



**STANDING COMMITTEE
OF
TYNWALD COURT
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**RECORTYS OIKOIL
BING VEAYN TINVAAL**

**PROCEEDINGS
DAALTYN**

**SOCIAL AFFAIRS
POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE**

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CHILDREN

HANSARD

Douglas, Wednesday, 25th June 2014

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Members Present:

Caairliagh: Mrs B J Cannell MHK
Hon. S C Rodan SHK
Mr E A Crowe MLC

Clerk:

Mrs J Corkish

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Social Affairs Policy Review Committee

Department of Education and Children

*The Committee sat in public at 2.30 p.m.
in the Legislative Council Chamber,
Legislative Buildings, Douglas*

[MRS CANNELL *in the Chair*]

Procedural

The Caairliagh (Mrs Cannell): Welcome to this public meeting of the Social Affairs Policy Review Committee, a Standing Committee of Tynwald.

I am Mrs Brenda Cannell MHK, and I chair this Committee. With me is the Hon. Steve Rodan, Speaker of the House of Keys, and Mr Alan Crowe, who is a Member of the Legislative Council.
5 Our Clerk today is Mrs Corkish.

Please ensure that your mobile phone is switched off, not just on silent, as it interferes with Hansard equipment. Also for the purposes of Hansard I will be ensuring that we do not have two people speaking at once – which sometimes is quite difficult when you have three witnesses in front of you.

10 The Social Affairs Policy Review Committee is one of three Standing Committees of Tynwald Court established in October 2011. We have a wide scrutiny remit. We have three Departments to cover: Education and Children, Social Care and Home Affairs, and also of course – I am remiss – the Department of Health; so in fact we have four Departments.

15 Today's session is the third of our annual general oral evidence sessions with the Department of Education. Our last such session was on 27th March last year. Since then we have said goodbye to Mr Stuart Dobson, who retired as Chief Executive of the Department in August last year, and today we are pleased to welcome his successor for his first oral evidence session.

EVIDENCE OF

Hon. T M Crookall MHK, Minister;

**Prof. R Barr, Chief Executive Officer; and Mr G Moorcroft, Director of Education,
Department of Education and Children**

20 **Q1. The Caairliagh:** So, if I can start with Prof. Barr – if I could ask you, sir, if you would, please, for the record, state your full name, your job title and how long you have held the job.

Prof. Barr: My name is Prof. Ronald Barr. I am the Chief Executive for Education and Children and I took up my post on 1st September last year.

25 **Q2. The Caairliagh:** On 1st September last year – and if I could ask you for just a brief history of your educational area of expertise.

30 **Prof. Barr:** I have a PhD in US history, a master's degree in US history, and I also have a
CertEd – I am a qualified high school teacher. Before I was in this role I was Principal of Isle of
Man College of Further and Higher Education, and before that a deputy principal at the same
institution.

35 **Q3. The Caairliagh:** Could I ask you at this point then, have you... You have only been in post
a relatively short time, but I would have thought long enough to get a flavour of what it is like to
be Chief Executive of the Department as opposed to Head of the Business School. How have you
settled into this new post? Is there a big difference from what you were doing before?

40 **Prof. Barr:** Absolutely. This is the first time in my life I have been a civil servant. The rest of
my life I have been in education – so I spent my whole time as a student, then a graduate
student, and then teaching at the University of Chester, the University of Liverpool, and then
back at the University of Chester, and then obviously teaching and in a management role at the
Isle of Man College. So it is a major career change for me to go from being in education from
that perspective into what is obviously a senior Civil Service role.

45 **Q4. The Caairliagh:** Nevertheless, I would have thought, given your experience in teaching, it
will help you to empathise with other teachers and to better understand how schools and things
are working than maybe your predecessor.

50 **Prof. Barr:** I would not like to comment on my predecessor.
I think, Madam Chair, from my own perspective I would like to think that that has given me a
perspective in terms of what headteachers tell me and what other educationalists tell me, and
at least having spent a lot of my professional life in higher education, vocational education and
FE, I know that world, I think, fairly well and I have obviously, as Principal of Isle of Man College,
worked extensively with the high school heads, so I do think that has been an asset in my new
55 role.

Q5. The Caairliagh: So what are you hoping to achieve for the Department in this new
position?

60 **Prof. Barr:** I think we are looking at a number of particular priorities.
The first one is to make the high schools work more co-operatively and collectively together;
to challenge headteachers in high schools and to raise standards in high schools; to tackle the
small class sizes in post-16 education in high schools.

65 In relation to the College: to continue the high standards that we already have in FE and
vocational training, but to develop further vocational training that meets the needs of the 2020
Vision as expressed by Government, and I think also to develop higher education on the Isle of
Man as a key priority for us as a Department as well.

70 To obviously look at our primary sector. We have had a lot of very positive comments from
senior educationalists who have come to the Isle of Man, who have seen our primary sector. I
have spent at least two hours, three hours, in each of our primary schools. I started that journey
in September and completed it by Easter. I have been back to some of those primary schools. So
it has been a learning journey for me.

I am very proud that we have such a wonderful Pre-School Assessment Centre. Pre-school
education is another area that the Department is clearly involved in and is continuing to engage
75 in.

So it is a very varied portfolio, Madam Chair, and it is never dull.

Q6. The Caairliagh: And it is a tall order.

80 Before we go into questions with Prof. Barr, can I also invite Mr Moorcroft, who is new to the Department as well, and as we understand it you are the Director of Education. If I could ask you the same question, please, for the record: if you could give us your full name, your job title and how long you have held that position.

Mr Moorcroft: Certainly. My name is Geoff Moorcroft. I am the Director of Education for the 85 Isle of Man and I have held that post since 1st April of this year.

Q7. The Caairliagh: A very new post, then.

Mr Moorcroft: That is right, yes. 90

Q8. The Caairliagh: I expect you are still finding your feet somewhat.

Mr Moorcroft: In some ways, yes.

95 **Q9. The Caairliagh:** Again, you have come from... formerly as a headteacher of a school, and you have come in to the Civil Service.

Mr Moorcroft: Yes. My background is... I was a primary school teacher in Rushen School. I then moved to Scoill Phurt le Moirrey as the deputy there and helped to establish it as a new 100 school. I became the headteacher of the school in 2009.

Towards the end of the year, I moved into the Education Improvement Service, and so I have done some time since then as part of a small team of educational improvement officers quality assuring schools.

105 Since April this year, I have taken on the Director's post, succeeding Martin Barrow.

Q10. The Caairliagh: Yes. So there is a relatively good balance, then: we have one who has got quite a history in working at high school level and college level, and one who has also got a lot of experience in primary education. So there is a good balance.

110 Are you enjoying your new position?

Mr Moorcroft: Yes. There are certainly challenges involved in it, but yes, I am enjoying going around the schools, familiarising myself with some of the sectors with which I have not been as closely associated in my career thus far; and yes, getting to know some of the very good practice that we are lucky to have on the Isle of Man. 115

Q11. The Caairliagh: Okay.

Minister, we know who you are, of course; but again, for the record, if you could give us your full name and your job title.

120 **The Minister for Education and Children (Mr Crookall):** Yes. Good afternoon, Madam Chair.

Tim Crookall, delighted to be the Minister for Education and Children still, at the moment, having been there now for just short of two years, which is still fairly new to the job, even though I have more experience and more time spent there than the two officers with me today. I feel very fortunate that we have these officers here to replace the two who were here last year 125 with me, with their experience.

Q12. The Caairliagh: Can I ask you at this juncture – bearing in mind that you said you have been in post as Minister for almost two years, almost halfway through the legislative term – a

130 rather cheeky question? Since you have been in post as the Minister and heading up the Department, what successes can you say are down to you to date for the Department?

135 **The Minister:** As far as I am concerned, Madam Chair, I would say the continuation of the extensions and the new builds that are going on, the physical builds on the schools, on the education buildings. That is essential to the long-term planning for the Department, and to be able to get that through with the support of Tynwald Members I think is absolutely paramount for the Department. So I would think that is probably something I am proud of, personally, to have got that through.

140 **Q13. The Caairliagh:** But they were already in the capital programme, weren't they?

145 **The Minister:** Some were, some were not; but until you get that support from your Tynwald colleagues... and the likes of the new Noble's school up at Westmorland Road, hopefully we will be getting this year if we get the support for that. Things like that, until you get the support for those and get the 'yes' from Tynwald, nothing is guaranteed, Madam Chair.

145 **Q14. The Caairliagh:** How are you coping with the ever-increasing demand to diminish the budget for Education and Children?

150 **The Minister:** It is not easy; it is certainly not easy. Again, with the experience of the officers we have got in the centre and the willingness of the heads and the unions... I have to say we work very closely with the unions. I meet them probably every three months. We met them last week – no, the beginning of this week. We work very closely with them. We keep them very up to date with all the information we have got and we seem to have a very good working relationship – they appreciate it and we certainly do – with them.

