



HOUSE OF KEYS OFFICIAL REPORT

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PROCEEDINGS

DAALTYN

HANSARD

Douglas, Tuesday, 26th October 2021

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Present:

The Speaker (Hon. J P Watterson) (Rushen);
The Chief Minister (Hon. A L Cannan) (Ayre and Michael);
Mr J R Moorhouse and Mr T S Glover (Arbory, Castletown and Malew);
Mr T D Johnston (Ayre and Michael);
Mrs C A Corlett and Mr C C Thomas (Douglas Central);
Ms J L Faragher (Douglas East);
Mr J C Wannenburgh (Douglas North);
Mrs S L Maltby and Mrs C S B Christian (Douglas South);
Mrs D H P Caine and Mr A J Smith (Garff);
Hon. K A Lord-Brennan and Hon. T M Crookall (Glenfaba and Peel);
Hon. J P Poole-Wilson and Mr S G Peters (Middle);
Mr R E Callister and Hon. J M Edge (Onchan);
Hon. L L Hooper (Ramsey);
Dr M E K Haywood (Rushen)
with Mr J D C King, Clerk of Tynwald.

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House of Keys

The House met at 10 a.m.

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

The Speaker: Moghrey mie, good morning, Hon. Members.

Members: Moghrey mie, good morning, Mr Speaker.

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The Speaker: In the absence of a Chaplain I will lead us in prayer.

PRAYERS

Mr Speaker

Leave of absence granted

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Members.

I have granted leave this morning to Mr Ashford, Mrs Barber and Dr Allinson.

Questions for Oral Answer

CHIEF MINISTER

1. Testing protocol – Reviewing for PCRs; LFD positives

The Hon. Member for Rushen (Dr Haywood) to ask the Chief Minister:

Whether he will review the protocol for COVID-19 PCR testing to evaluate the cost, resource implications and public health relevance of the current strategy; and whether in his opinion a positive lateral flow device (LFD) test is sufficient confirmation of an infection?

10 **The Speaker:** We turn then to Oral Questions and Question 1. I call on the Hon. Member for Rushen, Dr Haywood.

Dr Haywood: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I would like to ask the Chief Minister whether he will review the protocol for COVID-19 PCR testing to evaluate the cost, resource implications and public health relevance of the current strategy; and whether in his opinion a positive lateral flow device (LFD) test would be sufficient confirmation of an infection?

Thank you.

The Speaker: I call on the Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister (Mr Cannan): Mr Speaker, the Isle of Man Government has offered free of charge lateral flow antigen tests, known as LFTs or LFDs, to all resident since mid-July 2021. Since this date, some 5,660 positive LFDs have been recorded with a further 5,250 proving positive on confirmatory PCR testing, translating to a confirmatory rate of 93%. To date, 600,000 LFDs have been supplied to the public although it is not known how many have been used.

In the last three weeks the Pathology laboratory has carried out 5,300 PCR tests in total, with 1,293 proving positive. Of these tests, 1,200 have been due to the patient recording a positive LFD at home resulting in 1,120 confirmatory positives, 93%. Of the other 4,100 tests which have been admission screens, travel and symptomatic patients we have only found 173 positives.

It is therefore clear that the vast majority of COVID positives found on the Isle of Man at the moment are due to individuals self-testing at home and subsequently having confirmatory testing. It is also clear at the moment that these tests are proving very reliable, although we cannot monitor false negative LFDs or the fact that people may not always report positive results.

In recognising the importance of LFDs as the first diagnosis, the isolation period has been adjusted and starts upon the date of the initial test rather than the confirmatory PCR test. A move to a strategy where positive LFDs are accepted without confirmatory testing may bring savings; however, when considering such a move, there are several important points to consider of which I will give you just a few. The ability to test for variants of concern and subsequent genomic sequencing for the vast majority of positive cases would be lost; the ability for people to use a confirmed positive test for the immunity exemption for travel purposes would be lost; there may be a need to move back to full PCR testing in the event of variants of concern, or new variants, and sub-variants emerge, if identification will impact on case or outbreak management, and is advised by the UK Health Security Agency; and, importantly, such a move away from formal PCR testing for confirmatory tests would of course put the Island as an outlier compared to other jurisdictions that surround us.

