

Chief Minister



19-21 Broad Street | St Helier
Jersey | JE2 4WE

Gailina Liew

Chair, Statistics Users Group

BY EMAIL

29 March 2022

Dear Gailina,

Thank you for your letter dated 14 January 2022.

The Statistics Users Group provides an essential function, and your letter, recommendations, and pending report highlight to me that importance.

Fundamentally, I am a strong believer in the importance of the professional independence of statistical production. It is the hallmark of a well-run, mature jurisdiction, providing confidence locally and internationally.

Nevertheless, the precise arrangements to achieve this are complex, and require detailed consideration. As such, while I am supportive of the overall direction we are taking, as we recently discussed, we have established the political steering group to oversee the ongoing development of our legislation. In advance of this work, I can provide initial comments on your recommendations.

I would agree that adequate resourcing and dedicated budgets across the statistical system are crucial and must protect the independence of Statistics Jersey (recommendation 1); that the Statistics Users Group should be a consultee on organisational changes to statistical structures (recommendation 2); and should be engaged in the appointment of the Chief Statistician (recommendation 4) whilst respecting the functions of the Jersey Appointments Commission and States Employment Board. I can also see good sense in additional recruitment to the Group to achieve better representation by the main users of statistics (researchers, businesses, etc), with a balanced recruitment panel involving the Chair of the Group and overseen by the Jersey Appointments Commission (recommendation 5).

It does also strike me that Covid-19 statistical reporting has been extensive and high quality, appreciating your detailed observations (recommendation 9). Indeed, the pandemic has highlighted how essential good quality datasets are, and I believe our investment in ICT systems and data services are essential to improvements (recommendation 7).

Fundamentally, we must secure, and strengthen where needed, the independence of our national statistical system, including from government, with necessary legislative enhancements - while also improving the quality and consistency of public authority statistics across the board with professional guidance, leadership, and oversight under clear codes of practice (recommendations 3, 6 and 8). In relation to recommendation 6 specifically, we will provide you access to all the consultation responses. However, we have recently been advised that given the constraints around the legislative production process, it is not possible to lodge the legislation before the elections. Nevertheless, the work of the political steering group will be published before the elections. In

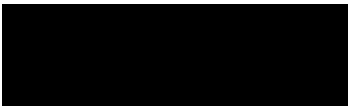
considering all of this, the Chief Statistician has a key role in these aims but must ensure his/her independence from Government.

As you will recall, the statistical function was previously managed from within the former Chief Minister's Department, without clear statutory independence. We now have a considerably strengthened position; and I have a high degree of confidence in the ability of the Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance Department to act as the sponsor for the statutory arrangements that are now in place following the introduction of the 2018 Law. We have a Director General with the highest standards of integrity, and as you recognise, the current Chief Statistician was an excellent appointment, with a strong appreciation of statistical independence.

Having outlined the above, I have no sense of complacency as improvements can inevitably be made, and that includes drawing on the strengths of the Statistics Users Group – indeed, I believe that important strides have been made during your tenure in terms of focus, professionalisation and governance.

I look forward to the future work of the Group.

Yours sincerely,



Senator John Le Fondré
Chief Minister