155 **Q15. The Caairliagh:** Okay. Do you have a new Finance Director in the Department? Who is the Finance Director?

160 **The Minister:** We have Glenn Shimmin, who has taken over from Ashley, who left us last year as well. We lost several senior members last year.

165 **Q16. The Caairliagh:** Yes, so have their posts been supplemented with the necessary expertise?

165 **Prof. Barr:** Can I answer that, Madam Chairman?

The Caairliagh: Yes, you may.

170 **Prof. Barr:** Glenn Shimmin obviously had been with the Department and he had spent some time in the centre. He has come back to the Department and he is a real asset. We are hoping to confirm him as our Director of Finance, probably at the end of the summer. He is in an acting capacity in that role at the moment and we are extremely pleased with the work that he has done.

175 We recognise that there may be a need to give him some additional support, particularly because we are obviously administering the Student Awards Scheme, which has a fair degree of financial work attached to it, and we also have the pre-school scheme as well, and both of those schemes, although they have attachments into other Departments – Health and Social Care and Treasury – are primarily being administered by us. So we are very conscious that Glenn has a fairly large workload and it is something that at the moment I have tasked the Director of

180 Corporate Services, Heather Christian, to look into, seeing if we can get some additional support to Glenn.

I have been talking to Malcolm Couch at Treasury, expressing our complete support for Glenn. We think he has been a real asset to us in the role he is doing. He has done a great job with the headteachers and on DFM, and we would like to see him carry on in that role.

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Q17. The Caairliagh: When you say he spent some time 'in the centre', could you explain for *Hansard* what is 'the centre'?

Prof. Barr: He spent some time with the Cabinet Office, in the centre.

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Q18. The Caairliagh: Right, okay, so in the Council of Ministers office?

Prof. Barr: Yes.

195

Q19. The Caairliagh: Doing what?

Prof. Barr: I am not sure. It was financial functions that he was carrying out within the Office, but I cannot remember exactly what he was doing there.

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Q20. The Caairliagh: Okay. Is he as qualified as your previous Finance Director?

Prof. Barr: I do not recall what financial qualifications Mr Halsall had. Obviously, I only knew him in my capacity as Principal of the Isle of Man College, because he had retired before I became Chief Executive.

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In terms of Glenn's qualifications, he is not a qualified accountant, and that has been something which has been raised in the past, but we are hoping that, Glenn having demonstrated his clear ability in the role, Treasury will be minded to confirm his appointment.

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Q21. The Caairliagh: It is going to be a tall order for him, isn't it? I will invite Members in a moment to take up their line of questioning, but we have also got a copy of the CIP Assessment 2013-14, the audit undertaken by the audit people, which is not very glowing in terms of the management of the finances and the delivery of services under the existing policy of the Department. So there is, I would suggest, going to be some difficulty and a great deal of pressure in this area.

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Prof. Barr: It is fair to say, Madam Chair, that we are well aware of that.

We were extremely disappointed, not so much in relation to the '1' that we got for our current thing, but the fact that Internal Audit thought that we were only a '1' in terms of our capacity to improve. I think it is fair to say that there were aspects of that internal audit report that we would have perhaps taken issue with, but rather than do so we have tried to engage positively with Internal Audit and I am well aware that Glenn Shimmin has had a number of positive meetings with Caldric Randall and others involved in the CIP process.

220

We are currently engaging with that process. Heather Christian, my Director of Corporate Services, and Glenn are working up some initial work for us on this and I have tasked my Corporate Leadership Group to start looking at financial planning. It is the intention of the Department to have a financial plan that mirrors the 2020 Vision for economic development.

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One of the things which I have identified, although relatively new in post, is the lack of long-term financial planning within the Department and we are very keen to align that within the cost improvement planning process. As I say, Glenn is very much aware of that and as a Department we are aware of that.

230

We are obviously very disappointed with that report; it was not a good report. The only point I would make to the Chair is that when this process was conducted in the UK, Civil Service departments were given a much longer lead time to prepare for that CIP process.

235 **Q22. The Caairliagh:** Okay. It would appear though that other Departments are doing quite a bit better. So it is, I think, an area of concern for the Department and one that we picked up on, and we share that concern.

240 Hopefully, you are going to be able to determine the policy to be able to match that with the financial means with which to deliver it without actually... It is suggested in here compromise solutions which have been flagged up in terms of the cutting back of services, rather than perhaps coming up with new solutions in terms of trying to... innovative ways of trying to boost what you are getting.

245 **Prof. Barr:** I think part of the problem was that when the information was gathered there was... I think we, as a Department, did not give those who were gathering the information the material that they actually were looking for and there was a sort of disjoint there.

250 The Department has reduced its staff by 117 FTE since 2009. We have absorbed pay increases and pay awards that have exceeded £1.2 million since April 2013. So, sadly, I think in the discussions that we had with those who came to the Department, in terms of the cost improvement planning process... they were obviously officers who were not from Education. We seemed to spend quite a bit of time explaining to them how the Department of Education and Children worked, and in some of that dialogue I think some of the financial detail did not translate into their final report.

255 **Q23. The Caairliagh:** Nevertheless, Internal Audit will be going back anyway.

Prof. Barr: Absolutely, and we welcome that.

260 **The Minister:** We would welcome that, Madam Chair.

Prof. Barr: We welcome that and Glenn Shimmin has already had two full meetings with Caldric Randall, asking him about how we should approach this and how we can improve, and it is very much a priority for the Department.

265 **The Caairliagh:** Okay.
Mr Speaker, I invite you.

Q24. The Speaker: Thank you, Chair.

270 Good afternoon, gentlemen. Just perhaps sticking with that particular topic at the moment – the cost improvement programme – would it be fair to say that when the criticism was made that cost savings and service cancelling options were put forward, they were done without proper scoping, costing or consultation that reflected the need for immediate areas of saving to make a 5% target reduction, rather than a systematic approach on a longer-term basis? Are you saying that now cost improvement is going to be systematic, well thought through and less *ad hoc* than has been in the past?

280 **Prof. Barr:** As the new Chief Executive, Mr Speaker, that is very much in the forefront of my mind, in the sense that what I have tasked the senior leadership team with is that we are going to be spending quite a bit of time in July working up what it might mean for the Education budget: if we were to proceed with a frozen budget every year between now and 2020, assuming pay rises in the order of 2% over that period and inflation running at about 3% over that period, what would that money buy us as an education service; what type of cuts would we

have to make to the service; what options would be available to the Minister in terms of, 'These would be the options, Minister, that you would have to take to achieve that kind of budget.'

285 Without wanting to cast aspersions over my predecessors, I was somewhat surprised when I joined the Department that there was not more of that strategic work.

Q25. The Speaker: Thank you, yes. And against that, of course, there is the moving feast of demand for services. Can you just say a little bit about the forecasts that you have as a Department for pupil numbers in the primary and the secondary sector? Minister, you referred to school buildings, and of course they are the end product of planning from several years previously as to what the demand and pressure on places is likely to be. What is the current picture; and how, against that picture, are you going to be managing costs – on the present levels of demand, or in terms of a rising demand or a falling demand in the years to come?

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Mr Moorcroft: I have got that information, Mr Speaker, if you would like me to respond to you.

Q26. The Speaker: Please.

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Mr Moorcroft: We have got some information, a population projection model from the Department of Economic Affairs, that projects pupil numbers largely increasing but not dramatically. So we are projecting 905 pupils into the reception classes in 2015, 989 in 2016, which is quite a significant increase, but then after that, 993 in 2017 and 919 in 2018. Of course, that information is contingent on a range of factors and we cannot know who is going to move into the Island and who is going to move out, and so on and so forth; but as a broad projection, that is what we are working towards in terms of reception numbers.

305

Within that, of course, there are peaks and troughs of demand in different areas, and we also have an analysis... and one of the things I was keen to establish in the early part of this new role was the numbers in different year groups and of course in different schools across the Island, and we can see patterns within that. If we look at QEII as an example, the current year 7 in QEII – so that is the first year group that they cater for – is 141 pupils, though the year 11 is 154. If we look at that, it seems like demand at QEII might actually be dropping off a little. However, we are also aware that in reception in Clothworkers we have got 71 pupils, but we only have 30-odd – (Interjection by Prof. Barr) 36, I think you are right, yes, 36 – leaving; so of course the feeder schools ultimately may well increase the demand for QEII as well. So we are modelling all of that as we speak.

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Q27. The Speaker: So is there a bulge that is moving through the system at any one time? The demographics generally are –

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Prof. Barr: I think we feel what you are seeing –

The Speaker: – pretty flat.

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The Caairliagh: Just one person speaking at a time, please.

The Speaker: Sorry. I was just going to say the demographics are that the younger age groups are pretty flat or static, notwithstanding this bulge that is going through, and therefore the requirement to make future provision for buildings and facilities is not apparent – there is no pressing demand.

