

# REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF TYNWALD COURT (QUESTIONS)

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**Douglas, Tuesday, 18th March 2003  
at 10.35 a.m.**

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Present:

The President of Tynwald (the Hon. N Q Cringle).

**In the Council:** The Lord Bishop (the Rt Revd Noël Debroy Jones), the Attorney-General (Mr W J H Corlett QC), Mr D F K Delaney, Mr D J Gelling, CBE, Mr L I Singer, Mr E G Lowey, and Mr G H Waft, with Mrs M Cullen, Clerk of the Council.

**In the Keys:** The Speaker (the Hon. J A Brown) (Castletown); Mr D M Anderson (Glenfaba); Hon. A R Bell (Ramsey); Mr R E Quine OBE (Ayre); Mr J D Q Cannan (Michael); Mrs H Hannan (Peel); Hon. S C Rodan (Garff); Mr P Karran, Hon. R K Corkill and Mr A J Earnshaw (Onchan); Mr G M Quayle (Middle); Mr J R Houghton and Mr R W Henderson (Douglas North); Hon. D C Cretney and Mr A C Duggan (Douglas South); Hon. R P Braidwood and Mrs B J Cannell (Douglas East); Hon. A F Downie and Hon. J P Shimmin (Douglas West); Capt. A C Douglas (Malew and Santon); Hon. J Rimington, Mr Q B Gill and Hon. P M Crowe (Rushen); with Mr M Cornwell-Kelly, Clerk of Tynwald.

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#### Manx Language and Culture – Promotion of – Question by Mr Henderson

Question 1. The hon. member for Douglas North (Mr Henderson) to ask the Chief Minister:

- (1) *Do you accept that as members of Tynwald we should be leading the way in promoting the Island’s culture and especially the Manx language; and*
- (2) *is your government currently undertaking to actively promote the Manx language?*

**The President:** I call upon the hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson.

**Mr Henderson:** Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane. Ta mee shirrey kied yn eysht y chur ta fo m’ennym.

**The President:** I call on the Chief Minister to reply.

**Mr Corkill:** Thank you, Mr President. I am not in a position, and I think it would be wrong of me, to answer on behalf of any individual members of Tynwald Court other than for myself, but what I can say is that it is the stated policy of Isle of Man Government to promote a positive national identity. This is one of the six principal aims set out in the government plan. Integral to this aim is the promotion of the Island’s culture, history and, indeed, the Manx language. Members of Tynwald approved the government plan in January of this year and thereby gave their general support to this aim. It is for individual members to decide whether they wish to promote the Island’s culture and language in more active ways and it is up to each individual member to decide the most appropriate way of doing so.

In turning to part (2) of the question, government is indeed actively promoting the Manx language. Various departments and agencies make a positive contribution to the development of the use of Manx. In addition, the Department of Education, Manx National Heritage, the Manx Heritage Foundation and a number of voluntary groups work closely together within the community to promote knowledge and understanding of Manx history and culture and to nurture the growing

use of Manx Gaelic. Indeed, the Department of Education’s work in these areas will soon become a statutory duty when the 2001 Education Act is implemented.

**The President:** Hon. member for Douglas North.

**Mr Henderson:** Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane. Could the Chief Minister respond: is his government going to consider the Manx Gaelic language as a national treasure and a priceless asset to our heritage? And further, will he enshrine those principles in the next government plan that comes along and does he recognise that currently, although slightly recognised in the current government plan, it is not given the priority that perhaps it should be?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** Well, thank you, Mr President. As I said, there is reference in the government plans a positive national identity and obviously the language is part of that; it is an important element of that. I take my hat off to those people who actively pursue the saving of the language and the promotion of the language for the future of our Island, and I think they do a good job. Alongside that, government has been able to support certain initiatives from a policy point of view throughout departments of government, but also we recently supported an EU initiative to protect and promote minority languages, and a press release was circulated to hon. members to that effect. This message has gone far afield, because I received a letter this week from the Celtic League’s Breton branch who, in their opening sentence, say, ‘I must sincerely congratulate you’ - that is the Isle of Man Government – ‘for your support to the EU initiative to protect and promote minority languages.’ So there is an interest there and I hope that it will develop our positive national identity policy which is within that plan.

**The President:** Hon. member for Garff.

**Mr Rodan:** Mr President, will the Chief Minister agree that the use of the Manx language is entrenched in the work of government today as never before, and in particular will he welcome the recent creation of a Manx medium class at St John’s Primary School, where a number of Manx schoolchildren will now have

the opportunity of getting their primary curriculum taught in the Manx language?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** Well, I certainly endorse the comments from the Minister for Education; in fact, the Department of Education makes provision for Manx language teaching to children of seven years of age and above whose parents wish for it to happen, and there are nearly 1,000 pupils, I understand, at the moment undertaking those lessons.

Yes, there is a Manx class at St John's Primary School attended by infants from different parts of the Island and there is a second class planned for September 2003.

**The President:** Hon. member for Peel.

**Mrs Hannan:** Thank you, Eaghtyrane. Could I ask the Chief Minister if he will start now ensuring that the Manx language is taught in mainstream schools and classes as opposed to anyone wishing it to happen, and will he give a firm commitment that this will be developed in the next two to three years as part of the government plan?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** Well, I think there is a lot of sympathy for the language throughout the community, Mr President, and I think my concern is - and I refer to my previous answer which said - 'for those parents who wish for it to happen.' (A Member: Hear, hear.) I think there is a danger that if we were to promote the language so that it has a more compulsory aspect in education or give that perception, then there could be a backlash to the language and I would hate for that to happen, because I think what we are doing at the moment is nurturing the language, the language is growing, it is successful from a number of people's points of view and I would be concerned about stepping that up too quickly.

**A Member:** Hear, hear.

**The President:** Now, hon. members, let us not get into a debate at Question Time. Hon. member for Onchan.

**Mr Karran:** Eaghtyrane, would the Ard-shirveishagh not agree that at the present time the Manx speakers are pushing against an open door as far as this is concerned, but what sort of safeguards are there to protect the likes of the hard-won advantages that we have got for the Manx language when the downturn comes in the economy, and that it will not be the first thing to be cut back on?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** Well, the hon. member is talking about budgetary issues now, and can I assure the hon. member that within the Department of Education there is a policy, there is provision for promotion of the language and, indeed, there are moneys elsewhere from the heritage aspect to promote and develop the language. Certainly, if you look at the core issue within the government plan, which talks about positive national identity, I would find it hard to see a situation where departments would deliver changes in policy contrary to that plan; they would be picked up on very quickly by other ministers, by members of this hon. Court. So I think we need to keep a watchful eye on what is happening but I think, by and large, perhaps compared to many years ago there is a reasonable amount of satisfaction that the language is being developed appropriately.

**The President:** Hon. member for Rushen, Mr Gill.

**Mr Gill:** Thank you, Eaghtyrane. The Chief Minister has indicated that he takes his hat off to people who promote the Manx language. Would he give an undertaking that at least in principle he will pass that hat around when funding necessary to promote language in a meaningful way is necessary?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** We are into a budget debate now, Mr President, about how much goes where. I understand what people are saying, that this is an important element of our society and that we need to invest in it. That is what has been happening for a number of years now by my predecessors. This is something that this government wants to carry on, so I do not believe that there is a need for concern.

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### **Human Rights Act – Current Status and Implementation – Question by Mr Henderson**

Question 2. The hon. member for Douglas North (Mr Henderson) to ask the Chief Minister:

- (1) *When did the Isle of Man Human Rights Act complete its passage through the Branches of Tynwald;*
- (2) *what is its current status; and*
- (3) *what are the next stages required to fully implement any outstanding parts of this Act?*

**The President:** Hon. member for Douglas North.

**Mr Henderson:** Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane. Ta mee shirrey kied yn eysht y chur ta fo m'ennym.

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** Mr President, the Human Rights Act was introduced to the House of Keys in April 2000 and to the Legislative Council in June of the same year. The Act completed its passage through Tynwald on 31st October 2000. Royal Assent was granted on 16th January 2001, at which point the Act became part of our Manx statute law. However, as we know the Act is not yet fully in force.

Subsection (23) paragraph 2 of the Human Rights Act provides that the Council of Ministers shall be responsible for deciding the date for the Act's implementation. Council shall make an appointed day order to bring the new law into force on the decided date.

The current position is that certain parts of the Act are in force: those provisions regarding the creation of subordinate legislation. As the hon. member for Douglas North may well know - he did actually ask a very similar question in another place a week or so ago - The parts which are in force are section 1 subsections (4), (5) and (6) and sections 13, 14, 17, 18, 19 and 23. The remaining provisions of the Act, including those inserted by the Human Rights Act (First Protocol) Order 2002 are awaiting a further appointed day order.

The policy of Council is to implement the Human Rights Act during this year, but the exact date is yet to be determined. Council is taking a balanced and responsible approach to this decision, I believe. We are committed to ensuring that people's rights are respected and that public service delivery is compliant with these internationally agreed standards. It is in the interests of the Island as a whole that the emphasis should be on quality of preparation, and we do not intend to rush the implementation.

**The President:** Hon. member for Douglas North.

**Mr Henderson:** Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane. Will the Chief Minister acknowledge that we are talking in the region of two years plus here, and also would he more importantly acknowledge that the Human Rights Act is the underpinning legislation for legislative construction in the first place? Therefore what is his view on the fact that we are still passing great tranches of legislation through currently such as the Anti-Terrorism Act, and will there be any room for retrospectivity and measurement on those Acts with the Human Rights Act when we finally do get all the parts implemented, Eaghtyrane?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** Mr President, during consultation with the United Kingdom Government about their experience of introducing this legislation, they

recommended that a minimum of two years should be allowed for preparation. We began the preparation project in 2001 and we have, I believe, achieved a lot since then. However, we are a small jurisdiction and yet, at the same time, we have the same legal complexities as a larger country. There are nearly a thousand Acts of Tynwald currently in force supplemented by secondary legislation, and the auditing of these laws for compliance with international standards is a vast job but a very necessary task. That is the task that we are undertaking.

