



# HOUSE OF KEYS OFFICIAL REPORT

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# PROCEEDINGS

DAALTYN

HANSARD

**Douglas, Tuesday, 2nd November 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 and Hon. C L Barber (Douglas East);  
Hon. D J Ashford MBE and 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 and Hon. A J Allinson (Ramsey);  
Dr M E K Haywood (Rushen)  
with Mr J D C King, Secretary of the House.

## **Business transacted**

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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.

5

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

### PRAYERS

*Mr Speaker*

## 1. Questions for Oral Answer

### TREASURY

#### 1.1. Gas price increase – Consumer support before January

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

*What support will be in place to assist consumers affected before January by any increase in gas prices?*

**The Speaker:** We turn straightaway to Oral Questions and Question 1. I call on the Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew, Mr Moorhouse.

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

I would like to ask the Treasury Minister what support will be in place to assist customers affected before January by the increase in gas prices?

**The Speaker:** I call on the Treasury Minister to reply.

15

**The Minister for the Treasury (Mr Ashford):** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

As I have already announced, support for certain people who get Income Support or Employed Person's Allowance as well as others on a low income will be provided in January through the Winter Bonus Scheme, subject to Tynwald's approval. I have already committed to bringing

20 legislation to another place in December to give effect to the measures detailed in my letter to  
Hon. Members of 20th October, which will deliver additional support worth up to £1 million.

Unfortunately, the functionality of the Social Security benefits payment system does not allow  
for mid-tax-year increases in the weekly allowances for Income Support, which might otherwise  
have been Treasury's preferred way of delivering additional support to customers before January.  
25 It would not have been possible to deliver additional functionality, enabling mid-tax-year  
increases before January. Furthermore, many recipients of Employed Person's Allowance have  
existing awards which stretch into January and beyond. It would not have been lawful to increase  
the amount of their allowances until the beginning of their next award. So using the lump sum  
winter bonus paid in early January to deliver extra help to each of those cohorts is considered to  
30 be the best option available.

Mr Speaker, I am advised that the vast majority of gas consumers will not see any significant  
increase in their gas bills until their next billing cycle in December or January. Furthermore, Manx  
Gas has pledged support for vulnerable consumers and is offering what it calls affordability  
payment plans and comfort checks for customers at home. I look forward to continuing to engage  
35 with Members over the coming weeks, ahead of December's Tynwald, Mr Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Supplementary question, Mr Moorhouse.

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

40 Given that support will not be available until next year, but costs are already increasing, when  
is the earliest opportunity for the increased assistance to be introduced? Is that 1st January?

With regard to the additional payment, each day counts as 1/64th of the total bill, so by the  
start of December, those people who are getting their bills, half their bills will be made up of the  
increased gas price. So there is a real issue happening around us very soon.

45 Thank you, Mr Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Minister to reply.

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

50 As advised in my original Answer, it will be the January winter fuel payment that is the earliest  
opportunity. The payments are made in and around 20th January each year.

In relation to those who are being billed and the spread of the cost, Mr Speaker, I am advised  
that in relation to that most people will not see it being applied to their bills until the December  
billing round. So for instance, Manx Gas bills a proportion of its customer base every day. The  
55 additional 2.1 pence per unit will be applied to accounts on a *pro rata* basis, starting from  
20th October, but 100% billing at the new rate will not be active until 20th December.

**The Speaker:** Supplementary question, Mr Callister.

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

Can I just repeat the question I asked in the other place: how many Manx Gas customers will  
be eligible for the support of the £1 million that he has outlined this morning? Can I also repeat  
my other question to the Treasury Minister in respect of support for the 1,400 businesses that use  
gas on the Island: will they be getting any support, especially with everything they faced with  
65 regard to COVID-19 over the last two years?

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

**Mrs Christian:** Hear, hear.

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

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

In relation to the number of people that it will assist in terms of households, the estimate is, including the taper off rate, which is above the Income Support level, it will be about 4,000 households that will be entitled to support.

75 In relation to businesses, we will look at what we can do in relation to businesses, but we do have to emphasise, Mr Speaker, that a lot of businesses actually are on fixed tariff rates with Manx Gas, so they will not be affected by the increase in the same way as the domestic consumer.

80 **The Speaker:** Supplementary question, Mr Moorhouse.