330

Prof. Barr: I think, as the Director of Education said, it depends. There are regional variations across the Island. Clearly, with the amount of new housing in Peel we are almost doubling the

335 number of children from the current cohort leaving Peel Clothworkers, which is 36, to an intake
this year of 71; so obviously, in six years' time there will be 71 children leaving Peel
Clothworkers. That clearly will have an impact upon QEII.

One of the reasons why we had the new build, which you will have seen in relation to QEII, is
an attempt by the Department to not only address the needs of the school as identified by the
340 headteacher but to also future-proof the school against that demand, which will be inevitably
run through in six years' time.

Q28. The Speaker: Okay, thank you, but that is Peel and the west – is that pattern being
evidenced elsewhere in the Island?

345 **Mr Moorcroft:** No. Indeed, I would say in most of our primary schools the numbers are very
similar. In some they are seeing a reduction in pupils coming in; in others, like Peel, they are
seeing an increase. So it is a very different and diverse pattern across the Island.

350 **Q29. The Speaker:** Are there any plans at the moment to close any primary schools following
the closure of Bride, or amalgamate schools?

Prof. Barr: In terms of school closures, Mr Speaker, no, there are not; and although we have
some capacity in some of our primary schools, since Government has a stated aim to grow the
355 population to 100,000, until the Department can find out from Government where those
additional people might be and how many of them will have families... then we would be in a
position to think perhaps about further rationalisation in terms of school closures. But for the
moment, if Government's stated aim is to grow the population, it would be ill advised to close
schools which are operating to a fair degree of capacity. They are not at full capacity in some
360 cases, but for us to think about mothballing a school or closing a school and then we continue
with this population growth and it ends up in an area where we have actually closed a school in
the south of the Island... I think there is a kind of debate to be had, which we have had at the
Chief Officer Group, about how joined-up Government is in terms of future population growth
and where the infrastructure needs to be, based upon where that population growth may be.

365 **The Speaker:** Thank you, yes.

The Caairliagh: Very interesting, and I wish you well on that.

370 **Mr Crowe:** Can I just ask a question?

The Caairliagh: Mr Crowe.

375 **Q30. Mr Crowe:** What about catchment areas? You mentioned QEII is reaching capacity – do
you need to reduce catchment areas or change catchment areas?

The Minister: We have said that the Department will look at the catchment areas – or I have
said that the Department will look at the catchment areas – again this year. Obviously, they are
not tightly stuck down but we try to stick to them as fairly rigidly as possible with regard to
380 staffing and things, to utilise the staff to their maximum potential. But there are occasions when
we will let one or two children from outside of catchment go to other places, and it may well be
in future that we do that a bit more if it serves the Department and the schools better.

If I can just pick up on a point you made before, Mr Speaker, about the amalgamation of
schools – just to clarify, mainly for *Hansard* – obviously the amalgamation of Fairfield and
385 Ballacloan will happen, or *has happened*, under the new name of the Henry Bloom Noble.

390 **Q31. Mr Crowe:** Can I just pick up on a point that Prof. Barr mentioned in his opening address, where you talked about high schools working closely together: was the implication that they do not work closely together now, or that they work closely but you are going to try and improve that, and this then follows with Ramsey, Castle Rushen, QEII High School and St Ninian's?

395 **Prof. Barr:** I think from our perspective, Mr Crowe, there has been a... The policy, by and large, has been to allow the high schools across the Island a great deal of leeway in terms of managing their budgets, their curriculum, and indeed managing their schools. That has allowed them to do a great deal of things and it has worked extremely well when the Island had money.

400 The questions that we have now are in relation to where we have schools using a plethora of exam boards. So they may use AQA, they may use Edexcel, they may use boards in Northern Ireland, England or elsewhere. That means that we have no consistency in terms of teaching materials; it means that it makes it, in some cases, harder for the Department to quantify performance between schools because they are not using the same exam board; and it is more expensive because you then have staff engaging with separate exam boards, all of which have their own regulations. So it has been an aspiration of the Department to perhaps simplify and streamline that, particularly in relation to a core of subjects.

405 The other issue is the small numbers of students we have in A-level. Clearly, from an economic point of view as well as an educational point of view, having class sizes potentially of three or four students – in a drama class or in a politics class, or indeed any class when you also learn from your peers – is not actually ideal learning. So it is not just financially driven. I think the Department has a concern that some of our post-16-education class sizes need to be larger, and we have asked the headteachers to think about ways in which they could co-operate and collaborate together to make that happen.

410 **Q32. Mr Crowe:** Through you, Chair, can I just pick the point up? Is this why the 14 to 16 review of Education is going to help this in any way?

415 **Prof. Barr:** To an extent. The 14 to 16 reforms, which has been a fantastic piece of work, Mr Crowe... We tasked the senior management teams in the high schools to work with us back in the autumn. It was with them that we came up with the three options: the new Scottish model, IGCSEs and the new English model. We then took that to primary heads in January, and then of course we also had four roadshows around the Island. As you may know, we had well in excess of 800 responses to our consultation exercise. So we were really delighted with all of that and that has led us to a position where the Minister, in due course, will make an announcement in July Tynwald about which direction of travel we are going in. But I think it is safe to say that we will be looking to a system that is dealing with fewer exam boards than we have had in the past.

425 **Mr Crowe:** Thank you.

Q33. The Caairliagh: Thank you, Mr Crowe.
430 So you are actually looking and perhaps concentrating on then, with the high schools, to perhaps standardise across the board? You said there is an inconsistency in the level perhaps of the available equipment and resources that each school will put into that area. So are you looking to standardised that process?

435 **Mr Moorcroft:** I am not sure 'standardise' would be the word I would use, but there is certainly a drive. One of the great advantages of working in education on the Isle of Man is the relative smallness of the authority, or of the Island, and the agility we have within that. So we can respond very quickly to emerging trends and to good practice that is research based.

440 There is a compelling amount of research at the moment both done in some of the London
authorities and the Manchester authorities – the London Challenge and the Manchester
Challenge – about very significant improvements in standards that are being effected by staff
collaborating and sharing good practice. So if you have a very good maths teacher, you can share
that very good maths teacher with somebody who is perhaps struggling a little, and that can
improve their practice and raise standards. It is that sort of positive engagement that we want to
continue to support and encourage within our schools. We think that that will be effected better
445 if people are working towards common exam specifications, for example.

Q34. The Caairliagh: We are talking about a degree, then, of shared services across the board
and possibly –

450 **Mr Moorcroft:** Of shared expertise.

The Caairliagh: Yes, and possibly larger class sizes for A-level students. Is that what we are
looking at?

455 **Prof. Barr:** One would like to think that we would have larger class sizes, Madam Chair.

I was somewhat disheartened, when I asked for the AS class sizes in the autumn last year, to
see class sizes of five, four, three, two and one. I just was astonished that we still were allowing
that to happen. It is certainly not value for money and it is certainly not good educational
practice in my view, or indeed in the view of the Department.

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The Caairliagh: Mr Speaker.

Q35. The Speaker: On that last point, would that be really a feature of headteachers
preserving their own territory and very much looking at their schools and what their schools do
465 on a territorial basis; whereas common sense and, from what you say, best educational practice
would be to amalgamate a lot of that provision?

Prof. Barr: I think it would be fair to say, Mr Speaker, that we have had headteachers who
have had it fixed in their mind that their key priority is to grow their school, and perhaps their
470 management thinking... and I have tried very hard over the last few months to get them to think
broader: that actually it is not Ramsey Grammar and it is not Ballakermeen; you are actually all
part of Isle of Man Government and it is about the education service for the Island.

I think it is very easy for headteachers to just get fixated on what is best in the best interests
of their school, which may not necessarily be in the best interests of education and young
475 people across the Island. I think it is important that the Department is there to remind
headteachers of that fact.

Q36. The Speaker: Yes, and – just if I may, Chair – therefore there is a good case for looking
at class sizes at A-level, and I think that is quite obvious.

480 Historically though, favourable pupil-teacher ratios and smaller class sizes than England were
always used on the Isle of Man as the benchmark of a superior education provision, and I think
we are all well aware that in the last year or two that claim for smaller class sizes has now gone.
Is that because of the pressure on the budget, which is simply that that is the line of least
resistance to absorb costs – just grow the class sizes; and if so, what is the Department's
485 optimum benchmark thinking on class sizes? Leaving aside the A-levels, and we can see the logic
of class sizes for them, but in the lower classes have smaller class sizes ceased to be a good thing
and something we can point to with pride; and if so, why, and what has changed?

490 **Mr Moorcroft:** Yes, I think your analysis is fairly accurate, Mr Speaker. The evidence is tricky to get, in terms of benchmarking against England, but my most up-to-date – which is November 2012 – evidence is that the pupil-teacher ratio for primary schools in England was 19.9 students per teacher, compared to 19.7 on the Isle of Man. So they are very comparable. Things are slightly more favourable in primary, though not much different to the UK, to England.