**The President:** Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

**Mr Houghton:** Thank you, Mr President. Does the hon. Chief Minister agree with me that the Human Rights Act, in particular with the criminal justice legislation, will only weaken our Acts of Tynwald, which will give offenders more rights and innocent people less?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** Mr President, I believe all citizens have certain rights, and human rights - the legislation was passed through both branches. I take note of the hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton's view that perhaps human rights legislation is retrogressive. I do not believe it is.

**Mr Houghton:** I do.

**Mr Corkill:** I think, if we look at the international beliefs that we are a part of and that we wish to continue to be a part of, then this legislation is very important, but I just underline that it is a large task; I have referred to these thousand Acts of Tynwald plus all the secondary legislation and it is taking time to go through those issues. I believe that, in a fair and just society that we all aspire to, the innocent do not have anything to be feared of by this legislation, Mr President. In fact, I would suggest that the human rights legislation actually protects the rights of those people who the hon. member refers to as innocent.

**Mr Cretney:** Hear, hear.

**Mr Houghton:** Far from it.

**The President:** Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

**Mr Karran:** Eaghtyrane, a supplementary. Would the Ard-shirveishagh assure this hon. House that the people of the Isle of Man will not have to wait, as they had to wait for years for the social legislation as far as employment was concerned, and that he will make sure that it is a priority that the human rights

legislation should be put forward as soon as possible in order to protect our citizens so that the ordinary working people who cannot use the legal system have got some fundamental principles as far as protecting their civil liberties?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** I think the hon. member makes a very important point, Mr President, that what we have done with the human rights legislation is incorporate into Manx law the very rights that the people of this Island already enjoyed, so there is nothing new, but what, of course, it does do, as the hon. member has said, is make these rights and the implementation of their rights more accessible through our own courts, and I would suggest that that is the right way for us to go as a mature community.

**The President:** A final supplementary. Hon. member Mr Henderson.

**Mr Henderson:** Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane. Can the Chief Minister confirm, and make it plainer than he already has with regard to these thousand Acts of Tynwald, that they will be assessed against a new human rights legislation and ensure that they are compliant with the new Act, especially this year with some of the larger and more important Bills that have gone through the hon. branches, and can he give a commitment that they will see the same scrutiny?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** I think the task to hand, Mr President, is that the existing old legislation needs to be compared for its compliance with regard to human rights.

With regard to new legislation that is promoted by the Isle of Man Government through the branches, that checking is done in advance that we already make sure that the law or the drafted legislation that we put before members for their consideration is compliant with our Human Rights Act.

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### **Kirk Michael – Medical Facilities – Council of Ministers’ Stance – Question by Mr Cannan**

Question 3. The hon. member for Michael (Mr Cannan) to ask the Chief Minister:

*Does the Council of Ministers support the policy of the Minister for Health and Social Security in failing to provide a doctor’s surgery and primary health care facility for Kirk Michael and the surrounding area?*

**The President:** Hon. member for Michael.

**Mr Cannan:** Mr President, I ask the question standing in my name.

**The President:** Again, the response is from the Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** Mr President, the hon. member will be aware from information previously provided to him by the Minister for Health and Social Security that the department is in the process of reviewing general medical services throughout the whole Island, including Kirk Michael and its surrounding areas. The Council of Ministers is supportive of this approach being adopted by the department in this regard which will include the location and suitability of existing GP premises, at the same time reviewing the current level of general medical services in various areas.

**The President:** Hon. member for Michael.

**Mr Cannan:** A supplementary. Is the Chief Minister aware that this correspondence regarding review is an endless comment that review seems to be heading absolutely nowhere, and is it not time that action is taken? How can the Chief Minister justify spending £9 million on offices for members of Tynwald that whilst at the same time denying the community in the north-west of the Island primary healthcare facilities and a doctor’s surgery? Finally, is the Chief Minister aware that there is hardly any medical facility now? Peel practice has withdrawn and the Ramsey practice is cancelling surgeries at over 50 per cent of those that are advertised.

**The President:** Chief Minister, I expect you just to reply to the latter part of that supposedly supplementary question.

**Mr Cannan:** Why?

**Mr Corkill:** Well, thank you, Mr President. The hon. member for Michael well knows, of course, how the capital programme of government matures and works its way through, and eventually votes are taken in this hon. Court. I think he is wrong to allude to the example that he has put forward and that this is an either/or situation. In fact, that is a wrong comparison to make and I do not believe it is helpful to his cause, which I fully understand, which is that he wants to improve the medical services to his constituents, particularly in the area of Kirk Michael. I would also say that perhaps, in the surrounding areas of Kirk Michael, there is also a need for full consideration (**Mr Delaney:** Hear, hear.) of those services, and of course, if you take that argument one step further, this is exactly what the department is doing: they are looking at GP provisions throughout the whole Island. I think this is a very important task because we are all

aware of certain practice premises throughout the Island that are less than ideal, and I would suggest that there has been quite a lot of improvement in recent times on an Island-wide basis with investment into GPs' surgeries in other parts of the Island, and I await with interest the report from the Department of Health and Social Security when they have completed their review of the services that it believes are required throughout the Island. Kirk Michael will be considered in that context, and the hon. member for Michael has my undertaking that Kirk Michael will be considered as part of that review of GP services.

**The President:** Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

**Mr Karran:** Eaghtyrane, would the Ard-shirveishagh not agree that the affect as far as the hon. questioner's question is concerned is the fact of uncontrolled immigration, and would he give an assurance in this hon. House that the policy that was provided for by a previous Department of Health and Social Security will be that the priority will be on the basis of need as far as the GPs' facilities being provided are not being raised in this hon. House? Would he also give an assurance that the likes of Onchan, after the Ballasalla GP's surgery, should be the next on the list?

**The President:** Now, hon. members, we have had the new building next door, we have had immigration and we have had Onchan - all ruled out of order. We turn to question 4, hon. members.

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### **Iraq Crisis – Council of Ministers' Support for UK Government – Question by Mr Cannan**

Question 4. The hon. member for Michael (Mr Cannan) to ask the Chief Minister:

*Does the Council of Ministers (the Government of the Isle of Man) fully support the actions and policies of the United Kingdom Government (responsible for the foreign affairs and defence of the Isle of Man) toward the Government of Iraq?*

**The President:** I call on the hon. member for Michael, Mr Cannan.

**Mr Cannan:** Well, I did ask, Mr President, on a point of order that I could have another supplementary.

**The President:** Question 4, sir.

**Mr Cannan:** Right. I ask question 4 standing in my name, sir.

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** Mr President, in November 2002 Tynwald Court debated a motion with regard to the actions of the United Kingdom Government and the Government of Iraq. At the conclusion of that debate Tynwald Court resolved that, and I quote: 'Tynwald supports the international attempts through the United Nations to prevent the acquisition and use of weapons of mass destruction by Iraq.'

That policy decision by Tynwald has not changed. The Council of Ministers, having said that, has not discussed the actions and policies of the United Kingdom because the policy of the Isle of Man was determined by Tynwald Court. However, I would add that it is a fact that the defence and foreign policy of the Isle of Man is unequivocally in the hands of the United Kingdom Government. If we do not support the actions and policies of the United Kingdom Government in this or any other international matter, our only alternative would be to take on the rôle for ourselves, and I certainly could not condone that action, especially at a time of such sensitivity; in fact, I believe such an action would be open to misrepresentation, would send out the wrong signals and would ultimately, perhaps, be to the detriment of our Island.

**The President:** Hon. member for Michael.

**Mr Cannan:** Can I ask the Chief Minister, therefore, will he unequivocally state that he therefore supports the actions and policies of the United Kingdom Government at this most serious time?

**Mr Cretney:** Do you?

**Mr Cannan:** Do Manx men and women serving in the armed forces and presently stationed in the Gulf have the support of the Manx Government, and will the Chief Minister give an unequivocal answer?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** I stated, Mr President, unequivocally that the issue of foreign policy and the defence of the Isle of Man is in the hands of the United Kingdom Government. I am very aware that there are people, men and women from this Island, in the armed forces who implement that policy on behalf of the British Isles and on behalf of other agencies on occasion. They have my absolute admiration for the work they have to do and I think at this time perhaps our concerns are with them.

**Several Members:** Hear, hear.

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## **Ethical Government Foreign/Economic Policy – Question by Mrs Hannan**

Question 5. The hon. member for Peel (Mrs Hannan) to ask the Chief Minister:

*Does your government have an ethical foreign/economic policy?*

**The President:** Hon. member for Peel.

**Mrs Hannan:** Thank you, Eaghtyrane. I beg leave to ask the question standing in my name.

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** Mr President, the term ‘ethical foreign policy’ seems to have originated from statements made by United Kingdom Government minister of the day, Robin Cook, when he was foreign secretary, around May or June of 1997. The statement appeared to place human rights at the forefront of foreign policy and Her Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom followed this up with a statement that it would no longer permit the sale of arms to régimes that might use them for internal repression or international aggression.

As a dependency of the British Crown, the Isle of Man cannot have a foreign policy independent from that of Her Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom, so to this extent we operate within that ethical foreign policy. I am unclear as to what is meant by ‘an ethical economic policy’, but if it is to be interpreted as introducing international bans and sanctions affecting trading relations with particular régimes then the Isle of Man complies with these again as the UK and indeed the EU adopts them.