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

Several constituents are increasingly fearful about not being able to turn on the gas because of this increase in cost. Is there anything that the Minister can do to reassure them? The answers provided so far are quite concerning from the point of view that it is still 79 days away until that additional assistance will be available for those people to use for their gas bills.

85 Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Minister to reply.

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

The assurance I would give is that nobody should be fearful of using their heating over the winter months and I would urge people to continue to use it. As I have stated, most people will not see an effect on their bills until the billing round and 100% billing will not come in until December. So support will be there shortly afterwards for those on low incomes.

95 I would also urge any consumers that are concerned about this to get in touch with Manx Gas. Manx Gas has announced comfort checks and affordability plans to make this easier for consumers and I would urge anyone who has concerns around this to contact Manx Gas at the earliest opportunity and discuss with them any concerns that they may have.

100 **The Speaker:** Supplementary question, Mr Callister.

**Mr Callister:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Just following on from my previous question and the Minister's answer there, that leaves around about 19,000 Manx Gas customers in a vulnerable position. There are 23,000 Manx Gas customers on the Island, Minister. You said there that there are around 4,000 people that will get help. Therefore, can I ask the Minister if there will be any additional support for those people that find themselves in difficulty over the winter months?

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

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

Firstly, I am advised that it is 20,000 domestic gas customers, not 23,000, but in relation to the 4,000 they are on the low income. I think it is important that we target those who are most vulnerable on the low-income scale. For instance, I am a Manx Gas customer myself, which I should really declare to the House, it would not be right for me to be receiving support for the increase in bills. I think it is important that we actually target it at the low income, which is exactly what we are looking to do.

120 **The Speaker:** Final supplementary question, Mr Moorhouse.

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

In the Minister's initial statement regarding the possible support, it was suggested that assistance would be provided for those just under the Income Support levels. Will assistance be made available for these people on 20th January 2022?

125 Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Minister to reply.

**The Minister:** Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker.

130 I think the Hon. Member means just *over* the Income Support thresholds. In relation to those just over, yes, as I said in my Answer again here today, we are deliberately not just targeting it at those that are in receipt of benefits. There is a taper amount above that will allow people who are just over the Income Support threshold to actually apply for support. It will come down from £100 to £75, £50 and £25 based on their income.

## EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE

### 1.2. New Castle Rushen High School – When plans to be submitted

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

*When plans for the new Castle Rushen High School will be submitted; and if she will make a statement?*

135 **The Speaker:** Question 2, I call the Hon. Member for Arbory – Oh, I should stop saying 'calling on the Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew' this morning, shouldn't I?  
Mr Glover.

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

140 Can I ask the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture when plans for the new Castle Rushen High School will be submitted; and if she will make a statement?

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

145 **The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture (Ms Edge):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Hon. Member for this Question; it is really helpful at this time.

This scheme has been progressing for some time and work on the new Castle Rushen High School is ongoing and is being completed in stages, with the development of the new playing fields being under way and progressing well. Construction of the new playing fields required early advancement to allow for the establishment of these playing fields prior to the planned construction works commencing on the existing school playing fields.

150 In terms of the new school design, the Department is currently working with an architect in the development of a concept design, which will be presented to the Department this month. The concept design will then contain proposed floor configuration options for the site to enable agreement to the project design brief.

155 Thank you, Mr Speaker.

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

160 **Mr Glover:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you to the Minister for that reply, but are you able to provide a timeframe for the architect's plans? That can take years. So when are we looking at hoping to get a new build under way at Castle Rushen? We have got more estates in the south, it is already overcapacity, it is in a dilapidated condition.

Would the Minister, Mr Speaker, be able to give a little bit more of a timeframe for us?

165 **The Speaker:** Minister.

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

Obviously once we have got the concept design, we will have to go out to a full design stage which will be tendered in accordance with Government procurement and on the procurement portal. The architect that we are using at the moment is only appointed on a limited consultancy basis, but I will give the Hon. Member my assurance that I will progress this scheme as quickly as possible to the design stage, and we will be working closely with Treasury on that.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

175 **The Speaker:** Supplementary question, Mr Moorhouse.

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

I am not quite sure whether the Minister is aware of what a state the building is in. Has she had the opportunity yet to see the FOI request report that was made available on 28th August? In that report it raises really serious concerns about safety, poor ventilation, inadequate means of escape and the list goes on. How quickly can these designs be pushed forward? There is a *real* need to do something in the immediate future.