In short, Mr Speaker, there may be attractive short-term savings but there would be an important number of control measures that would be lost and considerable inconvenience for people, travellers in particular, and the need to step back into a PCR process in the future, at additional cost, if needed. We are not aware of any country that has abandoned PCR tests completely at this point in favour of lateral flow tests, other than for initial screening subsequently confirmed by PCR.

I finally point out to Hon. Members that the Island's testing strategy will not be decided by me alone but by the Council of Ministers following the appropriate advice of our clinical and public health professionals. There may be a change in approach in the future following advice but, at this present time, that is not intended.

The Speaker: Supplementary question, Dr Haywood.

Dr Haywood: The UK government have talked about moving to using LFDs as border tests, and I wonder if in light of changes that, if anything does move, perhaps the decision will be revisited.

The Speaker: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, we are going to constantly monitor the situation and any further developments such as that would of course be properly evaluated.

65 **Dr Haywood:** Thank you.

2. COVID-19 – Winter mitigation

The Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew (Mr Moorhouse) to ask the Chief Minister:

What, if any, additional mitigation is planned in relation to the impact of COVID-19 as we move into winter; and if he will make a statement?

The Speaker: We turn to Question 2 and I call on the Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

70 I would like to ask the Chief Minister what, if any, additional mitigation is planned in relation to the impact of COVID-19 as we move into winter; and if he will make a statement?

Thank you.

The Speaker: I call on the Chief Minister to reply.

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The Chief Minister (Mr Cannan): Mr Speaker, a winter plan responding to the potential impact of COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses on health and care and other essential services is currently in preparation. The situation as regards COVID-19 is clearly different to the position going into *this* winter, as opposed to that of last year, and our vaccination programme has significantly weakened the link between cases, hospitalisations and deaths.

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However, the combination of continued circulation of COVID-19, with rising rates of flu and other respiratory viruses, may impact on the ability of the Island to maintain business as usual across all aspects of the economy and, in particular, the delivery of health and social care.

The objective of a winter plan will be to show how the Island may need to react and use all available mitigations to keep infection levels at rates that do not place unsustainable pressure on essential services. The key elements of the plan will include the ongoing vaccination programmes for COVID-19 and flu, combined with encouraging adherence to the non-pharmaceutical interventions – hands, face, space and ventilation. Increasing the use of face coverings in crowded and enclosed spaces, for example, public transport and shops, will be a priority for slowing transmission. Continued and regular use of LFDs will also be encouraged to enable identification of cases and measures to reduce onward spread and can be an important element of helping people assess their own risk, and that they may present to others.

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The impact of vaccination in breaking the link between infections and hospitalisation means that the community infection rates are not necessarily, in isolation, a sensitive predictor of pressure on health and care services. Therefore, it is not possible to fix a set of thresholds that can determine further action being required, as the situation is complex and multidimensional. Instead, DHSC and Manx Care have developed early warning indicators to identify building pressure on services from COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses, non-communicable disease, demand pressures and, of course, staff absence. In the event of unsustainable pressure on health and care services being indicated, an escalation of mitigation measures would need to be considered. It remains the hope that the impact of vaccination means that achieving control of

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rising rates should be possible through relatively small changes in mitigations, without the need to apply mandatory measures or lockdowns.

105 I would take this opportunity once again to ask every person who has been invited for a vaccination, either as a new cohort or as a booster, to please come forward to receive it. The winter plan when developed will be a public document so that people, businesses and other organisations can have clarity as to what the Government proposes to consider further as the winter progresses, and I am committed to sharing this within the next week or so with Hon. Members and, of course, the general public.

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The Speaker: Supplementary question, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Chief Minister; and thank you, Mr Speaker.

115 Will the winter plan be available very soon? Monday, 1st November is a watershed date, the children return to school and the clocks will have changed. People will be responsive to new information at that point, I would suggest.

The people do want clarity. It is now several weeks since the last press conference. Can we expect one this week?

120 In recent days there have been recommendations from the former Education Minister, the Director of Public Health and, on Thursday, a statement from the Council of Ministers. All say similar things but, rather than producing clarity, they are adding to apathy and confusion. Do you recognise the need to sort out these concerns as quickly as possible?

Thank you.

125 **The Speaker:** Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister: Yes, Mr Speaker, I do accept there has been a bit of a void in the handover between the last Government and this Government. I do intend to make a press statement later this week, and I do intend to discuss, at least in outline framework, a winter plan with the Council of Ministers at the earliest opportunity.

