If I take the example of the State-owned entities or other companies where independent non-execs are appointed, people doing honorary roles, they are

given a fixed time period. Normally you would not be a non-executive director of a company for more than 9 years. I think there is a case in the parishes where people are in those roles for, potentially, decades. That is not a criticism. The parish are very appreciative and they really value long service. But I think if you have the same people doing the same thing for a very, very long time there is always a risk of complacency. There is a risk of failing to modernise and coming up with modern standards because nobody is coming in and saying: "This is how it is done now." This is something I see in virtually every context that if somebody is in a job for 20 years it is not always a good thing. I think some more thought about the fact that somebody is willing to put themselves up for election over and over again, yes, it is marvellous from their commitment to public service, is not necessarily a good thing from keeping up to date with change, encouraging change. Are you at risk of people taking their eye off the ball, putting overreliance on those people? I have absolutely no evidence to suggest there is any issues with complacency or people taking their eye off the ball. I have never seen a set of accounts that has been problematic. But I just have this natural if you have the same people doing the same thing for a very long time there are risks involved with that. I think it would be good for the parishes to consider. The same person has been a rates assessor for 30 years, it is marvellous and you have given that time. But perhaps new people would come in and have different views and different ideas. I think there is always room for fresh blood, fresh eyes. That feeds back to my earlier comment about trying to engage younger people, so that we have younger people coming in. You maybe go in and do a term when you are 40 but you do not come in when you are 50 and you are still there when you are 80. That is absolutely not meant to criticise anybody because I really do value the level of public service.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

While there is lots of people doing a great job and everything, we have had concerns raised in submissions. Do you think there is a role for Treasury to do something, whether it is offering more guidance or whatever for the parishes and will that happen?

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

We have not been asked to provide guidance. I am sure it is something we could think about if it was in terms of things like ... I absolutely have no evidence there is anything problematic in terms of the financial administration in the parish. If it was advice in terms of governance, how they do things, how frequently they should think about how long somebody should be in a role before they move on to another role or retire. I do not know if you have a view on that, Andy.

Group Director, Strategic Finance:

Just from a technical and the financial reporting point of view, we have not done a huge amount of work on this because obviously it is the Connétables who set the accounting policies that they use in their accounts. It is not really for Treasury to start meddling, as it were, although if they asked us

for advice we could. Some of the challenge would be when we say G.A.A.P. it is finding what the right generally accepted accounting principles for the body in question are. Obviously if you are a private company you may use I.F.R.S. (International Financial Reporting Standards) or you may use one of the U.K. company reporting standards. If you were a smaller entity you might use the I.F.R.S. 102, which is designed for small companies. The Government of Jersey has moved to I.F.R.S. as amended, following what the U.K. Central Government do. You have also got I.P.S.A.S. (International Public Sector Accounting Standards). I am not aware of an out-of-the-box standard solution that would apply to a public sector entity the size of a parish. I do not mean this disrespectfully, they are relatively small in the world of accounting standards. How would you make sure that whatever standards you are applying are proportionate and adding value? You would have to do some work to decide what they are and I guess it is what additional benefit you would have if all of the information is being provided in the reports as they stand? Would you just be putting another layer of complexity on top of something which is working? I think you were just before undertaking what could be quite interesting, I should say, although I am not necessarily volunteering for extra work, exercise to find out what standards would you apply but would it improve how well parishioners understand those accounts? Because if not, is it justified?

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

Yes, because the accounts are not massively detailed. The accounts are maybe 8, 9, 10 pages. They are detailed but they are a small document and they are not difficult to read. I think if you would bring in standards, as Andrew says, bringing standards that they then have a whole list of well we have not followed that because, we have not followed that because, et cetera. You are then having to say we will adopt the standard but then have a whole other declaration saying we have not followed it because it is just not appropriate for us; it is difficult.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, thank you. I guess I am just thinking about, for example, small charities that are governed by the Charities Commission. You have to submit things every year, you have to do things in a certain way. But parishes are not governed by anybody, other than the Connétable, who set their own standards, who set their own policies.

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

The Assembly.

The Chief Minister:

There are laws, are there not? There is the Rates Law and the laws that ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

We are still trying to establish who is responsible for the Rates Law and again ...