Thank you.

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

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

Yes, I actually took a visit to Castle Rushen yesterday myself so that I could see some of the concerns that I had heard from Hon. Members. Certainly it is a nice school environment, but there are issues with the building.

With regard to progressing sooner, as soon as we have our Department meeting on ... next week, it is, I will make sure that we can come forward with a project plan as to when the design will go out to tender for the re – for construction, of the new school, not reconstruction!

Thank you.

195 **The Speaker:** Supplementary question, Mrs Caine.

**Mrs Caine:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I would like to ask the Minister could she confirm that when they look at the concept design that is to be presented to the Department, will the Department be ensuring a low carbon emissions type of construction and also an energy efficient new building?

**The Speaker:** Minister to reply.

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

Yes, clearly all Government projects should be taking into account sustainability and climate change, but I can confirm that the air source heat pumps are already in place under the school fields that were looking very green yesterday.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

210

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

215 **Mr Glover:** Can the Minister confirm if plans for the new school that were put forward in the previous administration were too grandiose and outside of budgets; and will the Minister engage with southern MHKs to revisit this urgent matter as quickly as possible?

**The Speaker:** Minister to reply.

220 **The Minister:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.  
Well, Treasury have approved the inclusion in the Pink Book of round about £44 million for the school scheme, and I think we do have to try and deliver a state-of-the-art school within that budget.

225 **The Speaker:** Supplementary question, Mr Moorhouse.

**Mr Moorhouse:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.  
On page 102 of the recently released report, it really identifies the current problem with the current school building. It raises issues in terms of aspects of the national curriculum cannot be taught in areas such as science, teaching methods, management and organisation of the school are being seriously inhibited. In terms of those real concerns about children today, you have suggested you are going to really push for the plans moving forward as quickly as possible, but how soon can we actually see spades in the ground? When do you expect that to happen?

235 **The Speaker:** Minister.

**The Minister:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.  
Certainly in the Pink Book the expected start of construction is 2024/25. I do need to discuss with officers to understand why that date has ... It appears to have been put back from the previous administration. But the most important thing is to make sure this scheme is progressed with Treasury as soon as possible to that design stage.

**The Speaker:** Dr Haywood, supplementary question.

245 **Dr Haywood:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.  
I would like to ask the Minister if, when she visited the site yesterday, she also took the opportunity to visit the Southern Swimming Pool, which is in a perilous state? It is almost as poor as the school in terms of structure. It is continually being pushed out of the design plans and yet it is seen as an integral part of that site. I wonder if the Minister would care to comment on whether that will be included in the future.

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

**The Minister:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.  
I did not yesterday, because I was on limited time, however, I have been briefed on the condition of the Southern Swimming Pool. It is certainly not part of the design stage at the present time, but there are discussions that need to take place with regard to the Southern Swimming Pool, and they are ongoing.  
Thank you, Mr Speaker.

260 **The Speaker:** Final Supplementary question, Mr Moorhouse.

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

265 Just extending the answer you have given with regard to the Southern Pool, is there any possibility that that can go into the design stage and be included from now going forward? That is a really important asset for the south of the Island.

In terms of the previous Minister, he did speak about it becoming a community centre, an area where people from the whole south of the Island could gather and come together.

Thank you.

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

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

275 As I say, the original design does not have any inclusion for the Southern Swimming Pool, but I am in discussions with officers with regard to the condition of the Southern Pool and we will, at some point ... We obviously need to meet with the Southern Swimming Pool Board, which is a Board, and hear their concerns, but most important is to get condition surveys and civil engineering reports at the outset.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

### 1.3. Castletown Golf Links Hotel – Development plans and the Planning Committee

The Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew (Mr Glover) to ask the Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture:

*When plans for a development at the former Castletown Golf Links Hotel will come before the Planning Committee?*

280 **The Speaker:** We turn to Question 3 and I call on the Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew, Mr Glover.

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

Can I ask the Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture when plans for a development at the former Castletown Golf Links Hotel will come before the Planning Committee?

285 **The Speaker:** I call on the Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture to reply.

**The Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture (Mrs Barber):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the Hon. Member for the Question regarding the former Castletown Golf Links Hotel.