130

The Speaker: Further supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr Speaker; and thank you, Chief Minister.

135 Will the Chief Minister please consider going back to basics? We need clarity on basic things like handwashing and distancing.

Does he simply accept the world record we are currently holding, if we have got a hospital that is functional? And what assessment has been made of the cost to the individuals and businesses of so many days being lost as people have to spend this time in self-isolation?

140

Thank you.

The Speaker: Chief Minister to reply.

145 **The Chief Minister:** I am not sure what world record has just been referred to but, Mr Speaker, I do accept that there is a public level of concern about the rising cases. But just to put that into perspective, we are in a position where cases are significantly lower than where they were actually back in July, when we were looking at significant daily rates at that point. Whereas today we are currently averaging about 60 or 70 cases, we were well above 200 cases at that point.

150 I also must point out to Hon. Members, there is a very helpful surveillance report published on a weekly basis, which does show to Hon. Members that actually significant numbers of our caseload at the moment are being driven in the 10 to 19 age group. So what we are doing with the schools will be of importance moving forward. In fact, for further information of the 700 or so

cases that are currently reported – there are 708 cases currently reported – it is estimated that some 237 cases, 28.59% of those active cases, are in fact amongst that 10 to 19 age group.

155 So I would urge a sense of perspective being applied here and what we are going to try to do is move forward: (1) to provide the reassurance that we are continuing to assess the situation; and (2) to provide a framework for Public Health, and particularly our schools and businesses to be able to work together to provide targeted mitigations in certain areas when we get outbreaks.

160 **The Speaker:** Supplementary question, Mr Glover.

Mr Glover: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Would the Chief Minister just clarify what the early warning indicators he referred to are on that, with Public Health?

165 The 14-day average on 1st October was 36; on 24th October it is up to 80. So what are, just for clarification those early-warning indicators that the Chief Minister referred to?

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: The Chief Minister to reply.

170

The Chief Minister: These will be in the form of a dashboard that is held within DHSC and Manx Care. I can provide further clarification, but these will be on the level of viruses, other disease demand pressures and staff absences.

Thank you.

175

The Speaker: Mrs Corlett, supplementary question.

Mrs Corlett: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

180 The Chief Minister has stated – and the figures were higher in July – but is he of the opinion that there is significantly more pressure on hospitals in the winter months than there is in the summer?

The Speaker: Chief Minister.

185 **The Chief Minister:** Absolutely, and we must bear in mind of course that this is an endemic virus now that is amongst us. Our key need ultimately is to ensure that the Health Service is properly protected and that we do have the available beds and healthcare facilities to ensure that we can continue to operate to provide a viable health service to our population. That would be an absolute key matter of concern.

190 One also accepts that as we move into the winter months, people will become more and more enclosed in buildings rather than have the opportunity to spread themselves out as they would otherwise do in the warmer months. So that is also a factor. But we continue to find our way through this. The situation going into this winter is different to last winter in terms of the levels of vaccinations that have been provided, and we are continuing to try and understand how this virus will operate in these types of periods of time and what the level of waves that we are likely to see moving forward actually are.

195 The wave that we are currently in seems to be plateauing and there are indications that it may actually start to decrease now. But we are going to continue to monitor the situation as we move forward and, as I said, what I hope to do is get to a stage where we are in a position to react quickly in a targeted manner to specific outbreaks wherever they occur across our Island.

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The Speaker: Final supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

205 Last year, the Isle of Man was the only place in the British Isles to have a normal Christmas. Current policy risks that being repeated. Does the Chief Minister recognise these risks and is he ready to take the necessary action?

210 And, when assessing the current impact of COVID, is any assessment being made of long COVID on individuals, the Health Service and the education system? Or is it simply the current numbers in ICU?

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Chief Minister to reply.

215 **The Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I very much hope that the Island can enjoy a normal Christmas and that we will do so with as minimal restrictions as possible. As I said to Hon. Members, we are going to continue to very closely monitor the situation.

220 I would like to see us move to a position of quick, targeted intervention where there are specific outbreaks around the Island. But the Hon. Member will recognise, of course, that moving to national mandatory measures does have significant impacts across the community. We do want to only apply to that level where we have serious concerns in terms of either the seriousness of the outbreak and the impact that it is having on public health, or the knock-on impact that it is having on our ability to deliver a proper health and care service on the Island.