There is, of course, rarely unanimity on the interpretation of ethics in foreign and economic policy. Differences in cultures, religions and political ideologies make unanimity impossible to achieve. I would also point out that our own experience over the last few years leads us to the belief that the only way to achieve changes in attitude at any level is by way of open, constructive dialogue. Each of us sitting in our individual silos not talking to each other achieves very little, so within our own government plan, endorsed by Tynwald Court only two months ago, there is an aim to identify and market new business opportunities including improved international understanding. From our own position, therefore, I would say that, yes, we do operate from a sound moral and ethical standpoint in our dealings with other countries, although clearly our ability to diverge from internationally determined attitudes and actions, should ever we wish to do so, is somewhat restricted.

**The President:** Hon. member for Peel.

**Mrs Hannan:** Thank you, Eaghtyrane. Could I ask the Chief Minister in a supplementary, could I assume then from the comments that he made that he raised the ethical issues of occupation of Tibet with the Chinese ambassador when he was here? He did say that dialogue was good and this is what was happening, and I hope that he will give an assurance that he did raise this issue with the Chinese ambassador.

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** Certainly, I can say to the hon. member for Peel that the issue of Tibet in relation to the People’s Republic of China was discussed by himself and myself. I have to say that I did not issue any opinion on that but I did express that there were people on the Island who were concerned with that issue and there was, I reminded him, freedom within this Island for people to demonstrate peacefully, and I am very pleased that that is what actually happened in the end, so I think the point was made. I think His Excellency the Ambassador was not surprised, he is aware of this opinion in other places, and so I would conclude that as part of his visit, which was primarily to tell him about the Isle of Man and not the other way around - it was primarily to help us educate him about our situation - that was a success and I do believe the point was put across to His Excellency.

**The President:** Now we are not going to lead down to a Tibetan debate. Hon. member for Onchan.

**Mr Karran:** Eaghtyrane, would the Ard-shirveishagh not agree that he can hardly say that his government has an ethical foreign/economic policy when he wants to invite such as representatives from the Chinese Government when the recent holocaust that been happening in Tibet is that businessmen are now being arrested and have to deal on a second-class citizens basis in their own country?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** Well I would refer the hon. questioner to a broader issue in terms of justification of the ambassador’s visit from an economic perspective and I will refer to a reference to China being accepted into the World Trade Organisation in December 2001 and the WTO Director-General stated, ‘This is a historic moment for the World Trade Organisation, for China and for international economic co-operation.’ Therefore there are many, many jurisdictions trying to open up dialogue, trying to deal with the economic opportunities that China presents, but can I say that there is no-one that I am aware of in my government who is not conscious of the fact - and we talked about it earlier - that the issue of human rights is an important factor, but, there again, there is progress in these relationships and I would say again that, if we

want to be recognised within the global community as a sensible jurisdiction, then we need to be having dialogue with all sorts of people from all over the globe.

**The President:** A final supplementary. Hon. member for Peel, Mrs Hannan.

**Mrs Hannan:** Thank you, Eaghtyrane. Would the Chief Minister not agree that the World Trade Organisation is not an ethical organisation at all –

**A Member:** Of course he will.

**Mrs Hannan:** - and would he also not agree that it operates throughout the world, it certainly has no reference to human rights or any sort of ethical policy whatsoever and clearly demonstrates this by oppression of local peoples and especially ethnic minorities in places, and would the Chief Minister revisit his position on the World Trade Organisation and try to understand what this organisation does throughout the world?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** Mr President, I do not pretend to be an expert on the World Trade Organisation. There are international aspects to it that I think the Isle of Man has to take note of for its own prosperity and for its own good. I am not unsympathetic to the points that the hon. member is raising; they are serious moral issues and will be addressed in places other than this Island. Can I just say again that, as China is now a member of the World Trade Organisation, that opens up a conduit for dialogue which comes around the conduit of trade, and that has to be in the best interests of everybody, because it does allow points of view to be exchanged quite validly in two directions.

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### **Rates and Rateable Values – Report of Investigating Committee Question by Mrs Cannell**

Question 6. The hon. member for Douglas East (Mrs Cannell) to ask the Chief Minister:

*When will the officer-level committee, constituted by the Council of Ministers to consider the issue of rateable values and rates levied, report and will such report be copied to members?*

**The President:** Hon. member for Douglas East, Mrs Cannell.

**Mrs Cannell:** Thank you, Mr President. I beg leave to ask the question standing in my name.

**The President:** Again the reply is in the hands of the Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** Thank you, Mr President. In December 2002 Treasury was tasked under the instruction of the Council of Ministers to report back to Council in respect of a further review of the implications arising from the increase in costs of providing services to domestic and commercial premises for waste management, sewerage and water. The Council of Ministers will be receiving a paper for consideration towards the end of this month. Until that paper has been considered and its recommendations known I am not in a position to say whether or not it will be circulated to hon. members.

**The President:** Mrs Cannell.

**Mrs Cannell:** Thank you, Mr President. Bearing in mind that it is government policy to abolish the domestic rate, which has never been implemented by this government, will the hon. Chief Minister advise on how he intends this report is going to impact on ratepayers of the Isle of Man, bearing in mind that they are now heading towards a charge, an increase, for waste disposal being levied on them as of 1st July, subject to a report being approved in this hon. place in June? Is it not paramount that any decision coming out of this report, officer-level committee, should be implemented, should be made public, prior to the imposition of rate increases for the Island's ratepayers and it is urgent that his Council of Ministers receive the contents of this report and advise the Court?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** I am rather shocked, if not surprised, Mr President, that the hon. member for Douglas East is saying that whatever a group of officers produce for the Council of Ministers it should be implemented without any concern as to the policies that are underlying those suggestions. I think it would be most premature to make any decision, the report not being available, I think it is quite reckless for hon. members to say that whatever the report may or may not say, we should implement it, particularly with such a sensitive issue as regards rating.

I am aware of a Tynwald resolution which set about abolishing the rate and the hon. member says this government has done nothing about implementing that decision. Well, neither did the previous administration, nor the one before that, because this was a decision before I even entered this hon. place. I acknowledge that it sits there, it was a decision of this hon. Court and no doubt the report will pay due respect to that decision when it comes out with the options that are before us, and I would just wish to say that the terms of reference to this working group agreed by the Council of Ministers are as follows: to set out the current position in relation to charges for sewerage,

waste disposal and water; to compare and contrast the current position with the Council of Ministers' previously stated policies; to set out the latest cost estimates, capital and revenue for the next three years; to set out the options available to fund such costs and to comment upon the appropriateness of such options in each case; to identify the implications for various groups within our society and assess the financial impact any move from the status quo might have, with particular regard to the less well-off; and to set out how the impact of increased charges associated with enhanced levels of services might be ameliorated. I await with interest the report at the end of the month.

**The President:** Hon. member for Douglas East.

**Mrs Cannell:** Thank you, Mr President. In view of the response I have had this morning, would the hon. Chief Minister not agree with me that whilst we wait for the impending report on such important matters, which in my view ought to have been considered earlier, it would be eminently more sensible then for this government to defer any increase in rate charges to cover the likes of waste disposal and possibly sewerage until a firm commitment is put forward through the officer-level working group to the Council of Ministers and therefore to members of this House and this hon. Court to make a final decision? Would it not be more sensible to defer any future impact on ratepayers until government has got its act together?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** Mr President, government does have its act together and we are very conscious of a motion that was passed in this hon. Court where the Minister for Local Government and the Environment will be reporting to this hon. Court in June about the very issue that the hon. member is concerned about. So, there again, it would be quite wrong of me to prejudge a report, particularly to this hon. Court, not just to the Council of Ministers. Can I say that this whole issue has not just been looked at for the first time; it has been looked at periodically over the last 10 years and there have been a number of reports emanating from the Treasury, including when I was Treasury minister, which went to the Council of Ministers and have been the basis of the current policy. So it is not just a snapshot view of the situation; there is an ongoing policy and once again, I look forward to the work the Minister for Local Government and the Environment will be bringing to this hon. Court in June, I believe.

**The President:** Mr Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Mr President. Could I ask the Chief Minister, regardless of the report as it is Tynwald's long-standing policy to abolish the domestic rating system, if the government wishes to

reverse that decision and implement service charges for government services through the local authority rating system, will the Chief Minister give an undertaking now that he will seek Tynwald approval for this major change of policy?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** I am very aware, Mr President, that the hon. Mr Speaker, who was a former Minister for Local Government and the Environment and who is obviously very aware of this outstanding Tynwald motion, has the knowledge of what has gone on over a number of years. I would give this undertaking, Mr President, that all major policy changes come to this hon. Court. It is what hon. members expect, it is what I expect to happen as leader of the government and there is no way that I will divert course from that. It is the bedrock of our democracy here on the Island.

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**Drug and Alcohol Strategy –  
Pharmacists –  
DHSS Discontinuation of Payments –  
Question by Mr Singer**

Question 7. The hon. member of the Council (Mr Singer) to ask the Chief Minister:

*Is the decision by the Department of Health and Social Security to discontinue payments on 1st June 2003 to pharmacists for the supervised methadone service supportive of the Chief Minister's Drug and Alcohol Strategy?*

**The President:** I call on the hon. member of Council, Mr Singer.

**Mr Singer:** Thank you, Mr President. I beg leave to ask the question standing in my name.

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** Thank you, Mr President. I have been advised that the proposal to review the existing arrangements involving community pharmacists in the supervised methadone programme reflected budgetary considerations which far exceeded the expected uptake of the service. However, I am pleased to be able to advise the hon. member that, prior to the tabling of the hon. member's question, the funding issue had been further addressed within the department to enable the service to continue for the foreseeable future.