495 And yes, we have had to... Partly that is the result of having to reduce expenditure. Something like two thirds or three quarters of our budget is given over to salaries, so there is very little leeway in terms of our ability to make those savings. We have cut back centrally, really quite significantly, though the vast majority of our expenditure is on salaries, and so one of the things that we have had to look at is reducing that favourable comparison, undoubtedly.

500 **Q37. The Speaker:** Okay. Pupil-teacher ratios: would you say that that is a fairly crude method of comparing? We know about free school meals as a crude measure of social disadvantage and how children are performing. What other sort of benchmarks and performance indicators do you work to, other than class sizes and free school meals and comparing averages, which I never found particularly helpful? To be below the English average is no great claim: considering the amount of resource that historically went into the Isle of Man education system, it jolly well should have been better! The trick is to know how much better *ought* it to have been and how much better *could* it be.

510 **Mr Moorcroft:** Indeed. So are you asking in terms of benchmarking particularly against the UK, or benchmarking with others?

515 **Q38. The Speaker:** Against the UK. I would be interested in the demographic area the Isle of Man Department of Education currently compares with. I think at one time it was East Cheshire or Warrington in terms of demographics and performance. So there is that wider aspect, but also how do you know that we are doing well? What are the tests that you apply, whether we are getting good value for the educational pound spent?

520 **Mr Moorcroft:** We do do that analysis. We get annual data in terms of, let's say... for example, at the end of key stage 2 we look at the number of pupils who are achieving level 4 and we compare the Isle of Man data, for the whole of the Isle of Man, with the whole of the UK, and we do that. It, as you say, is a very crude measure and it really raises more questions than it does answers sometimes. Nonetheless, it does make us ask those questions, and while it is a very complex picture – because I would have to talk about level 3s and level 4s and levels 5s, and English and maths and science – generally speaking, that would indicate that we are comparing very... well, not very... favourably with the UK at the end of key stage 2, definitely.

525 We also compare at the end of key stage 4, so we look at our English and maths. Sorry, we look at our GCSE results – I beg your pardon – and in terms of A* to C, again we compare favourably. In terms of A-level, we compare very favourably with the UK. We compare less favourably if we look at English and maths A* to C, including English and maths – so if we include that specific data.

530 **Q39. The Speaker:** The UK are lamentably failing in the international league tables of achievement. Are we not setting our sights too low by being satisfied with being marginally above the UK in certain areas?

535 **Mr Moorcroft:** I think, as the CEO indicated in his opening address, absolutely. If you are asking me do we want to raise the levels of aspiration for our young people on the Island, undoubtedly yes, absolutely we do.

540 We can learn a lot by comparing with a range of other jurisdictions, I have no doubt about that, though there are caveats around a lot of that comparison in terms of cultural differences.

People compare blithely with Finland or with Hong Kong and say, 'Well, PISA says these jurisdictions are doing well in the league tables, and these are not.' There is an awful lot behind those statistics, not least of all the culture and the ethos of the country and how well, or not, education is valued.

545

The Speaker: Okay, thank you.

Q40. The Cairliagh: Nevertheless, it is cited in the CIP assessment report from Internal Audit that there is a lack of key performance indicators and benchmarks, and I know historically, with the former management in the Department of Education, there was always a natural resistance against benchmarking and perhaps just a greater focus on education rather than how well we are doing. But now, as you know, we are not in favourable financial times. We still need to provide education under the Education Act. We have to provide the education and we need to be doing well. So without jeopardising the students' chances, we need to know, or at least the Department needs to know that it is winning in this fight to deliver good education and be comparable with anywhere else within the world, really, and doing well.

550

555

Prof. Barr: I do not think the Department would disagree with any of that, Madam Chair.

What I would say is that, certainly in terms of KPIs, in relation to FE and vocational education and in relation to higher education, it is a very good story in terms of success rates and pass rates at the Isle of Man College, and we certainly have all those figures. This is one of the issues we had with the CIP report. We consistently have a success and rate of pass rates in excess of 90% here on the Island. The English average is around 78.5%, so we are well ahead when it comes to those areas.

560

565

Higher education as well, which we may go on to discuss later on this afternoon, is another area where students doing the same courses here on Island as they would do at the University of Chester are performing consistently better in terms of the numbers of people getting firsts, 2:1s, and indeed passing those degrees, and the Department has that information. So although we have been discussing the schools, there is also the broader picture of FE, vocational and HE that sits alongside that as well.

570

Q41. The Cairliagh: Nevertheless, Prof. Barr, the measurement and the success of our pass rate for our students going into higher education has been largely due to the very generous support we used to give them. That has now changed, and I would suggest that since we altered the regime for student awards, in terms of no longer is it free, that might impact in the next five to 10 years. So I think it is possibly something that needs to be monitored *very* carefully, because we may end up with fewer students being in a position to actually go to university and do as well as their peers did previously. So that performance indicator of how well we are doing – 'Oh, well, we have got so many pass rates and we have got so many students doing really well,' – reliance on that, I would suggest, might be a bit foolhardy, because that may well change because the regime has changed significantly.

575

580

Prof. Barr: It may well be, and obviously we monitor these things every year when the results come out and we look at them and analyse them. So we would certainly be looking very carefully at those results. Having got it to that high standard, we certainly would not want it to slip, Madam Chair – absolutely not.

585

Q42. The Cairliagh: Before I move off students and student awards, do you not find it an irritation, Minister, that every year you have to come – well, you have done it for the last two – with new student regulations?

590

595 **The Minister:** Yes, I did ask about that, Madam Chair, this year – whether it was a case of we have to or not – and I believe that we do not actually have to if there is no change. I think what we did this year may well see us through probably until the following year. Unless there is anything that comes to the fore in the meantime, we may not actually have to come to Tynwald next year. But certainly it is something we are looking at to make sure that when we do come we make sure we get everything in the net, hopefully for this year and for next year and as far as possible into the future. Yes, it saves everybody time and effort.

600 **Q43. The Caairliagh:** It might release more time for more strategic focus on how you are going to get forward and deliver services way into the future and sustain them. I think it is shared with the Committee also that having to do that every year suggests that the focus previously has always been on year to year and getting this through and managing that area year to year, rather than having a strategic plan and policy to get you forward.

605 **The Minister:** I think that is very fair to say, Madam Chair, and I think a lot of Departments have probably been guilty of that, if I can put it that way; but certainly now the Department... I think Prof. Barr mentioned just now about DED's 2020 Vision and how we are now starting to form our own to run in conjunction with that, alongside that, so we can work up the students and the vocational training that needs to go alongside that and provide for the future of the Island. But we need to be working better together.

610 If I could just go back to the benchmarking that you mentioned before, while I think we will probably continue to benchmark against places in England and that, I am not saying just there; I think we will need to look... I think it was you or Mr Speaker who said maybe we should look at benchmarking against others as well to make sure... while they are our nearest across the water, there are others we are probably better off benchmarking against.

615 **Q44. The Caairliagh:** I think so. Can I also make a suggestion before we move off that: having served on the Department myself on two occasions in the past – once when Mr Speaker was Minister for Education – there was very much the focus on the monthly meetings and the delegated responsibilities for Members to have monthly meetings or to hold and chair student awards appeals and that sort of thing. There was never a focus on policy and strategy meetings at political and senior officer level. Can I suggest that perhaps you consider that in going forward, even if it is just once a quarter when you sit down and focus on policy and strategy rather than the business of the Department? You might find a window of opportunity to be able to put greater focus on going forward. It is just a suggestion.

620 **Prof. Barr:** Madam Chair, I think that is absolutely something we would be very keen to follow through.

630 There is only a minor thing I would say in relation student awards. Clearly, because it was a new system, there were a number of minor tweaks and amendments that had to be made, which is why it came forward, because obviously we have identified, in operationalising it, that there were a number of items that had to then be changed to hopefully make the system a bit more consistent and fair. There were a few anomalies that we wanted just to clear up through that. So hopefully we will not be bringing this forward, Minister, every year.

635 **Q45. The Caairliagh:** Okay. Can I just ask you briefly, again before I invite the Members, how are you getting on in delivering the recommendations of our Scrutiny Report approved by Tynwald?

640 **Mr Moorcroft:** Do you want to take them recommendation by recommendation, Madam Chair?

645 **The Caairliagh:** Yes, there were not that many.

Mr Moorcroft: That is fine. The first recommendation was:

650 'where a Department or the Council of Ministers is contemplating a radical change in policy, the need to consult Tynwald and the public is greater than ever...'

655 Of course, we as a Department absolutely endorse and recognise the need for openness and accountability in the work that we do with our schools and with the public. I think it is fair to say that the consultation that the CEO referred to earlier on was, I believe – and please correct me if I am wrong – the second biggest consultation that Isle of Man Government has seen. There were over 800 participants in that consultation towards 14-to-16 qualification reform. I think that is a fair indication of our support for the need to consult the public on key policy changes.