225 I hope by the end of this week we will have published our winter plan framework – at the very least that Hon. Members will get sight of that – and I do accept there is a need to communicate that effectively to the public.

Questions 3 and 8 to Written Answers

The President: Now, Question 3 has been converted to Written, as has Question 8.

CABINET OFFICE

4. COVID dashboard – Including the 14-day case notification rate

The Hon. Member for Rushen (Dr Haywood) to ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office:

Whether the 14-day COVID-19 case notification rate will be included in the dashboard?

230 **The Speaker:** So we move then to Question 4 and I call on the Hon. Member for Rushen, Dr Haywood.

Dr Haywood: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I would like to ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office whether the 14-day COVID-19 case rate will be included on the dashboard? Because those figures seemed to have disappeared a bit.

Thank you

235

The Speaker: I call on the Cabinet Office Minister to reply.

The Minister for the Cabinet Office (Ms Lord-Brennan): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Hon. Member for her Question.

240 The 14-day notification rate for the Isle of Man can currently be obtained via the covid19.gov.im website updates page, where the dashboard is also located. At the bottom of the relevant page is a link to the European Centre for Disease, Prevention and Control [ECDC website page](#) that has data from across the world in one data file including that for the Island.

245 The downloadable data file contains information on the 14-day notification rate of newly reported COVID-19 cases at 100,000 population, and the 14-day notification rate of the reported deaths per million population by week and by country. However, I understand the concerns of the Hon. Member, therefore the Isle of Man data will be extracted from the data file and will be displayed clearly on the dashboard from this week.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE

5. COVID-19 in schools – Challenges faced and half-term advice and updates

The Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew (Mr Moorhouse) to ask the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture:

What challenges are being faced in Island schools in dealing with COVID-19 at present; what new advice and updates will be given to parents and students ahead of the new half-term; and if she will make a statement?

250 **The Speaker:** We turn to Question 5 and I call on the Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

255 I would like to ask the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture what challenges are being faced in Island schools in dealing with COVID-19 at present; what new advice and updates will be given to parents and students ahead of the new half-term; and if she will make a statement?

Thank you.

The Speaker: I call on the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture to reply.

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The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture (Ms Edge): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

265 It has been a challenging start to the school year with some schools managing higher rates of absence due to winter illnesses which spread easily amongst young people, and with the continuing threat of COVID-19. There is no substitute for face-to-face learning and our students within all education settings have missed a lot of time in the classroom since the pandemic started. Therefore, face-to-face learning in the classroom is a priority, both for the immediate and longer term and I would like to take the opportunity to thank all staff, students and their parents for their continued effort, dedication and support.

270 There are a range of proportionate protective measures in place and guidance has been published to all education settings. The guidance does state that it cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach. School and UCM leaders are best placed to understand the needs of their individual settings and communities to make the informed judgements about how to balance delivering face-to-face learning, a broad and balanced curriculum with the measures needed to manage the risk.

275 As a member of the newly formed Sub-Committee of the Council of Ministers' National Covid Response Group, we will meet regularly to monitor the ongoing situation and the Department will

continue to regularly review all current measures and align with any amendments to the approach on Government policy as outlined by the Response Group.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

280

The Speaker: Supplementary question, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr Speaker; and thank you Minister.

285

What is the current advice that is being given and enforced in schools in an attempt to reduce COVID? I would suggest that at the moment this area could be improved. And, is the Department providing any additional posters and advice material to help children get clarity on these things that they could do to reduce the risk of COVID spreading?

The Speaker: Minister to reply.

290

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

295

Obviously in all schools there is increased messaging around, 'Hands, face, space and ventilation'. All students and staff are encouraged to wash their hands regularly and extra hand-washing and sanitation facilities are available in all education settings. Wearing of face masks was strongly encouraged for all staff in secondary and UCM students, when within the school or school premises. With regard to posters, certainly if there is any change prior to 1st November, I do feel that we need to be enforcing the message more and posters should be up in schools. I will check on that for the Hon. Member and make sure that we have some focused delivery and signage in schools.

300

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: A further supplementary question, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr Speaker; and thank you Minister.

305

With regard to advice and enforcement, is the Minister aware that if you go to the gov.im website Education, Sport and Culture, at the bottom of the page is a related link. This document is titled 'COVID-19 and Schools'. I would like to read the first sentence and ask the Minister what is going on in her Department. It says:

Currently the Isle of Man is COVID-19 free and the coronavirus is not circulating in the community here. This means that we have been able to remove all restrictions ...