290 It is currently expected that the application for a development at the former Castletown Golf Links Hotel will be presented to the Planning Committee on Monday, 15th November. The application was submitted on 6th December 2017, meaning it will have taken almost four years to be considered.

295 Whilst it would not be appropriate for myself, as the Minister responsible for planning, to discuss the details of a specific case, Members will be aware that this case has been the subject of a petition of doleance that appears complex. However, four years is an exceptional amount of time and I personally apologise that it has not been possible to progress this matter in a more timely manner.

300 I have, of course, not been able to examine the details of the planning application as any appeal is likely to be considered by myself as Minister and, as such, I need to leave myself in an unfettered position.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

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

305 **Mr Glover:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you to the Minister for that comprehensive Answer.

You referred to the matter going to the High Court, a doleance matter before Deemster Corlett, and just in there a comment was made that:

The planning system, like the administration of justice, must be adequately resourced to enable its statutory duties to be fulfilled.

Is the Planning Department adequately resourced?

310

**The Speaker:** Minister to reply.

**The Minister:** Thank you.

315 That is certainly something that will be a focus of my mind as I get to grips with the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture. The situation at present is that, with planning applications, a number of external factors can also influence those delays and there have been a number of different reasons for the delays in this situation.

But, as I said previously, I certainly apologise for any delay that is on behalf of *our* Department.

320 **The Speaker:** Supplementary question, Mr Moorhouse.

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

325 I would like to just go back a stage in terms of what is happening here. Dandara submitted their response and additional information on 18th June 2021. On 14th October, the Director of Planning indicated there was the expectation that it would be on the agenda of the Planning Committee on 1st November. It was not. And, again, we are hearing that it is going to be on the *next* agenda.

Is there anything the Minister can do to ensure that it will be at the next Planning meeting? We seem to keep going from one to the next, to the next, to the next and never quite get there.

Thank you very much.

330

**The Speaker:** Minister to reply.

**The Minister:** Thank you.

335 I totally understand the Member's frustrations. However, until a report has been reviewed and published on an agenda there is always potential that a further unforeseen issue may arise.

So the absolute commitment from the Planning Committee is that the plan *at present* is for that to sit on the Monday, 15th November agenda. However, if any external factors were to arise, I cannot comment about the unknown unknowns.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

340

**The Speaker:** Final supplementary question, Mr Glover.

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

345 Whatever the outcome of this planning application it is highly likely, indeed probable, that it will go to appeal whatever that decision is. Will the Minister give a reassurance here that that matter, that appeal, will be expedited as quickly as possible?

**The Speaker:** Minister to reply.

**The Minister:** Thank you.

350 I would hope to follow any appeal process in the timeframes laid down under statute.  
Thank you, Mr Speaker.

#### **1.4. Castletown Golf Links Hotel – Demolition order applications**

The Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew (Mr Glover) to ask the Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture:

*Who can apply for a demolition order for the former Castletown Golf Links Hotel?*

**The Speaker:** We turn to Question 4. Again, I call on the Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew, Mr Glover.

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

I would like to ask the Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture who can apply for a demolition order for the former Castletown Golf Links Hotel?

**The Speaker:** Again, I call on the Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture to reply.

360

**The Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture (Mrs Barber):** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

365 The onus under section 24 of the Building Control Act 1991 is placed on the relevant local authority to serve notice on the owners of a building in their district, if they consider the building as detrimental to the amenities of the neighbourhood by reason of its ruinous, dilapidated or neglected condition. The notice may seek to remove the detriment, which may be part or all of the building. In the case of the former Castletown Golf Links Hotel, the local authority would be Malew Parish Commissioners.

370 This notice referred to is different from a demolition order, which is served under the Housing Act 1955 and does not relate to hotels. In section 25 of the Building Control Act it sets out the powers conferred on a local authority *may* be exercised by the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture. That is, DEFA *may* act on behalf of the local authority.

375 An appeal can be made to the High Bailiff on the basis that such a notice is not justified, that the authority has refused unreasonably to approve the execution of alternative works, or that the works required by the notice to be executed are otherwise unreasonable in character or extent, are unnecessary, or that the time within which the works are to be executed is not reasonably sufficient for the purpose.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

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

380

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

This blot on the landscape is broken into. It also is riddled with asbestos. Can the Department step in on health and safety grounds alone to have this building demolished?