660 **Q46. The Caairliagh:** Well, in fairness, we were reporting on the pre-school fiasco at the time, which came in very swiftly without proper thought. It is also suggested in the CIP report that there was political influence in terms of that, rather than the delivery of education for the benefit of those receiving it.

665 That recommendation was strongly resisted, of course, politically, but I am pleased, and I think the Committee are pleased and welcome the fact that you have gone out for consultation early on other issues. However, if you are able to engineer greater focus on policy and strategy meetings, it might give you the opportunity to detect these things sooner rather than later, and we will not have to face an investigation such as we had to do again in this area.

So, recommendation 2.

670 **Mr Moorcroft:** Yes, thank you.

'work with the Department of Social Care to consider regulation and other means which will maximise the educational standards...'

675 Of course I think we would entirely endorse the importance of high-quality provision in the early years and how important that is.

680 With regard to that, we have continued to meet with Health and Social Care. As I am sure you are aware, Health and Social Care went out to consultation fairly recently on some draft day care standards, to which we contributed and with which we were involved to quite a degree in terms of offering our view.

685 **Q47. The Caairliagh:** If I could just ask you to pause there. Those draft day care standards are largely bringing in changes to childminders in terms of – we have got a copy of some information on that – largely looking to change, under those regulations, the ability of childminders to be able to look after children under the age of 12 months.

Mr Moorcroft: No. With respect, Madam Chair, I think we are talking at cross purposes.

The Caairliagh: Right, okay.

690 **Mr Moorcroft:** The day care standards I am referring to explicitly exempt childminders from the remit of what they are looking at. The day care standards were draft day care standards and were directed towards pre-school settings.

695 **Q48. The Caairliagh:** Well, they did exempt them, but they are looking to actually bring them in, include them, because they are out for consultation too, the child-minders currently who are

able to look after three children under the age of 12 months, and the Department is looking to reduce that down to one, unless they are siblings.

700 **Mr Moorcroft:** Nonetheless, the day care standards that we contributed to had a considerably greater emphasis on learning than is in the ones that are there at the moment. We were delighted to see that and we were able to support that focus on the connection between care and learning.

705 **Q49. The Caairliagh:** Okay. Nevertheless, without the regulation, it will be very difficult to enforce.

This is the problem that the Committee discovered in our two-year investigation into this area: that previously, when pre-school was delivered by the Department of Education, it was closely monitored and measured to ensure success. Now it falls between two stones, two Departments, and there is a grey area where it is your aspiration that they include early years learning as part of the day care experience, and it is the Department of Health and Social Care's ambition to just care for the child.

710 So the education standard is unable to be monitored, and this is why we felt that regulation would give you the ability in law to do that and make sure that they are meeting the minimum early years learning requirements.

715

Mr Moorcroft: Yes, we would not disagree. At the moment, there is no single body overseeing early years education, and we would agree with the Committee's analysis of that.

720 **Q50. The Caairliagh:** Okay. So recommendation 2 is still in the air a bit?

Mr Moorcroft: Well, like I say, we have contributed to the day care standards and I am quite confident, having read them and us having contributed to them, that there will be a significantly greater emphasis on education within those standards – not without the caveats that you have just outlined, Madam Chair.

725 We have offered training to providers in private, voluntary and independent settings and we have opened up our training to those people with the aim of increasing the skill levels of the people in that workforce, and we are currently undertaking an analysis of that uptake.

730 We are delighted that the Manx Quality Award – which is our verification, quality assurance, of early years setting – has been taken up by a large number of private, voluntary and independent settings. We have been able to accredit a number, including two recently to the full Quality Award, which is the ultimate stage of the award. So we are delighted to be working on that, but we recognise, as you say, that we need to work towards a joint inspection framework and –

735 **Q51. The Caairliagh:** Well, of course, if you have got that system in and the enticement is that you will get a grand award if you achieve this, it is only an enticement, isn't it? If you were to consider regulations under the Education Act yourself, in terms of the monitoring of that, early years, by the method possibly that you have just suggested – that each establishment, if they want to register that they want to look after youngsters and they want to benefit from the credit facility, which we are told is going to be increased, which is taxpayers' money, then surely we and the public need to be satisfied that the standards are maintained and are systematic throughout that level of education.

740 We were talking before about primary education, higher education and about there being consistency at different crucial levels, especially A-level, but we would suggest and argue with you that early years is just as crucial as A-level, because if you do not get it right at that stage you are wasting your breath, really.

745

750 **Mr Moorcroft:** I do not think any of us sitting here would disagree with that. I think early years is of *critical* importance. I think it is more a question of roles and responsibilities, and with Health and Social Care having drafted these day care standards to which we have contributed, I think Regulation and Inspections under Social Care would be the appropriate place for a regulatory framework that would look at early years settings. That is where it sits currently, and what we are –

755 **Q52. The Cairliagh:** Yes, so it is still in the air a little bit.

Can I just say that we are *very* keen and we will be monitoring the progress of all the recommendations whilst we are in post in this position, because we are *very* passionate about this area in education.

760 **Prof. Barr:** I think, Madam Chair, that was an interesting idea about including it in the new Education Act, and it is certainly something that we will take back and think about within the Department.

765 **Q53. The Cairliagh:** Well, I know in the Education Act there is no statutory provision for you to provide pre-school; nevertheless, you could give yourselves a statutory provision to monitor the level of education delivered.

770 **Prof. Barr:** We could certainly do that and it is certainly an interesting idea. Thank you very much.

The Cairliagh: Okay, right.
Mr Speaker did you...?

775 **Q54. The Speaker:** Yes, actually, that was the point I was going to make. Would it be the opportunity under the new Education Bill – given the importance, that you agree with, of early years learning – further down the line to establish some standards; if not give you obligation to provide it, at least an obligation to set adequate standards if only to be implemented by others?

780 And in that respect, I would ask what, educationally, is the optimum number of hours per week of early years learning? We know what the Department was providing in part.

The Cairliagh: Mr Speaker, we are only at recommendation 2, and I am asking Mr Moorcroft to go through with an update on the recommendations. Of course, that was one.

785 **The Speaker:** I am sorry, I thought we were on the subject of early years learning.

The Cairliagh: We still are, but in terms of our Report.

The Speaker: If you could just deal with that, and then perhaps we can...

790 **Mr Moorcroft:** Yes, I can, by all means. As was stated in the Social Affairs Policy Review Committee's Report, there is a vast amount of research on this, some of which is cited in the Report, and there are different views on what the optimum level is. I think there is a sort of consensus around three hours a day. I think before the pre-school credit agreement was in place we were working on 17½ hours a week, which was as close as we felt we could come to that financially, but of course only for approximately half of our young people at the time. I think that would be our aim. Our aim would be for all of the pre-school children who wanted to, or whose parents wanted them to, to be able to access two and a half to three hours of quality early learning support on a daily basis. That would be what we would be hoping for.

795

800 **The Speaker:** Thank you, that is clear.

The Caairliagh: Okay, thank you.

Mr Moorcroft: Do you want me to move on to recommendation 3, Madam Chair?

805

The Caairliagh: Yes, please.

Mr Moorcroft: There is very little to say on this, and that is largely... This was the one about continuing to produce baseline assessment data for new reception children and to publish that information. We published it for last year. We will have that information by midway through the autumn term in this year, and we would be happy to publish that data at that point.

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Q55. The Caairliagh: Okay. When you say you published the last lot of data, was it publicly published?

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Mr Moorcroft: As far as I am aware, yes.

The Minister: It went into a report, Madam Chair.

820

The Caairliagh: Sorry?

The Minister: It went into a report.

Q56. The Caairliagh: Yes, right, so you did not make it an issue that 'this is the baseline data and we are publishing this,' no?

825

Mr Moorcroft: No, sorry, we did not press release it, no; but it was –

The Minister: It was in a report but... Certainly it was mentioned in Tynwald, but I do not think there was a press release that went out about it on its own.

830

Q57. The Caairliagh: Okay. Well, again, if people do not know what you are publishing, then they do not know when to look and will continue to criticise possibly – when you have done what was required.

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Mr Moorcroft: As I think we have mentioned in our submission to that report, there is the caveat to that that the curriculum is in a state of flux. We have adopted a new early years curriculum in this academic year and we are working on a new assessment framework that matches that curriculum. Nonetheless, that will still be very congruent with what we have done in the past and we would be open to that being publicly available, absolutely.

840

But we do ensure that pupils have a positive start to their school life and we would not want to sit them down in the first week and do a series of assessments on them, so we give schools the first half term with which to –

Q58. The Caairliagh: Again, it is a KPI (**Mr Moorcroft:** Oh, yes.) of... [*Inaudible*] that we are offering up to help you.

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Mr Moorcroft: And it is not one, Madam Chair, that we have not looked at in the past. I would be doing the Committee a disservice to imply that we had not looked at it before – we look at it regularly; I am just saying that it is not available currently because of the timing.