**The President:** Hon. member of Council.

**Mr Singer:** Could I ask the Chief Minister, was he, however, aware of a letter sent by the Primary Health Care Manager on 27th February which says, in

discussing why they made a cut-off date of June 1st to stop the funding, 'The background to this decision is that this service was set up without there being any accurate estimate of usage and with no additional funding identified as a result of the Drug and Alcohol Strategy work'? So can he perhaps comment why that was not looked at before the whole system, which is a very important system, was set up?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** Yes, Mr President, I am aware of the letter and I do believe the letter has been unhelpful in terms that it has perhaps given the wrong message at a time when, if we think back to the timing of that letter, departments were vying for budgets out of the total budget, which this hon. Court approved in February. So it is unfortunate, I think, that some of the terminology in the letter has been . . . 'misleading', I think, is perhaps even a strong word, but 'giving the wrong perception'. So the hon. member refers to the cost of the scheme and sadly - and I would say 'sadly' as Chairman of the Drug and Alcohol Strategy Committee - there has been a greater need for this methadone service, which goes to show that I believe what the strategy has done by my predecessor and what I have tried to carry this on is unearthen the extent of our drug abuse problem on the Island. (**Mr Karran:** Hear, hear.) It is still much better than many other places, but I think we have now a more accurate assessment of the numbers of addicts who require methadone support. The hon. member as a pharmacist himself will know that the drugs budget is not capped, it is open-ended, and therefore whatever is prescribed is paid for. Those situations are very difficult to budget for at the beginning of a year and it would not be the first time that the drugs budget has been underestimated, or in fact one year it was overestimated.

**The President:** Hon. member for Rushen, Mr Gill.

**Mr Gill:** Thank you, Eaghtyrane. Would the Chief Minister agree that this is an example of, again from the drug strategy team, being politically driven rather than assessed-needs driven?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** Well, certainly assessment of need is a matter for officers to be part of, but the whole process of the Drug and Alcohol Strategy Committee is that we have political leaders of departments and, most importantly, senior officers and people who are dealing with the issue of drug and alcohol addiction actually around the table, and it is something which enables us to set our priorities based on assessments. That is very important and obviously methadone support is a key part of our support strategy, as indeed

it has to be elsewhere. It is very sad, I think, that we have to offer this service, but it is part of the strategy which is involving harm reduction.

**The President:** Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

**Mr Karran:** Eaghtyrane, would the Ard-shirveishagh give hon. members the figures for the methadone system at the present time and also maybe the needle exchange as well in order that members are aware of how serious this problem has gone since we first introduced this system through the pharmacies, from the Department of Health and Social Security?

**The President:** Now, Chief Minister, you may not have those figures with you. Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** All I can give the hon. member at the moment is the cost of the service, and on present costs the projected figure of payments to pharmacists for 2002-3 is £55,000 and I believe that is the cost of the drugs and the cost of the dispensing, all wrapped up in the one figure.

**The President:** Hon. member for Peel, Mrs Hannan.

**Mrs Hannan:** Thank you, Eaghtyrane. Would the Chief Minister not agree with me that there is a problem with regard to the Drug and Alcohol Strategy being within his office and the work in other departments of government, and it is this strategy and the funding of the strategy that needs to be looked at with the divisions in departments. This needs to be worked through prior to any announcement being made by anyone. And how is he going to improve that liaison between his strategy and departments and will he look at either improving the liaison or in actual fact giving the responsibility to departments?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** The hon. member for Peel makes a very valid point and something which was raised early on when I became chairman of this committee. As the member for Peel is a member of the department she will be all too well aware of the interface between departments and the Drug and Alcohol Strategy Committee. The way I believe it has been addressed, and I think it is the right way to address it, is that budget headings are highlighted in each relevant department, whether it be education, health or home affairs, and these items are highlighted so that they are seen to be part of the overall government strategy in relation to drugs and alcohol, because what is a priority in one department may be a lower priority in another department, and the good thing of the strategic committee is that you get an overall view of what the priorities should be corporately across government.

But where the budget sits is an issue, because if the budget was all to sit in my department, it would be then a question of almost another round of budgets where departments were applying for budget headings, not just to the Treasury but also to the Chief Minister's Office and I think that does complicate the situation. What I wish to see continuing is highlighted headings within each department so they are responsible for their budgets and they get those budgets from Treasury at the budget round, but it must be understood by everyone within the departments that this is a co-ordinated strategy and they are linked and they have to be retained as a priority within each department's budget, and I think it is quite important that we succeed in that.

**The President:** Hon. member of Council, Mr Lowey.

**Mr Lowey:** Thank you, Mr President. Would the Chief Minister not agree that his new corporate approach to government is hardly enhanced with what we have heard this morning, and would he agree with me that one department of government should not threaten to cut the service as indicated in this question and his answer, and does it not underline the fact that although we may have a new corporate strategy for all overall government, there is a long way to go before we actually reach the promised land?

**The President:** I have a long way to go to find corporate government in question 7! Nevertheless, Chief Minister. (*Laughter*)

**Mr Lowey:** It is there.

**Mr Corkill:** I will not refer to corporate government - oops, I already have! No, Mr President, seriously, this is a serious issue -

**Mr Lowey:** It is.

**Mr Corkill:** - the methadone support in the community. As I have said already, I think the letter was unfortunate. I think there has been a certain amount of confusion in the budgeting process because of the existence of this committee and that that has been straightened out, but can I make it clear: there was never any chance that this service was going to be withdrawn. It would not fit in with the Drug and Alcohol Strategy to do that, and I just want to make that clear.

**The President:** Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

**Mr Karran:** Eaghtyrane, a supplementary. Would the Ard-shirveishagh at a later time circulate the figures for the use of methadone and needle exchange, the numbers involved and the growth over the last

couple of years for hon. members information? And would he not agree that it will show that we are not winning the war against drugs?

**Mrs Hannan:** Hear, hear.

**The President:** Chief Minister, you indicated before that you did not have those figures.

**Mr Corkill:** Mr President, one of the things that the Drug and Alcohol Strategy Committee has achieved and is continuing to achieve is better data collection, and that has been one of the whole issues that we have had to address to understand the depth of the problem. I do not believe anywhere in the western world is winning the war against illegal drugs, but we are doing our best. There are a number of successes in the strategy with regard to enforcement, but regarding the issue of the level of addiction, which is what the hon. member's question alludes to, I can supply hon. members with those figures fairly easily, I believe.

**The President:** I return now to the hon. member who asked the original question, Mr Singer, for a final supplementary.

**Mr Singer:** Thank you. Can I ask the hon. Chief Minister: whilst he says that there was never any chance of this being withdrawn, is it not a fact that the letter was sent announcing the withdrawal and, within that letter, it says that this was being withdrawn whilst further funding was being sought? So would he not agree that certainly the terminology of that letter made it appear that it could be withdrawn and further funding might not be found? Would the Chief Minister therefore make it quite clear to the medical profession that there is no risk of this funding being stopped within the long term of his Drug and Alcohol Strategy, and that it will continue?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** I think I have already given that assurance, Mr President. I reiterate that. What I would say is that hopefully in future there may be better alternatives to methadone, and there are things on the horizon which might be better in terms of helping with people's addiction, but yes, that letter was very unhelpful. I can also say to the hon. member that budgeting can be a brutal process and I could probably quote a hundred letters from other departments on many other subjects, all trying to lever some extra budget in whichever way that they can. My hats go off to these people who are at the sharp end of delivering these services. They want more resources and this hon. Court gives them what we can.

**Chinese Ambassador's Visit –  
Question by Mrs Hannan**

Question 8. The hon. member for Peel (Mrs Hannan) to ask the Chief Minister:

(1) *Was the Chinese ambassador's visit deemed a success; and*

(2) *at whose invitation was he here?*

**The President:** Hon. member for Peel.

**Mrs Hannan:** I beg leave to ask the question standing in my name.

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** Mr President, the Chinese ambassador's visit to the Isle of Man was part of an ongoing process of developing positive relationships which can facilitate the identification and development of commercial interests. That process is led by the international services division of the Treasury following on from initial contacts developed by them. I invited His Excellency the Ambassador to the Island when I met him during one of those initial contacts. I believe that, in terms of furthering contacts at a high level in order to develop a positive relationship, the visit was a success. The development of such relationships is a long-term process and it may be some years before we see any definite commercial opportunities arising from this initial relationship building work. However, these visits enable the necessary building blocks to a relationship to be put in place, and I am confident that this most recent visit moved us along the process of allowing opportunities to develop between our two countries.

**The President:** Hon. member for Peel.

**Mrs Hannan:** Thank you, Eaghtyrane. If this is for commercial interests, do ethics not come into this –

**Mr Karran:** Of course not.

**Mrs Hannan:** - when inviting someone to visit us, especially when it is for commercial interests?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** We invite a great number of people to this Island for commercial interests, whether it be people from European countries, people from the Far East, people from African countries, who also perhaps have a dubious record with regard to human rights, but hopefully they are all developing nations where things are getting better. I do hope hon. members do not think that I put business before ethics. That is not the case,

but I am not one to moralise on situations that I do not always fully understand either, Mr President.

**The President:** Hon. member for Michael, Mr Cannan.

**Mr Cannan:** Can the Chief Minister confirm or otherwise that the Chinese ambassador received the proper protocol appropriate to his status as ambassador to the British Isles?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** Yes, I believe he did, Mr President. the programme was put together by the international services division of Treasury, His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor hosted him at Government House, and that is where he stayed, the Council of Ministers hosted him and indeed he was given the opportunity to meet members of Tynwald during his brief stay. He, as an ambassador, also wanted to meet a number of concerns on the Island who have already, and have done for many years, done business with China; they are household name companies within this Island and it has never caused a problem in the past.