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

**The Minister:** So the Department, to my understanding, can step in on the request of Malew Parish Commissioners, and I would encourage the Member to pick that up directly with them.

390 **The Speaker:** Supplementary question, Mr Moorhouse.

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

In terms of clarification, can demolition on the instruction of a third party take place while the planning application is being considered by the Department's Planning team?

395 Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Minister to reply.

**The Minister:** Thank you.

400 My understanding is that any order for demolition and the planning application are two *separate* items.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### 1.5. Manx Care's local area co-ordinators – Arbory's non-inclusion in plan

The Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew (Mr Glover) to ask the Minister for Health and Social Care:

*Why Arbory is not included in Manx Care's plan to appoint two local area co-ordinators in the south of the Island?*

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

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

Can I ask the Minister for Health and Social Care why Arbory is not included in Manx Care's plans to appoint two local area co-ordinators in the south of the Island?

**The Speaker:** I call on the Minister for Health and Social Care to reply.

410

**The Minister for Health and Social Care (Mr Hooper):** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

I would like to thank the Hon. Member for his Question and for engaging with me over the last week or two on this issue.

415 Manx Care have advised that the original plan proposed a phased approach to delivering local area co-ordinators in the south of the Island. Arbory was originally included in the second phase of that roll-out. However, following correspondence from the Hon. Members for Arbory, Castletown and Malew and the Clerk for Arbory Commissioners, who all expressed concerns with this approach, the senior leadership change group met to consider how this could be brought forward. After considering all that has been expressed, this group have advised the Clerk to Arbory  
420 Commissioners that they will ensure Arbory *is* included in the initial phase.

The Chair of this group, who is the Executive Director for Social Care, and other members will be making arrangements to meet with the Commissioners in the very near future to offer a full apology for any consternation caused, to identify lessons learnt from this experience and agree the way they can ensure they work together going forwards.

425

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

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

430 We have had the southern community liaising with the Western Wellbeing Partnership now  
for several years. There has been the Integrated Community Care Group drop-in sessions in  
September 2020 in Port Erin, Castletown and Ballasalla – not Santon, I note here; an Integrated  
Care Group presentation to Arbory and Rushen Commissioners in September 2020; a previous  
Chief Minister’s Community and Public Engagement Committee were involved in October 2020;  
435 the Cabinet Office Public Health Directorate has been involved; and a company ironically called  
Inclusive Neighbourhoods Ltd was involved in May 2021.

Have the waters been muddied too much here? And why was Arbory not included in the first  
place, and Santon included?

**The Speaker:** Minister to reply.

440

**The Minister:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Just for clarity there, the Hon. Member mentioned the Community Engagement Committee  
was involved in this roll-out. That is not the case. The Community Engagement Committee has  
never been involved in the roll-out of health and well-being hubs around the Isle of Man.

445

As to why the decision was taken not to include Arbory in the first phase of the roll-out, that is  
a question for Manx Care. Operationally, it is up to them how they decide to roll out care around  
the Isle of Man following the strategy that the Department has of delivering integrated care.

My understanding is that the Hon. Member has had an answer to that question already by  
email around about 22nd October, but I do not have that to hand, unfortunately.

450

**The Speaker:** Further supplementary, Mr Glover.

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

455

We just have an answer that it is a more positive outcome without actually giving the detail of  
what the outcome is, is what we have had. But how transparent is Manx Care? Does the Health  
Department hold them to account, despite the arm’s-length approach?

**The Speaker:** We are straying slightly into the governance of Manx Care. But, Minister?

460

**The Minister:** Yes, that question is so far outside the scope of the original Question, but the  
short answer is yes.

The original Answer, actually, I thought was quite clear. Arbory *is* to be included in the initial  
roll-out. There is no equivocation there, Mr Speaker. That decision has been taken by Manx Care  
following the concerns raised to bring Arbory inside the first phase.

465

So if you need any more clarity, the situation is as it stands: Arbory will be included in the first  
phase of the local area co-ordination roll-out in the south.

**The Speaker:** Final supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

470

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

Does the Minister accept that this is a case where a simple mistake was made in the first  
instance and, rather than apologising, we wasted too much time? We went forward, got nowhere  
and we have simply gone back to the place where we should have been.

Thank you.