That is what it looks like in some of our schools.

310

I do accept that the Minister is new, but does she accept there is now a real need to improve the messaging in this area?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister to reply.

315

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker; and I thank the Hon. Member for pointing out the website and I will certainly make sure that is updated as soon as I am out of this sitting.

320

With regard to the Department's position, the Department continues to work with Public Health in determining the most appropriate course of action to be taken in our schools and UCM. The Department provides advice and support to our schools based upon this ongoing work and we will align ourselves with it.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary question, Mr Glover.

325 **Mr Glover:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Could the Minister just clarify that guidance to teachers and staff? Because I was at an old stomping ground at Vic Road on Friday and none of the teachers or staff were wearing masks of any kind whatsoever. So is that going to be reinforced after the half-term holiday?

Thank you.

330

The Speaker: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

335 Clearly before half-term it was encouraged to wear masks. If there is any change in the Government response to that we will certainly make sure it is implemented in schools. I am happy to circulate what the current advice is to schools, but this will possibly be updated.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Final supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

340

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

345 Can Monday, 1st November be seen as a real opportunity? The clocks will have changed, students will be going back after half-term and they will be really responsive. That is our perfect chance to reinforce the need to do basic things like wash hands, distance and use masks where appropriate.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Minister to reply.

350 **The Minister:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Quite clearly that is key when the schools return back. From my point of view, as Minister, I will make sure that that position, and what the Government's response is, is enforced within schools and made clear, to make sure that *everybody* ... We are all in the same situation on the Island, and it is an Island response to this.

355 Thank you, Mr Speaker.

INFRASTRUCTURE

6. The mid-rent pilot – Results

The Hon. Member for Ayre and Michael (Mr Johnston) to ask the Minister for Infrastructure:

What the result was of the mid-rent pilot commenced in 2018?

The Speaker: Question 6, I call on the Hon. Member for Ayre and Michael, Mr Johnston.

Mr Johnston: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

360 If I could ask the Minister for Infrastructure, what was the result of the mid-rent pilot commenced in 2018?

Thank you.

The Speaker: I call on the Minister for Infrastructure to reply.

The Minister for Infrastructure (Mr Crookall): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

365 The mid-rent pilot commenced in mid-2018 at five properties in Cronk Cullynn in Colby. The purpose of this small pilot scheme was to trial the access and eligibility criteria for a more permanent scheme, and to monitor the tenants' ability to save money towards a first home deposit within the terms of a two- to three-year tenancy agreement operating at approximately 80% of the open market rental.

370 In order to track the degree of success of the pilot, the Department surveyed tenants annually. The results of this show that tenants were able to save for a deposit towards their first home. Although the pilot scheme has been somewhat impacted by the recent lockdowns and limitations on property transactions, half of the tenant schemes have successfully moved into home ownership at this point, at the point of giving up their tenancies, demonstrating that there is definitely merit in having a mid-rental affordable housing option.

375 Between October and December 2020, the Department ran a public consultation assisting with policy development and to assess wider opinion. The results of the consultation exercise indicated a very strong interest in developing mid-rental schemes on a permanent basis. The introduction of a mid-rent scheme will require a Tynwald-approved allocation policy and sufficient properties to meet demand, of course. Whilst the properties at Cronk Cullynn were provided in lieu of a section 13 commuted sums, at no additional charge to the Government, a longer-term solution will require further consultation, policy development and additional properties to be available.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

385 **The Speaker:** Supplementary question, Mr Johnston.

Mr Johnston: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Minister for the reply.

Would the Department consider including local authority housing in their mid-rent scheme as well, going forward?

390 Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister to reply.

395 **The Minister:** Mr Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for his question and it is an idea that absolutely will be taken on board. We all know that there is a huge issue with housing at the moment across the Island, and it will be something that will be looked at by the Department, or whoever takes on the housing portfolio in the future.

The Speaker: Supplementary question, Mr Callister.

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Mr Callister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Minister for his statement this morning.

He mentioned there about a long-term solution, which is really good, but does he have any idea on the timescale of getting this introduced? We know that it is working, we need to help more people to obtain the keys to their own home, so if he has any idea on timescale it would be much appreciated.

405

The Speaker: Minister to reply.