850

855 **Q59. The Caairliagh:** Yes, but in our Report we actually had to ask you for it in order to consider it so that... What we found was difficult, in terms of our investigation, was this grey area that fell between two Departments, where formerly it was under one, everything was there – anything you needed to know was there. Then we found a big grey area, so it was *very* difficult for the Committee to judge the success or otherwise of the new pre-school regime. Therefore, the only way to be able to do that is to actually measure it by publishing the baseline data, and the last lot which we asked you for, which is in our Report, indicated there was a downturn in I think it was world affairs, which is in –

860 **Mr Moorcroft:** Knowledge and understanding of the world.

865 **Q60. The Caairliagh:** Yes, understanding of the world, and that was down; but then there was a caveat attached to that which suggested, ‘Ah, but numbers are up anyway.’ Nevertheless, it is something we feel that you have to monitor, because previously, despite the fact it was only perhaps half the Isle of Man’s pre-school-age children who had the ability to attend pre-school, the measurement of them going into primary school was very good – the success rate of them blending in, getting on and performing well was *very* good – so that is the area that we would like you to focus on, so that you got an early indication if there is a little red alarm bell.

870 So it is a KPI suggestion, the data.

Mr Moorcroft: Yes, accepted, Madam Chair.

875 **Q61. The Caairliagh:** Okay, and the next one, recommendation 4.

Mr Moorcroft: This was:

880 ‘assess the impact of the 2012 pre-school reforms on the Government’s ability to identify children with special educational needs...’

We are alert to the possibility that the changes to the pre-school system may result in a lack of identification of pupils with special educational needs, though the 19% figure quoted in the Report covers the full spectrum of additional need from children we might call, in our terminology, ‘on a record of concern’ – so that would be a child we would simply be monitoring very lightly, right through to those with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

885 Many of the existing systems, we feel, would continue to address the concerns. Indeed, those pupils who would be seen by health visitors, who would have picked up some of these concerns, would continue to be seen by health visitors. That continues to exist.

890 We have, as the CEO indicated earlier on, a very effective Pre-School Assessment Centre and my understanding, from a conversation I had literally before we arrived today, is that they are seeing something like 165 pupils, which is a significant –

895 **Q62. The Caairliagh:** Can I ask you at this point... We are very pleased you have still got that running, but previously it was the qualified teachers who were delivering the service who would identify early on that there might be a problem with a youngster, and then they would get referred to be assessed. Given that now there is not the requirement for teachers to deliver pre-school, could there not be a problem potentially that those who are taking care of these youngsters are not actually able, because they are not qualified sufficiently, to pick up perhaps a disability in terms of a certain area of learning?

900 **Mr Moorcroft:** We are open to that possibility. We certainly accept that that possibility might exist. However, I think it is really important to get this into perspective. As I said, the 19% figure that we identified earlier on can cover a wide range of additional needs. When children are

905 entering the reception class, many of them are four years old and there can be a 12-month
disparity between the ages of the youngest and the oldest. Twelve months when you are four
makes a huge difference in terms of maturity and development, and it would be really quite
unlikely, even at that age, even in reception, for teachers to identify formally special educational
need.

910 In terms of the most demanding special educational needs, the physical needs or the
profound and multiple learning difficulties, of course they would be identified by teachers; but
on the whole, a child's inability, let's say to count or to write numbers, may be related to their
age, and the current situation is that in a large number of cases formal identification of that
additional need would not actually happen until year 1, which would be after the reception class
anyway.

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Q63. The Caairliagh: Would you say that a qualified teacher in a pre-school would not be able
to formally identify what the need was, other than that there is a need here and there needs to
be assessment... and we have lost that expertise? I know that we have one pre-school in the
Island that is still headed up by a qualified teacher, a very popular facility and great expertise,
920 and they are picking up quite a lot of children very early on, literally within the first term.

Mr Moorcroft: But again, referring back to the day care standards, which are the draft day
care standards of which we have been cognisant, there is an expectation within those standards
of a level of training – and yes, it is not to say that those people would be qualified teachers, that
925 is not the case, but there is an expectation of a level of qualification and a very detailed analysis
of a whole range of factors, including the appropriate person, the buildings, as well as the care
and the learning that would take place, and again the quality assurance of that. There is also a
section in there on the identification of special needs.

930 So I think it is not necessarily the case that these people, who can be very good practitioners,
will not be alert to these needs when they present themselves. The early years curriculum
guidance in general identifies, or is based upon the principle of identifying, individual need.

I think what I am trying to say is yes, we are open to this and we will monitor it; though I
think it is fair to say that our take on it is that it is not... the 19% figure was perhaps covering a
very full range, much of which would be covered already and addressed already.

935

Q64. The Caairliagh: Okay. You said before that the early learning centre where youngsters
are sent for assessment... you gave us a figure of...?

Mr Moorcroft: I think it was 165 children receiving support from PSAC.

940

Q65. The Caairliagh: Okay. How did those children become referred there?

Mr Moorcroft: Typically, that would be through health visitor screening.

945 **The Caairliagh:** Health visitors?

Mr Moorcroft: Yes.

Q66. The Caairliagh: Right. Has that number grown?

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Mr Moorcroft: I think it has grown, but I could not give you the exact numbers; I would have
to go back and check exact numbers from previous years.

955 **Q67. The Caairliagh:** Would you please let us see that, the numbers that you referred... when we had state-run pre-school education and the latest number, because again that is a good indicator of where there is possibly another grey area.

Mr Moorcroft: Yes, of course.

960 **The Caairliagh:** Thank you. If you could let the Clerk have that, we would appreciate that.

Mr Moorcroft: I will do it, indeed.

I am sorry, one final thing to say is we are trialling... Oh, sorry, no, two things – forgive me.

965 Part of the role of the Education Improvement Service itself is to quality assure the work of schools, of course. We have got a very small team and they undertake that role. Integrated through all of the quality indicators that we look at is the notion of inclusion. So whichever aspect we happen to be looking at in a school – if we are looking at learning and teaching, if we are looking at leadership, if we are looking at environment, whichever aspect we are looking at – there is an element in there in terms of inclusion. So the work of the link advisers at the moment

970 would pick up issues around identification of special needs. That is something just for your information, really.

In addition to that, to augment that process, we have embarked upon a scheme called the Inclusion Quality Mark. One school has undertaken the first year of that process and three schools have opted to continue the pilot next year, including one of our secondary schools. That

975 again is looking at the school's capacity to include pupils with additional needs within the framework of the school.

Q68. The Caairliagh: Is that largely due to the fact that the Department had to abandon the nurture groups?

980

Mr Moorcroft: I would not say that. That would not be my estimate at all, no. This is part of the ongoing quality assurance of schools, when in fact the four headteachers to whom I have spoken have been very proactive in seeking to improve their schools and have identified this as a possible mechanism by which they can identify what is good in their schools already and also

985 identify areas for improvement.

The Caairliagh: Do Hon. Members have any questions on this particular one?

Q69. Mr Crowe: Yes. Can I just ask does it include English as a second language? Does your special needs include children who maybe do not have English as their first language? How do you sift that?

990

Mr Moorcroft: It would take a very broad remit in terms of looking at inclusion, so it would look at pupils who have English as an additional language, or bilingual children; it would look at those pupils who are rapid learners and who perform really well; it would look at physical disability; it would look at learning difficulties. It would look at a whole range of additional need.

995

The Caairliagh: Thank you.
Did you have any questions on that?

1000

Mr Speaker: Not on that.

Q70. The Caairliagh: Okay.
I think we have come to the fifth and last recommendation.

1005

Mr Moorcroft: Yes, a very short answer to this. I do not know whether I am pleased or afraid! This one was:

1010 'to design the credit scheme and to allocate sufficient funds, to ensure that no child is denied the opportunity of attending five 2.5 hour sessions per week...'

My understanding is that there was a recent announcement of increased funding in Tynwald for the pre-school credit scheme on 24th June, and I am awaiting imminently an announcement of the details of that; but my understanding is that it is a significant increase in that funding.

1015

Q71. The Caairliagh: So will that be sufficient to offer the opportunity for five half-day sessions a week?

1020 **Mr Moorcroft:** I do not know that, Madam Chair, because the press release is coming from Social Care.

The Minister: I think, to be fair, Madam chair, we are just waiting for the final clarity from Treasury and Social Care to make sure those figures are what we hope they are going to be, but they should be out in the next few days.

1025

Q72. The Speaker: But it follows on – through you, Chair – as to what the optimum level of provision should be. It is not for Treasury or Social Care to guess what that is. Can you confirm that they have consulted with you – on the basis that there is to be additional Child Benefit money available – how much is required for there to be a meaningful improvement?

1030

The Minister: They have indeed, Mr Speaker.

Q73. The Speaker: They have?

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The Minister: Absolutely, yes.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Caairliagh: Good. Thank you for that.

1040

Mr Moorcroft: Thank you.

The Caairliagh: Mr Speaker, I am going to invite you, because I think you have got one or two topics you want to cover.