**The President:** Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

**Mr Karran:** Eaghtyrane, can the Ard-shirveishagh tell us what the costs were to the taxpayer of bringing this representative to the Isle of Man from such a brutal régime?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** I will not comment on the second part of the supplementary question because I have not the knowledge to do that. How much did it cost? £5,900.

**The President:** Hon. member for Peel.

**Mrs Hannan:** I wonder could I ask the Chief Minister if the Chinese ambassador considered his visit here a success?

**The President:** The Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** I had a letter from the ambassador thanking Isle of Man Government for the courtesy that had been extended, and I think he found it an interesting visit. He came principally to find out about the Isle of Man and he is visiting a number of jurisdictions around this part of the world. I know he has been to Malta quite recently. They are fact-finding and I think we were able to give him the facts that we intended to.

**The President:** Hon. member for Onchan.

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**Mr Karran:** Eagh tyrane, a supplementary. Can the Ard-shirveishagh give us a breakdown of this £5,000? It seems very reasonable. (*Laughter*)

**Mr Delaney:** What was the cost of the takeaway?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** The hon. member always has a habit of casting doubt on figures. You know, it is easy enough to do. I do not have the breakdown of £5,900, but the hon. member will get a letter from me with that breakdown, right down to the last cup of tea in the Tynwald members' room. (*Laughter*)

**A Member:** Hear, hear!

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### **Immigrants and Asylum-Seekers – Approach by UK Authorities – Question by Mr Houghton**

Question 9. The hon. member for Douglas North (Mr Houghton) to ask the Chief Minister:

*Has your administration been approached by the UK authorities to receive an intake of asylum-seekers or any other immigrants?*

**The President:** Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

**Mr Houghton:** Thank you, Mr President. I beg leave to ask the question standing in my name, sir.

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** Mr President, I can confirm that the Isle of Man Government has not been approached by the UK authorities to receive an intake of asylum-seekers or any other immigrants. I would like to add, however, that I presume the hon. member is referring to recent media coverage of the proposed immigration and asylum policy of Her Majesty's official opposition in the United Kingdom. I can therefore also add that no approach was made to the Isle of Man Government by Her Majesty's official Opposition in respect of this matter. I have, however, written to the leader of the Conservative Party asking him to clarify what was meant by the term attributed to him in a recent Sunday newspaper when he referred to offshore havens, and for him to confirm that it does not mean the Isle of Man and I am presently awaiting his reply, sir.

**The President:** Hon. member, Mr Houghton.

**Mr Houghton:** Thank you, Mr President. I thank the hon. Chief Minister for his full and comprehensive answer this morning, and if he can confirm the answer

to any future approach would be no, and also, if he was ever approached, would he inform members of Tynwald, sir?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** In researching this question, Mr President, the Lord Chancellor's Department has confirmed to me that any attempt by a future United Kingdom Government to implement a proposal as articulated by the Conservative Party would need to be subject to consultation with the insular authorities - that is, Crown dependencies - and there would also be a requirement of the Immigration Acts as they apply to the Isle of Man and the associated immigration rules to be amended, as they presently do not provide the legal basis (**Mr Houghton:** Hear, hear.) for the dispersal of asylum-seekers in the manner suggested in the article in the newspaper.

**The President:** Hon. member of Council, Mr Delaney.

**Mr Delaney:** Thank you, Mr President, a supplementary. Having clarified the legal situation in relation to illegal immigrants of any description, can the Chief Minister give assurance to the Court that when he receives the letter from the leader of Her Majesty's Opposition he will circulate the members so we can see exactly what it was talking about when he made this statement off the top of his head?

**Mr Houghton:** Hear, hear.

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** Bearing in mind, Mr President, that the article was in the *News of the World*, maybe –

**Mr Delaney:** That is right, off the top of his head.

**Mr Corkill:** - the hon. leader of the Conservative Party may not recognise what he said in the newspaper, but certainly I will keep members informed. Can I also say that the Constitutional and External Relations Committee of the Council of Ministers recently considered this issue and has recommended to Council that it should write formally to His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor to express its concern at any attempt that may be made (**Mr Houghton:** Hear, hear.) in the future by the present or future government of the United Kingdom to do what we have been talking about. The letter will confirm that the Isle of Man Government will strongly resist any such proposals.

**Mr Houghton:** Hear, hear. Well done!

**The President:** Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

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**Mr Karran:** Eaghtyrane, would the Ard-shirveishagh clarify whether, because we delegate this part of legislation to the United Kingdom, we would have the ability to be able to stop such a proposal if the United Kingdom Government decided on a policy to do so, and would the Ard-shirveishagh look at ways of making sure that that weakness can be resolved so that it cannot happen legitimately with our delegation as far as our immigration legislation is concerned?

**The President:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Corkill:** I think the hon. member raises an important point. Can I say that it would be completely unprecedented for the United Kingdom to change its legislation to allow this sort of thing to happen without consulting with us, but yes, I would not say that we actually, as an island, delegated to the United Kingdom, because the committee I referred to, our Constitutional and External Relations Committee of the Council of Ministers, has also been considering the whole legislative framework for immigration on the Isle of Man, and there were papers circulated not long ago in relation to certain problems, because we have a view that the Isle of Man Government should have greater authority over its own immigration matters. (**Mr Houghton:** Hear, hear.) It is hoped that this will be achieved by the end of 2003, and one of the effects would be that the immigration rules would be made by the Isle of Man Government in consultation with the Lieutenant-Governor rather than the other way round.

**Mr Delaney:** Hear, hear.

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### Health – Vaccination of Children – Question by Mr Singer

Question 10. The hon. member of the Council (Mr Singer) to ask the Minister for Health and Social Security:

*Are parents offered the choice of available Thiomersal-free vaccinations for their children?*

**The President:** I call on the hon. member of Council, Mr Singer.

**Mr Singer:** Thank you, Mr President. I beg leave to ask the question standing in my name.

**The President:** Hon. members, the reply is in the hands of the hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson.

**Mr Anderson:** Thank you, Mr President. In responding to the question I should perhaps clarify that thiomersal is an ethyl mercury-containing compound which has been used as a preservative in some vaccines. Since thiomersal contains mercury there have been concerns that might effect brain

development when given in vaccines. The issue was initially reviewed by the Committee of Safety of Medicines (CSM) in 2001, and the advice was that there is no evidence of neurological effects caused by levels of thiomersal in vaccines. The CSM again reviewed the issue on 12th February 2003 in the light of further evidence.

Two independently conducted UK epidemiological studies concluded that there are no adverse developments effected from exposure to levels of thiomersal at the amounts used in existing UK vaccines. A further study in infants has shown that ethyl mercury is rapidly excreted from the body following administration of thiomersal-containing vaccines. In view of the above evidence the CSM concluded that there are no adverse effects in thiomersal in vaccines and recommend that there is no need to make any changes in the UK immunisation schedule. The Isle of Man's immunisation policy follows the UK policy closely and, in view of this recommendation from the CSM, the department did not feel that there was any need for any change.

**The President:** Hon. member Mr Singer.

**Mr Singer:** Can I ask the hon. member: whilst he was talking about some evidence, is he aware that the reasoning of the USA, Australian and European regulatory authorities that removal of thiomersal from vaccines (a) reduces the risk from exposure to mercury in premature babies and (b), perhaps more importantly, the intent is to reduce the total exposure to mercury in babies and children in a world where other environmental sources particularly in food may be more difficult to eliminate? Therefore it is a matter of continued safety and therefore they recommend - the European, the Australian and USA authorities – that all vaccines on the standard vaccine schedule for children under five should be thiomersal-free.

**The President:** Hon. member for Glenfaba.

**Mr Anderson:** Thank you, Mr President. The hon. member is obviously more aware of these details than I am, but I can confirm to him that the world health organisation has also recently concluded there is no evidence of toxicity in infants, children or adults exposed to thiomersal vaccines and also the use of thiomersal-containing vaccines has not been banned in the USA or in Europe.

**The President:** Hon. member Mr Singer.

**Mr Singer:** Would the hon. member not agree that we are talking here about a risk and absolute safety? And acknowledging, of course, that it is better to use a thiomersal-containing vaccine than none at all, does the DHSS use, therefore, the French whooping cough jab with thiomersal or does it offer the UK vaccine Infanrix which is slightly more expensive but

is known to have lower side-effects? That is acknowledged. And does he not think, therefore, that parents should be given the choice or can they get the more expensive one if they ask? But does he not think that they should be given the choice, as, for example, it is proposed to do in Scotland for the absolute safety reasons that one is absolutely sure that if you do not take mercury into the system, then it cannot cause any damage?

**The President:** Hon. member for Glenfaba.

**Mr Anderson:** Thank you, Mr President. I can refer the questioner back to my original answer where I said that the Isle of Man's immunisation policy follows closely the UK policy and we rely on their expertise. Obviously, where there is mercury included in these vaccines I suppose there will always be a very slight risk and it is better to minimise any slight risk, but quite clearly the studies they have investigated have shown there to be no evidence to support this, and in relation to that we are following their policy.

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**Police – Recognition of Service –  
Retired Officers –  
Question by Mr Houghton**

Question 11. The hon. member for Douglas North (Mr Houghton) to ask the Minister for Home Affairs:

*Why has the constabulary failed to honour the long and loyal service of retired police officers?*

**The President:** I call on the hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

**Mr Houghton:** Thank you, Mr President. I beg leave to ask the question standing in my name, sir.

**The President:** I call on the Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Braidwood, to reply.

**Mr Braidwood:** Thank you, Mr President. The Isle of Man Constabulary honours the long and loyal service of all its employees - regular officers, members of the Special Constabulary and civilian employees. The constabulary has never underestimated the experience and commitment all of its staff brings to bear on enhancing community safety within the Isle of Man.