410 **The Minister:** Unfortunately, no idea at the moment, Mr Speaker. Obviously there is going to be a lot of work involved and it will have to come back to Tynwald, as I believe. So not at all at the moment, but I will keep the Member updated.

The Speaker: Supplementary question, Mr Moorhouse.

415 **Mr Moorhouse:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Has the Minister any data on the occupancy levels of the houses in this scheme?
Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister to reply.

420

The Minister: Since the scheme has been run, there are five houses that have been used – four two-bedroom houses and a two-bedroom bungalow. But they have all been occupied fully since the scheme began, Mr Speaker.

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The Speaker: Supplementary question, Mr Thomas.

Mr Thomas: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

430

Can the Minister just clarify, in case the words are used, that the section 13 agreement is to provide affordable housing and the commuted sum is in lieu of that obligation? It is not something in lieu of a commuted sum?

The Speaker: Minister.

The Minister: Yes, I think the Member is correct.

435

The Speaker: Supplementary question, Mrs Corlett.

Mrs Corlett: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

440

Could the Minister tell me whether developers are being encouraged to provide rent-to-buy schemes?

The Speaker: Well, this is mid-rent rather than rent-to-buy, so to the extent that that falls within the Question ...? No?

445

The Minister: It does not really fall within, Mr Speaker, I do not think at the moment. I will happily talk to the Member afterwards, though.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary question, Mr Johnston.

450

Mr Johnston: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

To conclude, I just want to make the point, and hope that the Minister would recognise, that mid-rent agreements could well be a useful measure in tackling affordable housing. I hope the Minister would agree that that would be a possible tool for the future.

455

The Speaker: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Thank you.

460

As I said, it is certainly something the Department will be looking at and taking forward with all the options that are available in the future, Mr Speaker.
Thank you.

The Speaker: Supplementary question, Mrs Caine.

465

Mrs Caine: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Just a point of clarity, please, from the Minister. He said there were five properties in Colby involved in the scheme and half of them had moved into a permanent home, and the properties

470 had continued being rented on this pilot. Could he confirm the number of people who have moved into a permanent home, the number of people who have benefited from the scheme, and if it is still continuing?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister to reply.

475 **The Minister:** Yes, Mr Speaker.

Residents of two of the properties have now moved into their own, and those properties have now been filled again by other people on the scheme, as far as I am led to believe.

7. Douglas Promenade works – Finishing date and standards

The Hon. Member for Douglas South (Mrs Christian) to ask the Minister for Infrastructure:

When the Douglas Promenade works will be finished and to what standard; and if he will make a statement?

The Speaker: We turn to Question 7 and I call on the Hon. Member for Douglas South, Mrs Christian.

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Mrs Christian: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I would like to ask the Minister for the Department of Infrastructure when the Douglas Promenade works will be finished and to what standard; and if he will make a statement?

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

485

The Speaker: I call on the Minister for Infrastructure to reply.

The Minister for Infrastructure (Mr Crookall): Thank you, and I thank the Hon. Member for her Question.

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It is probably fair to say that Douglas Promenade works are now about 95% complete. Contractually, completion of the works will be when the construction of all the works stated in the contract are done, Auldyn's equipment is removed from the site, and the final clean of the site has taken place as defined in the contract scope.

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The works will be to the standard defined in the contract documents. Where those standards are not met, a defect is issued to Auldyn in line with the contract, which Auldyn is then obliged to correct within the defect correction period or a proportionate payment is withheld from them by the Department.

Disappointingly, Mr Speaker, the Rail Regulator has recently raised a concern in respect of the rail points at the bottom of Broadway. These points now have to be modified in the UK factory.

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This means that a 70-metre section of tramway between Broadway and the Esplanade Mews will remain unfinished until the tramway points arrive back on Island. They will then take three to four weeks to install. The work will be off the highway and will have a minimal impact on traffic flow.

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I *hope* this will be completed this year. This project has taken around a third more time than expected and, because of COVID, some of the works such as the block paving at the bottom of Broadway and the railway track between Broadway and the Sea Terminal have been removed from the contract. I, along with everybody else and every user of the promenade, will be glad to see it completed and look forward to the day when the people will be able to use the promenade fully.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

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The Speaker: Supplementary question, Mrs Christian.

Mrs Christian: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

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I understand the Minister has not had very much time to establish a completion date and I hear him say towards the end of year he is *hopeful*. But would the Minister please advise this House how he will hold himself, the DoI and the contractor accountable over the coming months without a physical completion date?