1045

Q74. The Speaker: Yes, thank you.

I have picked out a couple, really, from the Business Plan 2014-15. One aspect, which is on page 23, is:

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'Keep legislation, policies, procedures, systems and practices under regular review to avoid bureaucracy and ensure efficiency and effectiveness.'

One thing I just wanted to ask you about is the new Education Bill that is being developed. What exactly is it intended to do, and what improvements are there going to be within it?

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Prof. Barr: I am very excited about this. It is not often we get the chance to do a new major piece of education legislation, and we have been in negotiations, Mr Speaker – not negotiations, but consultations – with headteachers, with primary heads and secondary heads, and also with

1060 the teaching unions. We want this legislation to be as good as it can be to close off a number of areas where we think the current legislation is not fit for purpose or needs to be modernised. We have already made some fairly clear commitments to some of those areas and I am happy to summarise one or two thoughts that we have got.

1065 One of the things that was a particular bugbear when I was Principal of Isle of Man College was that anybody could come along as a private provider and set up educational provision on Island. So, for example, somebody might come along and set up a hair and beauty course, and that would be in direct competition with the Isle of Man College – nothing wrong with that, but the fact that that course through a private provider... that we had no powers of inspection, that we had no powers to ensure the quality of the academic work that was being done... It is very much my wish, as Chief Executive, that the Department has the authority to inspect and to quality assure that type of provision, and if necessary shut it down if it is not up to the requisite standards. There have been incidents in the past where we have had private providers offer qualifications that they should not have been offering, and that has let young people down and I think it has also caused some reputational damage to the Island. So we definitely would like to see a more robust approach to how education is delivered in that context.

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1075 We also are aware that we have something like 49 individuals who are being home educated and we would like those who are being home educated... that there is some kind of annual report provided by the individuals who are being home educated about how those individuals are being educated and what kinds of areas of education they are covering, so that we have some kind of mechanism to look at controlling that.

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Q75. The Caairliagh: Can I just ask you for clarification there: in an Answer to a Keys Questions on 1st April this year, the number of those being registered as being home educated was 34, and you have just said 49.

1085 **Prof. Barr:** Yes. We checked that number this morning and my understanding from the latest information that we have is that it is 49.

Q76. The Caairliagh: It is 49, so has it gone up – or did we have the wrong information to start with?

1090 **Prof. Barr:** I could not answer that question.

The Minister: No idea, Madam Chair, but we will go back and check on that. That Answer was from what date, sorry?

1095 **The Caairliagh:** It was 1st April in the House of Keys. It was a Written Answer and it was to a Question that was raised by Mr Thomas to your good self, Minister.

1100 **The Minister:** Yes, I will check that for you, Madam Chairman.

Q77. The Speaker: Is there something wrong with home education in the Island that you have evidence of?

1105 **Prof. Barr:** No. I think that we just feel that we would like some kind of reassurance that young people are getting some kind of appropriate educational provision. Not that we have anything against home education, but I think there is a concern within the Department that we have currently, at this time, no means of monitoring or checking what exactly 'home education' means.

1110 **Q78. The Speaker:** Are there equivalent powers in English legislation?

Prof. Barr: I am not aware of what the current English legislation is on this matter.

1115 **Q79. The Speaker:** The primary Act, as it stands, has a duty on the Department to provide schools, not to provide education. Surely it is up to individual families whether they want to avail themselves of what the state provides or if they choose to have their children educated otherwise, either at home or in other institutions.

1120 **Prof. Barr:** We would not in any way want to inhibit people's choice to have their children educated in any such manner; we just feel that there is an issue in terms of these individuals who are home educated – that at the moment we have no information about what happens in terms of home education. Those individuals sometimes want to subsequently access education provided by the Department, and it is just... It is not a mechanism by which we would wish to stop people from having that choice, Mr Speaker; it is simply an opportunity for us to reassure ourselves that individuals are getting some kind of education and allowing us then, if those
1125 individuals want to access the Department's educational provision, the Government's educational provision, to have some context in which we can place that

Q80. The Speaker: Would that involve families making annual reports to the Department?

1130 **Prof. Barr:** Potentially. Again, you will appreciate that this is at the pre-drafting stage of the Bill, so this is an idea we are just discussing. If you, as somebody who has an interest in this, have some ideas, we would welcome hearing from you in relation to the Education Bill, in terms of your own thoughts and ideas on this. The Department has no particular wish, other than that again we want to consult widely in terms of the kinds of issues –

1135

Q81. The Speaker: And home educators will obviously be a part of that consultation?

Prof. Barr: Absolutely.

1140 I am just giving you a list of initial thoughts that we have in relation to things that we would like to see potentially in any new piece of legislation: greater clarity in relation to out-of-catchment requests.

We would also like to have tighter regulations in relation to private tuition. At the moment, again, we feel that the way in which people operate as private tutors... We have had some unfortunate incidents, in terms of private tuition, which have put young people at risk, and again that is something we would like to see potentially in any new piece of legislation – that there is
1145 some tightening of licensing of private tutors on Island.

We would also like to strengthen the provisions in relation to school inspections. Again, some of the language of the current legislation is fairly general and we would like to have a bit more specificity in terms of school inspections so that we can have a more robust school inspection regime.
1150

And we have, I think, things in relation to special educational needs, issues in relation to making it clear that the Department makes arrangements to assess children's educational needs and just to tighten all of the legislation up in terms of how special educational needs are provided for within the education service within the Island.
1155

Q82. The Speaker: What about giving legal basis to the Protecting Children Board? We understand that at one point the Education Bill was being seen as the vehicle to put that on a proper statutory footing. Have you any information?

1160 **Prof. Barr:** There was a discussion that took place between officers on that matter, and my current understanding is that that is not going to be part of the new education legislation.

Q83. The Speaker: It will be dealt with separately?

1165 **Prof. Barr:** Dealt with separately

Q84. Mr Crowe: Can I just interject at that point? I thought Alice Martin of the Chief Secretary's Office said it *was* in the Bill. Has that subsequently changed?

1170 **Prof. Barr:** Alice Martin has been in negotiations with our legal and administrative officer, John Gill, who has been taking the lead on the pre-work on this particular piece of legislation. My last conversation with Mr Gill was that we were not proceeding with that legislation within the education legislation.

1175 **Q85. Mr Crowe:** But it would be dealt with separately?

Prof. Barr: Dealt with separately.

1180 **Q86. Mr Crowe:** As a separate piece of legislation?

Prof. Barr: I have no further information than that.

The Caairliagh: Okay, thank you. We have already got that information, Mr Crowe. If I can invite Mr Speaker to continue.

1185

Q87. The Speaker: The Bill does seem to be, from what you have said, involving the Department in areas that it, up to now, has not been involved in, in terms of standard setting and the way individual families choose to make education provision for themselves. You have powers under the present Act in respect of independent schools and colleges. What is it you are intending more than what you have already?

1190

Prof. Barr: I am only giving you this as a provisional list at the moment, Mr Speaker. We have not done anything other than start to generate a list of things that people want to consider. I am not saying any of this will be in the new legislation; these are just ideas that we are talking about.

1195

In terms of the specifics in relation to the Department's views on this, I come back to the issue that there is a concern that we have a significant number of children who are home educated, about which we know nothing.

1200 **Q88. The Speaker:** And your interest in them relates to them coming in to access Department services later on, because presumably... Is it any of your business if you know nothing about them otherwise?

1205 **Prof. Barr:** It is very much about those young people: about how do we then benchmark or quantify what they do if they are then accessing education provision on the Isle of Man.

1210 **Q89. The Speaker:** One of the things you referred to was, I think, out-of-catchment decisions. Would that relate as well to appeal procedures and involvement in the Department in making the decision and being the appeal body against the decision – for example, by an individual family who wanted their child placed, for whatever personal reason it might be, in a particular school?

Mr Moorcroft: I think I would reiterate what the CEO has said: that the specifics of this Bill, as far as I am aware, we have not finalised.

1215 In terms of out-of-catchment requests, I think it is important, for some of the reasons we
rehearsed earlier on, that the Department has the capacity to manage its resources and serve
the community best in terms of the resources it has and the users who want to use those
resources. That is why there are times when we might get a glut of people making out-of-
1220 catchment requests for a particular school, and that would overcrowd that school. So I think our
thinking around that is that it is important for us to be able manage the resources we have and
therefore the out-of-catchment requests. In terms of the Bill, I think it is simply a case of spelling
out in a clear and transparent way for the public what our arrangements for that would be.

1225 **Q90. The Speaker:** Okay, thank you.
May I move on to –

The Caairliagh: Yes, please.

1230 **The Speaker:** – another area of the business plan, and it relates to, on page 19:

‘Develop a multi-agency Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy jointly with the Department of Health and
Social Care.’

1235 It talks about:

‘Establish a multi-agency pilot “Team around the School”...’