Regular officers receive Her Majesty's long service and good conduct medal after 22 years' service. Members of the Special Constabulary receive a similar medal after nine years' service and a bar for that medal after 22 years' service. The constabulary have recently introduced an initiative whereby civilian support staff receive a Chief Constable's certificate for long and loyal service after 15 years. Further awards

are presented in the form of Chief Constable's commendations and awards of merit for bravery, meritorious conduct or outstanding devotion to duty.

All of these awards are presented either by His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor or myself at the constabulary's annual award ceremony. The forthcoming pay reform package will open an avenue which will allow the Chief Constable to reward officers with individual payments of up to £500 for outstandingly demanding or important work. Additionally, on retirement all serving police officers are now presented with a framed loyal service certificate, a plaque and a crystal paperweight honouring their service dates.

Officers can choose to have these presented by the Chief Constable and their spouses or partners are invited to attend. When they do, flowers are also presented. The occasion is also photographed and copies forwarded to the retired officers for their own private use.

There have also been occasions when a senior officer has been invited to a celebratory lunch, although there are no formal procedures for this. At the invitation of the Lieutenant-Governor a lunch was held for the retirement of the last Deputy Chief Constable. Some officers, regardless of rank, at their own expense, organise their own retirement party.

**The President:** Hon. member for Douglas North.

**Mr Houghton:** Thank you, Mr President. Does the hon. Minister for Home Affairs really believe in what he has just read out to this Court? (*Laughter*) If he does, then he is the biggest fool I have ever known in my life! (*Interjections*) Mr President, can the hon. Minister for Home Affairs please revert back to the discussions that I have had with him with those names who will remain nameless to this Court, and would he, following what he has read out, invite back to Tynwald those former police officers who have given long and loyal service for many decades to the Millennium Room in the Tynwald precincts and properly honour them?

**The President:** Hon. member Mr Braidwood.

**Mr Braidwood:** Mr President, the information which I read out in answer to the question is what I received from the constabulary. In answer to the other points the hon. member for North Douglas has raised, yes, I have received correspondence. I also believe that he wrote to the Lieutenant-Governor –

**Mr Houghton:** Correct!

**Mr Braidwood:** - and the invitation to invite those officers was refused. As I have already previously said, the former Deputy Chief Constable was invited to a lunch by the Lieutenant-Governor. There were other officers the hon. member has

mentioned who were also invited by the Chief Constable to receive their awards, and I believe they refused.

**The President:** Now, hon. member for Douglas North, I would ask you to be a little bit more circumspect with your language, sir.

**Mr Houghton:** Thank you, Mr President. I will curtail it from now on, sir. My apologies to the Court. Will the hon. minister answer as to why there are so many officers who have retired and who, right up to recent date, received their certificate for collection at the reception desk at police headquarters and they are not properly presented? And may I ask, once again, that he invite those officers – I can give him a list of those former officers – to Tynwald for proper acknowledgement, sir?

**The President:** Minister for Home Affairs.

**Mr Braidwood:** Mr President, from the information received, all retired officers are invited by the Chief Constable and their spouses to receive their rewards.

**Mr Houghton:** They are not!

**The President:** Hon. member, the minister is replying.

**Mr Braidwood:** So, Mr President, from the information I received, again I reiterate: all officers who retire are invited to the Chief Constable's office.

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**Police –  
Applications from Residents to Join –  
Question by Mr Singer**

Question 12. The hon. Member of Council (Mr Singer) to ask the Minister for Home Affairs:

- (1) *During the last two years to December 2002, how many persons who were either Manx, or permanently resident in the Isle of Man, applied to join the police force;*
- (2) *how many were accepted; and*
- (3) *is a time period specified before a rejected applicant can reapply?*

**The President:** I call on the hon. Member of Council, Mr Singer.

**Mr Singer:** Thank you, Mr President. I beg leave to ask the question standing in my name.

**The President:** Again, the answer is in the hands of the Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Braidwood.

**Mr Braidwood:** Thank you, Mr President. In answer to part (1), between December 2000 and December 2002 a total of 260 Isle of Man residents applied to join the service.

In answer to part (2), after the quite rigorous selection process 35 local residents accepted offers of employment.

In answer to his final part (3), the selection process is deliberately rigorous and has proved to be successful, evidenced by the low rate of discharge of probationer constables from the force since its introduction and continuous refinement over the last decade or so.

There are a number of key stages to the selection process. Initially, applicants are vetted in terms of their background and medical antecedents, and those deemed unsuitable to hold the office of constable very rarely reapply. Applicants then take a physical fitness test prior to which they receive a list of the various exercises and pass standards. Roughly a third of all applicants fail at this stage, but they are eligible to reapply to participate during the next available test. Following this, a written educational examination is arranged. There is a set pass mark and standard to be achieved. Applicants who fail this part are normally advised not to retake the examination for the next 12 months or so.

Successful candidates are then invited to attend a two-day outward bound assessment course where written tasks, problem-solving exercises, reasoning, communication and ability to perform under pressure are assessed. Unsuccessful candidates are offered a development feedback meeting and will be provided with advice which includes a personal timescale before reapplying. Normally such timescales range from between eight months minimum and two years maximum.

**The President:** Hon. member Mr Singer.

**Mr Singer:** I thank the hon. minister for his detailed answer. Of the 85 per cent, therefore, that were rejected during the last two years, how many were actually told to apply again - I do not think you gave us that number, minister - and why are some told to wait for up to three years if they are told to apply again? Surely, if failed applicants are told to reapply obviously because they are basically suitable and enthusiastic, would it not be financially advantageous to give them suitable training to reach the level needed rather than perhaps waiting up to three years before reapplying whilst officers have to be recruited from the United Kingdom?

**The President:** Minister to reply.

**Mr Braidwood:** Mr President, in answer to one of the last parts, the constabulary is looking at assisting applicants by providing some pretraining for applicants which may assist borderline cases to pass the tests. Yes, individuals can reapply, as I have already stated, and in fact they are invited to reapply when notified that they have failed to pass. Home Office guidelines normally stipulate a maximum of three applications, but in the Isle of Man each case is examined on an individual basis and may permit additional applications in some cases. Normally the maximum time before reapplying is two years and not three years.

**The President:** Mr Singer, hon. member of Council.

**Mr Singer:** In view of the fact that only 15 per cent of applicants have been accepted in the last two years, could the minister tell me: during that period of time how many officers have actually been recruited to the Manx police force from UK sources, and what grants are given to them to help them settle on the Island that are not given to Manx officers? And the other supplementary to that is: why do we have an age restriction here to people joining the police force which is not applicable in any parts of the United Kingdom? Surely we should be on a level par with the United Kingdom and we might get more police constables into our police force and not have to bring people across from the United Kingdom or elsewhere.

**The President:** Minister.

**Mr Braidwood:** Mr President, unfortunately I do not have that information to hand, but I will supply the hon. member of Council –

**Mr Singer:** And the age.

**Mr Braidwood:** - and the age - with all the details when I receive them.

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### **Employers – Recognition of Trade Unions – Question by Mr Henderson**

Question 13. The hon. member for North Douglas (Mr Henderson) to ask the Minister for Trade and Industry:

*Will you undertake to survey every employer in the Isle of Man as to whether:*

- (1) they recognise trade unions and that staff can be members of trade unions;*
- (2) they will allow and recognise union representatives on their premises on official*

*business, not only for disciplinary purposes, and will allow staff to become union stewards; and*

- (3) would be willing to enter into recognition agreements with an particular staff side?*

**The President:** I call on the hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson.

**Mr Henderson:** Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane. Ta mee shirrey kied yn eysht y chur ta fo m'ennym.

**The President:** Minister for Trade and Industry, hon. member, Mr Downie.

**Mr Downie:** Thank you, Mr President. I understand the question concerns the recognition of trade unions for collective bargaining or other purposes by an employer, and I will briefly set out government policy in relation to this matter.

The department consulted extensively on the issue of trade union recognition in 2002 and a consultative document was published at that time which set out three different options. These were: retaining the status quo where employers were not obliged to recognise trade unions for collective bargaining; issuing a code of practice to provide guidance on when and how trade unions should be recognised; and introducing a right to statutory trade union recognition under certain circumstances. Responses from consultees revealed a clear lack of consensus on the issue and, following the consultation period, the department recommended publication of a code of practice specifying the circumstances where it was considered appropriate that employers should reasonably recognise a trade union.

The department's proposals were endorsed by the Council of Ministers and a draft code, which was the subject of a separate round of consultation in itself, was then published in 2001. The final code was approved by Tynwald in October 2001. At that time it was pointed out that government retained the option to introduce statutory recognition should evidence be presented to show that the code was being ignored.

As far as the department is aware, since the code was published, there have been no disputes concerning recognition and there is no evidence to suggest that this is a problem area for the Island. In these circumstances I do not consider there is any justification to divert the small number of officers working on employment law from their existing priorities in order to undertake a survey of the Island's 3,000-plus employers on this matter. As the government has no powers to compel employers to respond to such a survey, it is likely that the usefulness of the exercise would be extremely limited.

The hon. member may rest assured that the department is committed to ensuring that there is fairness in the workplace. Our immediate plans are to bring forward an Employment (Amendment) Bill

which will radically overhaul existing employment law on the Isle of Man, and our proposals include giving all workers a statutory right to be accompanied at a disciplinary or grievance hearing by a trade union representative or a fellow worker; extending the Employment Tribunal's powers so that it could reorder re-employment in an appropriate case; giving workers a right to a minimum of four weeks paid leave each year; and giving workers on maternity leave a completely new deal.