The Chief Minister:

Yes, in relation to the Island-wide rate, it is a States Assembly. I think to change the Island-wide rate you bring an amendment to the Rates Law and that goes to the Assembly. In relation to the accounts, the preparation of accounts are in accordance with the applicable law and I am not sure what that law that is, I am not sure ...

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Given the lack of knowledge with regards the accountability, where is the oversight provided and how is that applied ...

The Chief Minister:

Excuse me, what do you mean by a lack of knowledge?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

It was clear neither of you knew earlier who was responsible.

The Chief Minister:

I have just explained it, yes.

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

The Rates Law because I have not read it. If the Rates Law has a Minister responsible that means that ...

Chief Officer, Cabinet Office:

It is the Comité.

The Chief Minister:

Yes, we said that, yes.

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

It is the Comité, so there is a Minister. I do not know the answer because it is not my responsibility; I have never had to look at it because the Comité ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

But usually the amendments are brought by the Minister for Treasury and Resources to the Rates Law.

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

I have not been asked to make an amendment.

The Chief Minister:

We have not done it for probably 20 years, I guess.

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

It has not crossed my desk, I do not think.

Chief Officer, Cabinet Office:

2006, yes.

The Chief Minister:

2006, yes.

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

I think the fact that there is not a law, I think the parishes still, as you say, have existed for 800 years. They are holding and managing, some of them, very significant sums of money. I think whether or not you have a law, they are all producing accounts that are audited. To suggest there is some kind of Wild West; I do not think that is happening. Auditors have standards in terms of when they come in to do an audit, audit means something in their profession. If they are going to do an audit they will apply their professional standards to the set of accounts and is that a clean audit opinion? I think the fact that there is not something saying Constables setting out what they must do, the fact that they have an audit and that they are scrutinised by the Parish Assembly, the Procureur, I think that means that there are checks and balances. I am really concerned I have said something that people think there is something going on. I have nothing to suggest there is anything untoward with any financial administration.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, thank you.

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

I am sure accounts are well kept and are audited. I think the audit is the critical factor.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I am just conscious of time. You have talked about modernisation, I have just got a couple of final questions. If you were to identify any areas where the parish system might benefit from some

modernisation, what would they be, Chief Minister, what do you see as the future of the parish system?

The Chief Minister:

Obviously it has evolved over the last 800 years. If we went into how the parishes were run, then I think we would find considerable differences. I cannot see a great need for a change. I think we could perhaps tighten up on certain regulations, for example, G.A.A.P. accounting is a good practice to help all the parishes. I think there could be more access, income and expenditure could be more detailed for parishioners to look at. But, as I said, I think the parish systems work well. I think there could be improvements to the way Comité and Government, the States and Scrutiny interact. The Comité do not often bring legislation but when they do we could look at tightening those up a little bit but generally it works well.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

The Comité are not a statutory body.

The Chief Minister:

No.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

The Comité is just 12 Connétables. Do you think there might be some benefit in establishing the Comité in law as a committee that would establish some ground rules I guess?

The Chief Minister:

I would have to give that some thought. I am not sure. Obviously you consider that in your deliberation, that could be a good idea, I am not sure.

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

I cannot say I have given it any thought and I am not sure. What would the purpose of that law be? If you created the Comité you then create a formal structure where people are obliged to do certain things. Who is the Chair? Who is the Vice-Chair? What powers does it have? How do you deal with disputes? How do you deal with ..

Deputy H.M. Miles:

In the same way that ...

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

Because St. Helier are saying: “We must all adopt this policy” and a small parish saying: “That absolutely does not work for us.” I think the value of the parish system is that it does look on a community-by-community basis across the parishes. I think bringing the Comité together you are almost bringing the parishes into one rather than 12. I think it is the 12 bodies. I am sure there are things in terms of services that you could bring in but if you bring in all these things, like driving licences ... every time you bring something out of the parish you reduce their value in a way.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, right on time.

The Chief Minister:

You could have had another 4 minutes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

No, that is fine. Thank you for attending today. We are very grateful for your time.

The Chief Minister:

Thank you very much.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

We will close the meeting.

The Chief Minister:

Thank you very much.

The Minister for Treasury and Resources:

Thank you.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you.

[12:00]