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

520

The Speaker: Minister to reply.

The Minister: Mr Speaker, it is really awkward and difficult to put a completion date on it and, as I have just said, the rails have now got an issue and we have got to sort those out.

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The points have gone away to be sorted and then it may be three to four weeks when the points are back. We have not got a date exactly when the points are going to be back, we do not know. It is going to take three to four weeks to relay those rails. Then of course there is the weather over the winter period and we might have COVID to contend with.

530

It is absolutely impossible to put a completion date ... I would absolutely *love* to put a completion date on this so everybody would know and say, 'Happy Christmas, it's finished.' It is not possible to do that at this time. I would love to be able to say in a week's time it is going to be completed, but it is not possible.

535

I will do my very best, and I might break my promise one day and say, 'Tomorrow it is going to be completed, because they are going to brush it and it is finished.' (*Laughter*) But at the moment I really cannot and it is not fair to the people that live there, work there and have suffered for more than three years now to keep putting a date on it, Mr Speaker, and then moving it and moving it.

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We had a date recently of 3rd November and already I have seen, in this last couple of weeks since I have been in the parliament, we have now moved, and they are saying probably the end of December. To me, we will be into next year for sure because by the time those rails get back and we get everything finished, I am absolutely sure it will be into January at least, Mr Speaker.

I regret to say that, but it not fair to put a date on it and keep moving it. I apologise, but I just do not think it is fair to the public.

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The Speaker: Supplementary question, Mrs Caine.

Mrs Caine: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Could I ask the Minister whether he believes the promenade will be completed before the single-tram track line is reinstated to the Sea Terminal?

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Can he give any indication when he will be bringing forward the budget funding to put that motion to Tynwald to complete that single line reinstatement? And, the date of the horse tram operation has been confirmed for April next year, but does he have any indication at this stage what length of line the horse trams will be running along?

Thank you.

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The Speaker: Minister to reply.

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The Minister: Taking the last point first, Mr Speaker, I am guessing that the trams will run to Broadway and no further at the moment. I still have not been back to the Council of Ministers and asked them when I can bring this back to Tynwald for the next bit of finance to finish off the rails. I cannot put a date on it. I know the former Minister for Infrastructure said, I think, November

originally that it would come back to Tynwald. Obviously that is not going to happen this November. But, once I have spoken to Council of Ministers, I will come back and make a statement on when that is likely to be.

565 Will the prom be finished, as far as I am concerned, before the single line goes in? Officially, no. The idea was that that would happen in the original contract, but that has been taken out. So, while I was not in Tynwald, that was taken out. So I will say yes, the prom will be finished without that piece of track in it, because that is what Tynwald did and took it out at the time.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

570 **The Speaker:** Supplementary question, Mrs Christian.

Mrs Christian: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

575 A promenade for Christmas, that is hopeful. Hope and accountability is why we have been elected as MHKs. How does the Minister believe he will be able to deliver an Annual Report for debate, scrutiny *and approval* which is proposed by this new administration, if he will not give tangible dates on capital projects?

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

580 **The Speaker:** Minister to reply.

The Minister: Mr Speaker, if it has been agreed and Departments will give a report back to Tynwald, I will absolutely do that and I will explain everything that I possibly can. But I just do not think at the moment that it is possible to put those dates in there.

585 In my period of time in the Department I will explain everything that I am responsible for, but I cannot explain what went on beforehand. But I will absolutely take on board that I am responsible for the Department from this time onwards.

The Speaker: Supplementary question, Mr Thomas.

590 **Mr Thomas:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

What are the safety standards for the operation of horse trams on roads that apply? And how have they been applied in recent decades? Because obviously the question is about the standards that will be applied.

595 **The Speaker:** Minister, do you have that level of detail with you?

The Minister: I absolutely do not have that level of detail with me.

600 I am happy to supply it to Members, Mr Speaker, but they will have been detailed in the contract originally and I suppose agreed by Tynwald as part of that contract.

The Speaker: Hon. Members, that concludes Question 7.

Question 8, as I stated, is to be conferred to a Written Answer, and that completes the Order Paper before us this morning.

605 The House will therefore stand adjourned until our next sitting which is scheduled to be next Tuesday, 2nd November in our own Chamber.

Thank you, Hon. Members.

The House adjourned at 10.36 a.m.