Finally, I would point out that whereas the hon. member implies in his question that staff are not free to join trade unions, I would inform him that all employees and prospective employees do, of course, have statutory protection against any discrimination on grounds of trade union membership or activities, so that there can be no question of employers prohibiting staff from becoming members of trade unions. Thank you, Mr President.

**The President:** Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson.

**Mr Henderson:** Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane. Would the Minister for Trade and Industry acknowledge that what I am seeking here affects the 30,000-plus working men and women of this Island who are providing the backbone of our successful economy, and would he further acknowledge that there are, indeed, employers who question closely any job applicants' applying to their employment if they are members of trade unions and if so, they are denied a job prospect at that particular company? And further to that, given that the minister has indicated the dissent amongst the 3,000-plus employers in the Isle of Man, would he then not think it fair and reasonable to actually undertake such a survey to try and get to the bottom of this situation which, at the end of the day, is his department's remit?

**The President:** Minister.

**Mr Downie:** Yes, I thought I made myself quite clear, Mr President, and pointed out in the answer to the question that as far as is known there have been no trade disputes concerning recognition subsequent to the publication of the code, and no workers have tried to seek recognition thereafter. The industrial relations services inform me that there are no current recognition disputes, so it would be helpful to know where the hon. questioner is actually coming from.

**Mr Henderson:** Hence the question.

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**Waste Disposal –  
Haste in Introducing Charges –  
Question by Mrs Cannell**

Question 14. The hon. member for Douglas East (Mrs Cannell) to ask the Minister for Local Government and the Environment:

- (1) In view of the deferment of constituting the Waste Management Board until April 2004, under what authority can it continue to function under designated powers; and*
- (2) why the haste in introducing waste disposal charges on ratepayers in the absence of a non-constituted board proposed to be charged with overseeing expenditure of moneys raised through such charges?*

**The President:** Hon. member for Douglas East, Mrs Cannell.

**Mrs Cannell:** Thank you, Mr President. I beg leave to ask the question standing in my name.

**The President:** I call on the Minister for Local Government and the Environment, hon. member for Rushen, Mrs Crowe.

**Mrs Crowe:** Thank you, Mr President. I regret to say that the first part of the hon. member's question reveals the misunderstanding on her part about the current situation over the Waste Management Board, especially references to its functioning under designated powers. The Waste Management Board has not been established, and the order made by Governor in Council which is before the hon. Court this sitting reflects the decision of the Council of Ministers, in collaboration with my department, that the board should not be set up until April 2004. In other words, at the moment the board does not exist.

A judgement has been made that the waste operations unit of the department needs to be supplemented with additional resources in order that it can be fully effective in advance of the operative date of April 2004. As hon. members will know, the 2003 budget presented in this hon. Court by the Treasury minister has included provision for additional resources, and it is my hope that five new posts will be filled as quickly as possible. It follows from what I have said, Mr President, that the Waste Management Board is not functioning and has no designated powers.

As regards the second part of the hon. member's question, I can only repeat that there has been no haste in introducing waste disposal charges, and the cost of disposing of the Island's waste is with us today as a vital issue that must be addressed without further delay. It is currently my department's responsibility to

deal with waste management matters and it is the department that has responsibility, therefore, for the overseeing of expenditure of moneys raised through income generated from waste disposal charges.

The anticipated deficit on waste disposal for the current financial year stands at between £7 million and £8 million, and this will rise as further elements of the infrastructure are put in place.

As an island community we do not have the luxury or comfort of being able to rely on our neighbouring authorities to deal with wastes we cannot handle ourselves. We must be self-reliant as a community and deal with these issues effectively and in an environmentally sensitive manner, so the cost of waste disposal does not begin on the day the Waste Management Board is established; these costs are being borne now. The introduction of charges has actually achieved one of its key objectives, and possibly for the first time some waste producers on the Island are thinking constructively about how they can play their part in reducing the amount of waste that will be taken to the new energy-from-waste facility which will come into full operation from April 2004.

**The President:** Hon. member for Douglas East, Mrs Cannell.

**Mrs Cannell:** Thank you, Mr President. I thank the hon. minister for her very candid and informative reply, but if the Waste Management Board does not exist and therefore there are no delegated powers, why are letters going out from an organisation which calls itself 'Waste Management Division' and refers to the designate chairman, who is very much here with us, alive and kicking, (**Members:** Hear, hear.) (*Laughter*) the hon. member of Council, who, the minister has just advised, Mr President, does not exist, and can she explain the confusion, therefore, in respect of that situation? And if this does not exist and it is not in being and therefore does not have any powers, then who has the power to be sending out letters in the name of the hon. member who is the chairman designate and who does not exist? (*Laughter*)

**The President:** Minister to reply.

**Mrs Crowe:** Once again there would seem to be difficulty in understanding. I did not for one minute say that letters or, indeed, any other correspondence were going out in anything other than the department's name. The member of Council, the hon. member, Mr Lowey, is indeed a delegated member of my department; he has delegated responsibility for dealing with waste management matters in exactly the same way as Mr Earnshaw deals with local authority matters and Mr Houghton deals with environmental health matters - all part and parcel of the Department of Local Government and the Environment.

**The President:** Hon. member for Peel, Mrs Hannan.

**Mrs Hannan:** Thank you, Eaghtyrane. In relation to self-reliance, could I ask the minister: with regard to dealing with refuse, will the minister take out adverts advising people how to reduce, reuse, recycle and how to get their actual waste disposal amount down so that we do not have fly tipping and so that we do not have people using other people's bins for their waste disposal?

**The President:** Minister.

**Mrs Crowe:** Indeed, I will, and in fact there was a full-page advertisement in the local newspaper this week about being able to reduce one's household waste by home composting. The department offered three thousand home-composting bins, all of which have been taken up by people on the Island keen to reduce the waste that is going to be disposed of, and, we will be bringing forward, as the hon. member has suggested, more and more initiatives so that people can recognise the routes very easily at which they can reduce the amount of waste that they are either producing or disposing of.

**The President:** Hon. member Mr Quayle.

**Mr Quayle:** Thank you, Mr President. Within the last two or three months I asked the hon. Chief Minister the question about the constitution of the Waste Management Board, and whether it was intended to come into effect from 1st April 2003, and he gave a reasonably firm indication that it was indeed the intention to progress from 1st April 2003. Can I ask, why then has the policy changed within what has been a very reasonably short time?

**The President:** Minister.

**Mrs Crowe:** Thank you, Mr President. The reason quite simply is that we did not have the resources to put in place the post required to do all the things that are necessary like education, information - all the things that we need to do to make sure that everyone on the Island is fully aware of the way in which waste can be disposed of effectively and in an environmentally friendly way. So what we have done is delayed the introduction until the posts are filled. The first post, I believe, has been filled and the second post, we hope, will be filled very shortly; these are key rôles within the department of education, of recycling, of all the things that are so necessary to make sure that we continue with the progress which we have already made.

**The President:** Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson.

**Mr Anderson:** Thank you, Mr President. When the hon. minister stated in her original answer, 'We cannot rely on our neighbours to dispose of our unwanted waste', how long can we rely on our neighbours to dispose of our fly ash in the future?

**The President:** Minister.

**Mrs Crowe:** That is a very specific question and, indeed, at the present time new technologies are being introduced which are being tested in the United Kingdom at this moment and which will, in fact, dispose of the fly ash on site. So we are hoping that we will not be reliant on any other nation to dispose of what is, I feel, unacceptable waste, but at the present time we have established a disposal route for that fly ash but we are looking very seriously at the new technologies that are being introduced for on-site disposal.

**The President:** Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

**Mr Karran:** Eaghtyrane, would the shirveishagh not agree that under the principle of no taxation without representation, the issue as far as the Waste Management Board is concerned, now that she has moved to the dizzy heights of the Legislative Council, should be that there should local authorities representation on this board? You are wanting to levy taxes and yet once again it is another case of unaccountable people being able to levy taxes that are unaccountable to everybody.

**The President:** Minister.

**Mrs Crowe:** Indeed, the suggestion may well be that members of local authorities or a representative of all local authorities are included as members of the board when the board is established.

**The President:** Finally I refer to the hon. member for Douglas East, Mrs Cannell.

**Mrs Cannell:** Thank you, Mr President. Would the hon. minister confirm that the Waste Management Board is not ready, that the posts have not been fully filled to staff the Waste Management Board, that the mass burn incinerator is not ready and is three months at least behind schedule, that the landfill inquiry at Archallagan is yet to be held and may or may not go through, and further that she will make a report to Tynwald Court in June on the implication of the range of charges that she is imposing upon local authorities? And finally, Mr President, in view of all of that, why the haste to introduce and impel rates going up from 1st July in view of the fact that no infrastructure is in place and no board to oversee the management of?

**The President:** Minister.

**Mrs Crowe:** There is a department in place to oversee the management of waste disposal on the Isle of Man, as indeed it always has done. The energy-from-waste plant is not three months delayed; it is less than 12 weeks delayed (*Laughter*) and we are hoping that that time will be made up very quickly and indeed we are expecting burn to begin in December. So we are not expecting a three-month delay. At the present time -

**Mrs Cannell:** Twelve weeks!

**Mrs Crowe:** - the board had not been established and we will be dealing with these matters as a department.

**The President:** Hon. members, the questions 15 to 19 inclusive are for written answer and those answers will be circulated to you shortly. That concludes the question paper, hon. members.