475

**The Speaker:** Minister to reply.

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

480 No, I do not actually, because, as far as I am aware of the way this timeline played out, concerns were raised by the Clerk for Arbory Commissioners and concerns were raised by the Hon. Member, Mr Glover. They got in touch with Manx Care who responded, explaining how the decision was taken. Manx Care then actually went back to revisit that decision, following further concerns that were raised. The decision was revisited. The outcome, I think, is quite a positive one now Arbory is being included.

485 That is exactly how I would expect positive engagement to work with communities and with Hon. Members, for there to be no defensiveness around it. In fact, Manx Care, the answer they provided me with, they are actually quite apologetic about the way that this has turned out and they are more than happy to engage with the Commissioners and with Hon. Members to make sure that this does not happen again with any other similar roll-outs.

490

**Mr Thomas:** Hear, hear.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

### 1.6. People with diabetes – Three-year driving licence holders

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

*How many people with diabetes currently have a three-year driving licence; and what additional requirements have been introduced into the application process?*

**The Speaker:** Question 6. I again call on the Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew, Mr Moorhouse

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

I would like to ask the Minister for Infrastructure how many people with diabetes currently have a three-year driving licence; and what additional requirements have been introduced into the application process?

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

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

505 The system does not report on the breakdown of licences in terms of the length of issue. However, I can report there are currently 500 driving licences issued to people who have declared that they have diabetes treated by insulin. No additional requirements have been introduced to the application process, which has been in operation for many years.

510 The application process involves the applicant making a declaration as to the status of their health as required by the Road Traffic Act 1985. On receipt of a health declaration, the Department writes to either the diabetic consultant or GP for a medical opinion on the control of the condition. The Department reviews the medical opinion and a decision is made on the applicant's fitness to drive in compliance with the Road Traffic Act 1985. This is the standard process for an application where a medical condition has been declared.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

515 **The Speaker:** Supplementary question, Mr Moorhouse.

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

520 Why has the process been changed and a private sector provider now used? Can the Minister offer any reassurance about the protection of confidential personal data which is now being held by a private sector provider?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Minister to reply.

525 **The Minister:** As far as I know, the system has not been changed, Mr Speaker. A licence is not renewed, though, until a medical opinion is received. Medical responses vary from time to time, but one month is normal. Understandably, however, from time to time waiting times may vary, when the medical profession is under pressure from issues such as COVID, as we have seen recently. Drivers are advised to submit their applications two months in advance. The delay is  
530 down to awaiting a response from the medical profession, as above.

We do not record how many are being issued after the licence has been expired, but on checking our recent applications we receive about 40 to 50 responses back per month; 10 of these applicants' licences had expired before we received their response. This could be down to the delay in response time from the consultant, or from when the applicant actually decided to apply  
535 for their licence, or not applying in time.

**The Speaker:** Supplementary question, Mr Moorhouse.

**Mr Moorhouse:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for that detailed answer.

540 In terms of the delay process you identified a couple of things there. There is no additional advice that could be given to the people who are applying for these licences, so they actually get the stuff to you in time, and then things can move forward? There seems to be a misunderstanding here, there is something not quite happening as it should.

545 So is the Department able to flag up this sooner than it actually does, so the people who are going to apply for the licence actually get the stuff in as and when required?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Minister to reply.

550 **The Minister:** As far as I know, Mr Speaker, all the applicants are advised to apply well in advance, as we all are, whether it be for driving licences or passports or whatever the case may be. I will certainly have a look into it for the Hon. Member to make sure that is the case and, if it is not, I will report back.

## HOUSING AND COMMUNITY BOARD

### 1.7. First-time buyer housing – Consulting on increasing access

The Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew (Mr Moorhouse) to ask the Chair of the Housing and Community Board:

*What plans he has to consult on increasing access to first-time buyer housing; and if he will make a statement?*

555 **The Speaker:** We turn to Question 7. I call on the Hon. Member for Arbory, Castletown and Malew, Mr Moorhouse.

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

I would like to ask the Chair of the Housing and Community Board what plans he has to consult on increasing access to first-time buyer housing; and if he will make a statement?

560

**The Speaker:** I call on the Chair of the Housing and Community Board, Mr Thomas, to reply.

**The Chair of the Housing and Community Board (Mr Thomas):** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

565 Tynwald expressed its opinion in its Resolution at the end of the motion I tabled in June 2020 that, amongst other things, the Isle of Man Government should integrate all housing policy, law and provision, building on the positive interdepartmental initiatives arising from the Programme for Government.