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**Rates – Public Sector Properties –  
Question by the Speaker  
for Written Answer**

Question 15. The hon. member for Castletown (Mr Speaker) to ask the Minister for the Treasury:

Can you confirm -

- (1) *that an individual tenant of a public sector property is subject to both the domestic rate as set out annually by the relevant local authority, and the water rate as set annually by the Isle of Man Water Authority, in exactly the same way as such rates apply to the owner of a privately owned domestic property;*
- (2) *that there is no special reduction in the local authority rate and/or the water rate that applies to the tenant of a public sector property due to the property being owned either by government or by a local authority;*
- (3) *that in relation to the rateable value of a property that all public sector properties are valued using the same criteria and procedure that applies when undertaking the valuation of a privately owned domestic property;*
- (4) *who is responsible for the payment of the local authority rate demand and the water rate demand as applied annually to each public sector property, when a tenant occupies such property; and*

(5) *that the tenant of a public sector property will be subject, in exactly the same way as the owners of private residential property will be subject, to the full charges applied through the domestic rating system, in relation to any waste disposal charges as determined by the government?*

**Answer**

- (1) I can confirm this to be the case. Individual tenants pay domestic and water rates as part of their rent, charged by the property owner. The payment is made up of two parts, a 'pure rental' element, and a recharge of the rates levied by local authorities and the Water Authority.
- (2) There is no such reduction. All properties are rated using the same calculation, regardless of its ownership.
- (3) The government valuer confirms that the rateable value of a property is determined using the same criteria and procedure regardless of whether it is a private or public sector property.
- (4) The relevant housing authority pays the local authority and water rate demands and recharges that amount to the tenant, through the rent it charges. The housing authority remains responsible for the rates payment if the property was empty, or in cases where the rent is not collected.
- (5) As a result of the position outlined in (2) and (3) above, public sector properties will be subject to the charges resulting from waste disposal through the recharge of the rates by the relevant housing authority into the overall rent paid by the tenant.

**Government Offices Refurbishment –  
Tenders etc. – Question by Mr Singer  
for Written Answer**

Question 16. The hon. member of the Council (Mr Singer) to ask the Minister for Local Government and the Environment:

*In relation to building companies invited to tender for the Old Government Office refurbishment contract:*

- (1) *how many were invited to tender;*
- (2) *how many tendered;*

- (3) *how many withdrew and what were the reasons given for withdrawing;*
- (4) *who were the successful tenderers;*
- (5) *was it the lowest tender that was accepted;*
- (6) *in relation to the statement by you at the February sitting of Tynwald, how much was the tender figure reduced on negotiation;*
- (7) *did the process of negotiation fully comply with financial regulations;*
- (8) *has the successful tenderer previously worked on the Isle of Man and are they aware of the special conditions and extra costs of building here and was this taken into account in their tender price;*
- (9) *what are the credit ratings of the successful company and are you satisfied that the ratings are high enough to undertake such a prestigious government project;*
- (10) *is the contract fixed price; and*
- (11) *are the government and all local contractors covered 100 per cent by a suitable bond or bonds?*

**Answer**

The answers to the hon. member of the Council's question are as follows:

- (1) Following a period of advertisement in the local press tenders were originally invited from a select list of three contractors in March 2002. No satisfactory tender was received from this process and eventually a further advertisement was placed in the UK building industry press.  
  
Eight companies expressed an interest in tendering from which a shortlist of four was selected.
- (2) Tenders were received from all four companies on the shortlist in November 2002.
- (3) None of the tenders received in November 2002 was withdrawn.
- (4) The company whose tender formed the basis of the financial motion to February 2003 Tynwald was O'Hare and McGovern Ltd.
- (5) This was the lowest tender received.

- (6) The total tender sum was reduced by £338,802 by negotiation.
- (7) The process of negotiation was undertaken in agreement with the officers of the Treasury and in accordance with the Code of Procedure of Selective Tendering. This was consistent with the Procedure Notes for Capital Schemes issued by the Treasury and therefore in accordance with financial regulations, specifically Financial Directive FD17 'Capital Projects'.
- (8) The company has not previously worked on the Isle of Man, although key members of the contractor's management team have a number of years' experience working here for other companies. The enquiries of the project team indicate that the contractor has applied his resources appropriately to have an understanding of the unique characteristics of our local industry.
- (9) In accordance with Government's Procedure Notes for Capital Schemes, the project team made enquiries of the contractor's financial stability and advises that there should be no concerns in respect of the successful tenderer. Independent credit ratings suggest that there should be no higher risk of financial difficulties than the majority of other contractors used on projects of this size.
- (10) In common with most capital projects the contract is based upon a fixed price tender.
- (11) In accordance with government's procedures for capital projects a performance bond has been put in place for this project based upon the standard conditions agreed with government's independent bonding company.

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**Clubs – Funding – Scheme to Assist –  
Question by Mr Henderson  
for Written Answer**

Question 17. The hon. member for Douglas North (Mr Henderson) to ask the Minister for Tourism and Leisure:

*How far has your department progressed a scheme proposed by the hon. member for Ayre, Mr Quine, and approved by Tynwald, to assist small clubs with funding?*

**Answer**

At the December 2002 sitting of Tynwald, the Court gave its unanimous approval to both the Isle of Man Sport and Recreation Strategy 2002-2012, and the General Leisure Strategy for the Isle of Man.

The hon. member for Ayre's successful amendment to the motion stated:

'That Tynwald is of the opinion that in the interest of further developing sports and recreational facilities for young people through voluntary bodies, a scheme for the provision of financial assistance to such bodies to a maximum of £50,000 for each approved project, subject to the raising of funds on a pound-for-pound basis by the voluntary body, should be introduced by Government'.

In presenting the strategy documents to Tynwald, I made it clear that it would be necessary for my department to bid, through the normal budgetary and policy process, for the very substantial additional resources, both financial and manpower, required to enable the implementation of both strategies as amended.

My department is currently preparing its submission for this year's round of budget estimates and will, as with all other government departments, be bidding for resources, which are likely to be more limited in comparison with recent years.

It is my department's priority, in attempting to secure resources to support the implementation of these strategies, to focus on young people and on areas where limited resources can produce significant benefits. It is also the case that, following recent 'efficiency savings', our current operational activities reflect our current priorities, and thus there is no significant scope for resource reallocation.

It is not possible, therefore, to say definitively when a scheme as envisaged by the amendment will be put in place. Clearly, since we have no budget for the forthcoming year the earliest timescale is the financial year 2004-05. Whilst our priority for any new funding will be young people, and that is clearly set out in the strategies, both sporting and general leisure will need to prioritise between a range of initiatives which are all targeted at young people. One particular priority would be to enhance informal leisure opportunities for our young people and we would wish to put in place assistance to encourage the development of facilities such as skateboard and BMX areas.

The department is firmly committed to investing in young people and as minister I will be doing

everything I can to secure the resources to deliver the approved strategies.

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**National Insurance – Increased  
Employers’ Contributions –  
Receipts – Question by Mr Cannan  
for Written Answer**

Question 18. The hon. member for Michael (Mr Cannan) to ask the Minister for Health and Social Security:

- (1) *What are the estimated receipts from the one per cent surcharge on employers’ national insurance contributions with effect from 1st April 2003;*
- (2) *will you detail the purposes for which this extra revenue will be used; and*
- (3) *will you give an assurance that the revenue will be used for improved patient care and not absorbed into administration costs?*

**Answer**

- (1) £5.6 million per annum.
- (2) It will be used to support the gross cost of the provision of the National Health Service. That gross cost is estimated at £107.8 million in 2003-4. The sources of funding are estimated as follows:  
  
(See TQ 244 Table 1)
- (3) I confirm that all moneys allocated for the provision of the National Health Service are applied for purposes of giving effect to the department’s objectives for health services.

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**School Meals – American Potatoes –  
Question by Mrs Hannan  
for Written Answer**

Question 19. The hon. member for Peel (Mrs Hannan) to ask the Minister for Education:

- (1) *Why are American potatoes used for school meals; and*
- (2) *are they GM-free?*

**Answer**

- (1) Locally sourced potatoes are used wherever possible; the only American potato to be used in schools is in a dehydrated form within the frozen regeneration kitchens where the menu states mashed or creamed potatoes.

This product was introduced to us by one of our suppliers and, after testing and trialling the product, the decision was taken to use it in place of the then frozen product (which was likewise imported).

There are a number of advantages in using this product, not least being the quality. When the first frozen regeneration kitchens opened, the potatoes used were a frozen item in a foil tray. The serving quality of this product proved to be less than satisfactory and an alternative was sought. The dehydrated products available at that time, whilst possibly acceptable as part of a made-up dish, was certainly not considered suitable to serve as part of a traditional ‘meat and two veg’ meal. The next option was to go to a frozen pellet of mashed potato, which did prove reasonably satisfactory but could again raise concerns about serving quality.

Ease and speed of preparation is another advantage that this dehydrated product has over the frozen product. Closer control of quantities used is also another feature of the product, because it is a stable dry product, the exact quantity can be weighed out and used with the remaining product easily stored for the next time.

Products and practices within the school meals service are continuously under review and with each new term’s menu, skills of the staff employed within the frozen regeneration kitchens are raised and extended.

I would advise the hon. member that the possibility of using Manx potatoes in the required convenient form suitable for regeneration from frozen is being examined by the department. The policy of using Manx produce wherever possible remains the overall objective. I would hope that, increasingly, local agricultural products can be made available to the local market in the form that is actually required by the customer.

- (2) The UK agent supplying the product has advised that the company has the product regularly tested to ensure that its GM-free status is maintained. The potatoes grown for processing are not genetically modified and a guarantee is issued by the company that any

oil used within the product is derived from  
GM-free sunflower seeds.

**Table 1**

	£ million
General Revenue	75.2
Allocation from NI contributions	20.8
Service charges	2.5
Hospital Estate Development Fund (to cover loan charges on new hospital capital expenditure)	9.3
	£107.8