I, for one, was delighted when the hon. questioner, Mr Moorhouse, was successful in persuading Tynwald to add to its opinion in January 2021 that this all-Island review should examine both the sufficiency of the existing first-time buyer option, with particular consideration of the ease of access to the option for those who satisfy the residency criteria as currently defined in the Shared Equity Purchase Assistance Scheme – eligibility thresholds, payment terms, increased flexibility in paying off loans and the feasibility of a second-time purchase offering. I understand this work was taken forward to some extent, both under the terms of reference of development of the National Housing Strategy and by an examination of the existing First-Time Buyer Scheme by the Division responsible for housing in the Department of Infrastructure. This latter review was announced in Keys on 29th June 2021 as concluded, but I believe the election will have affected continuation activity.

575 Having only recently been appointed by the Chief Minister as Chair of a new and still-to-be-established Housing and Communities Board, I hope the questioner can accept it will take a little time to bring about the changes necessary to increase access to first-time buyer housing and deliver other fundamental reforms to secure suitable, affordable and accessible housing for all, something which our Island needs if it is to have a secure, vibrant and sustainable future.

585 The timetable for this important matter, including for further engagement and consultation, will be in line with the Island Plan and with the legislative and budget processes. And, in this particular matter, I have already had tentative and initial discussions with the Department of Infrastructure about progress in respect of amendments to the First-Time Buyer Scheme, through officers, which I expect to follow up next week with the Minister for Infrastructure.

590 **The Speaker:** Supplementary question, Mr Moorhouse.

**Mr Moorhouse:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you, Chairman.

595 On 23rd August 2021, in a DoI Facebook post, there were initial recommendations outlined. Are all these recommendations being brought forward? And could some detail be provided on external discussions which are currently taking place with key stakeholders? These changes are crucially important. They are needed, but changes must be fit for purpose.

Thank you.

600 **The Speaker:** The Chairman to reply.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, and to the Hon. Member for his important supplementary question.

605 Of course external discussion with professionals and indeed with the wider public is absolutely vital, and that will be topmost in the agenda with the Minister for Infrastructure and, through him, through to officers in the Department of Infrastructure next week.

**The Speaker:** Further supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

**Mr Moorhouse:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you, Chairman.

610 In terms of the Facebook post, there was an indication that we are really close in terms of replacing the existing First-Time Buyer Scheme and we would be seeing something coming through in the very near future, there would be a decision made in the spring in Tynwald, and there would also be then the actual stuff being available for people to participate with.

615 The Chair does not seem to be quite as optimistic in terms of this material coming through to fruition. Can we expect this stuff to be there in the early spring, as the post suggested on 23rd August?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Chairman to reply.

620 **The Chair:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Apologies, then, that my optimism did not shine through, but I am very optimistic. *(Laughter)*

I am very optimistic that I can work with the Minister for Infrastructure to make speedy progress and then to make a further statement either in the Hon. Court or just merely by public announcement.

625

**The Speaker:** Final supplementary, Mr Moorhouse.

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

630 In terms of the statement on 29th June, there was a real emphasis on the Treasury's support being required. Have any movements been taken to actually ensure that the Treasury's support will be there? And, when will we hear about this?

635 Also, in terms of the review findings that were mentioned in the initial Question, they were referred to on 29th June, and there was an indication that that material would come to Tynwald Members very soon. Is the Chairman able to provide those materials to Tynwald Members in the very near future?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Minister to reply.

640 **The Chair:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I do agree that there was an indication that Treasury concurrence would be sought back in June. It is my understanding that there is no Treasury concurrence as yet, but that will be second on the agenda with the Minister for Infrastructure next week, how we take that forward.

645 On the second point, I have looked back at the Question on 29th June, and there was a clear statement by the then Minister that a letter would be sent to Hon. Members. It was not sent. I believe it was prepared, and that will be number three on the agenda with the Minister for Infrastructure. We will circulate information to Members thereafter.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Members, that completes Questions for Oral Answer.

650 I just wish to remind Members that there will be a workshop on winter preparedness at 11.30 a.m. and a briefing on active travel at lunchtime.

With that, the House stands adjourned until our next sitting on Tuesday, 9th November.

Thank you.

*The House adjourned at 10.36 a.m.*