1240 and it has reported that this ‘has started to take referrals’ and ultimately it is looking for an
evaluation by July – which is not very long – ‘informing the decision about roll out across the
Island.’

When we look at issues like taking referrals, can I just ask what involvement the Data
Protection Supervisor has had up to this point in this pilot multi-agency scheme working and the
handling of information, something pretty fundamental.

1245 **Mr Moorcroft:** The very blunt answer to your question is I do not know what involvement the
Data Protection Supervisor has had, though what I would say is the professionals involved in the
team around the school would all give and receive referrals currently anyway. So they would be
involved in making referrals about children and receiving referrals about children.

1250 **Q91. The Speaker:** I am sure you would agree the Isle of Man is a small place and the
handling of personal and sensitive information can have a disproportionate effect on families if it
is not done properly.

1255 **Mr Moorcroft:** Yes, of course.

Q92. The Speaker: Finger-pointing and so on. Informed consent is the key to this. Can you
confirm that these issues of informed consent by families when information is passed on, with
different people within a multi-agency... that this is actually going to take place?

1260 **Mr Moorcroft:** Sorry, yes, I am with you, Mr Speaker. Of course, yes, I can, and one of the
things perhaps I should have said earlier is that the ‘team around the school’ includes the family.
The family is involved as part of that team. So pupils are identified, as I understand it, and the
parents are invited to come in, or the carers are invited to come in, and involve themselves in
this.

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Q93. The Speaker: Specifically to give explicit consent to information about that family being passed within the team and potentially shared with others?

Mr Moorcroft: I do not know whether there is explicit –

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Q94. The Speaker: Through you, Chair – could you get back to us on that? I think we would be interested – given that this is a pilot that is due to inform a decision about rolling out across the Island as soon as next month – the extent to which data protection issues have been considered.

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The reason I seem to be giving some emphasis to this is that this is a joint strategy with the Department of Health and Social Care and there have been significant shortcomings in the way that Department in the past has engaged with Data Protection – to the extent that there have been huge numbers of over referrals to Social Services.

1280

Can you confirm this looks very much to promoting the worthy intention of early intervention and engagement with families short of formal referral to Social Services – in other words pre-emptive work; but for that to take place, there needs to be very clear understanding by all the people involved that information cannot be passed on without consent?

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Mr Moorcroft: I take your point, Mr Speaker, and it may well be that that system exists as we speak. I just do not know, so I will find that out for you and get back to you.

1290

Q95. The Caairliagh: Okay, well, if I can just come back in. The Minister will be aware, because he was Minister in post at the time, that we took a second report back, dealing with the same subject matter – this was data protection – in terms of the requirement for the Department to consider and bring in regulation for the handling of data. This is to do with the central pupil database that the Department has and the handling of the same, or the requirement by the Department for teachers to submit more than just register numbers, but information about their students for which they did not have the legal authority. We had a bit of an argument on the first report about it and the report was lost, but we did not leave it there, because it was a very serious issue, and we did get agreement from the Data Protection Supervisor, together with the Acting Attorney General, where it was conceded that yes, the Department did need to bring in regulations to regularise this.

1295

Clearly, there has not been sufficient time for you to do that yet, but it has been agreed – Tynwald approved it and the Department agreed to do it. I think, following on from what Mr Speaker said, until you have actually covered that and you are aware of the importance of data protection and you are having regulations to regularise that activity, I would suggest that you perhaps engage with the Data Protection Supervisor whilst you are undertaking this pilot scheme, because otherwise I think you might get into hot water again.

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1305

The Minister: The point is well made, Madam Chair, and just to clarify, I am fairly sure... As Mr Moorcroft has said, we will check, but I am fairly sure that the conversations we had when we were setting the 'teams around the school' prototype up, Sally Brookes and Heather Christian were involved in that and I am fairly sure I can remember saying that Mr McDonald would be involved as well, but we will check on that and come back to the Committee as soon as possible.

1310

Q96. The Caairliagh: If you could double-check and let the Clerk know – yes, please.

The Minister: Absolutely.

1315

Q97. The Speaker: Thank you, and this is a follow-up: it was said as recently as April that these secondary regulations would be brought forward without delay. This was on the question

1320 of registration and the secondary *vires* for registration. One of the things that was brought out in this investigation was just how general the powers of the Department are, in terms of the present Education Act, to make education provision, and you can include within that very much what you like, and the fact that some areas – special educational needs, for example – went into... there exists secondary legislation in great depth to address that, but in other areas, such as the one the Chair referred to, there is non-existent regulation.

1325 So I suppose my next follow-on question is how far advanced is the Department in providing a proper statutory basis for its operations under the primary legislation. We have seen what happens when you do not have a proper statutory basis: it is open to challenge, like the data protection and the provision of information by headteachers to the Department. Secondary legislation will put that beyond doubt.

1330 Has the Department undertaken an exercise to look at other areas of activity to ensure there is a proper statutory basis for what it does and proper statutory gateways with other Departments for what it does – especially the Department of Health and Social Care, with which clearly you are engaging more and more?

1335 **The Minister:** I am not aware that we have done – through the Chair – Mr Speaker, but I am certain... I will check through the legal officer, Mr Gill, that we have done that between him and the Department when we have checked up on that with what we are doing, working with other Departments. Again, we will check on those.

1340 **Q98. The Speaker:** If you could, because I think it is fairly fundamental for the Department, as the Department of Education *and Children*.

1345 I just wanted – through you, Chair – a general comment on the title, because the title was changed in 2010 when there was a Children’s Bill coming along – which was subsequently dropped, of course, for various reasons – extensively consulted upon, and your Department was seen very much as the lead Department on child welfare concerns as well as education, through partnerships with the Department of Social Care admittedly.

From your business plan, I see little evidence of child welfare in that general sense being part of your business plan. Would it be correct to say that it is the Department of Health and Social Care that is now the lead Department on child welfare issues?

1350 **Prof. Barr:** I think it is safe to say that that sits with Children and Families within the Department of Health and Social Care.

1355 **Q99. The Speaker:** Is it time to rename the Department of Education? I think you have now got Arts Council and sports responsibilities: maybe Education and Culture would be a more accurate description of what you do.

1360 **Prof. Barr:** We did have that discussion, Mr Speaker, within the Department, and we did not feel that it sent out the right message to start changing letterheads and signage. The Minister and certainly senior officers did have that discussion. We did think about a Department of Education, Sport and Culture, or Education and Leisure, and there were various configurations we came up with; but for the moment we have stuck with Education and Children. That is a fair summary, I think, of where we are, just primarily for the reason I think there is so much emphasis on cost savings, and people, the staff, are having to do a lot – less and less staff with more and more pressures on them – dealing with the demands of shared services. I certainly felt that changing the name of the Department was not necessarily something that was going to help.

Q100. The Speaker: Child welfare, two or three decades ago, was part of the Department of Education – welfare services for children, and then they were moved.

1370 **Prof. Barr:** I think the other thing, Mr Speaker, it is fair to say is that there have been
discussions in the past about Children's Services coming to the Department of Education and
Children, so it would be somewhat ironic if we changed the name of the Department and then
1375 six months later Children's Services suddenly appeared in the Department of Education and
Children. Certainly there have been discussions in the past. Obviously, Health and Social Care
have now merged. It is a very large Department with a lot of challenging issues, and there have
been discussions in the past with me and with the Minister about possibly Children and Families
moving to Education. So, for the moment, for the reasons I have articulated, that is why we have
chosen not to change the name.

1380 **The Speaker:** Okay, thank you.

Q101. The Caairliagh: Just following on from that, of course the reason for the name change
was following the tragic consequences of the two teenagers and the public inquiry into that and
the area of concern, so it was the aspiration of the Government of the day to include children
1385 into Education and give them the remit to monitor these youngsters.

Nevertheless, I think I agree with you, Prof. Barr, that in fact 'Education and Children' tells
you that it is Education *and Children*, and of course the children are part and parcel of the
education system, so I think I would rather agree that probably the concept has changed but the
name will probably stand good for a little while.

1390 Mr Crowe.

Q102. Mr Crowe: Chair, can I just pick up on a point? Prof. Barr, you have talked about
shared services and the work involved in that now and devolved financial management: how is
that working under the new situation of catering etc going to central procurement?

1395 **Prof. Barr:** It has been a tremendous challenge to the staff who are involved. I think the
Department is very pleased about how people have positively engaged in this process. It has
been very destabilising for those staff, particularly caretakers, cleaners, catering staff and those
in IT.

1400 What I would say is that obviously those, in many ways, are back-office functions for the
Department. We have established an e-mail contact point and have informed all headteachers
to e-mail their concerns to that central collection point. I have tasked a senior officer to monitor
that so that we can pick up any pattern of concerns that may be coming through as shared
services are implemented. So far, we have not had much response to that central collection
1405 point, but it is also a standing item at the monthly meeting with secondary heads and the Isle of
Man College Principal and we discuss it at those monthly meetings. We wait to see how this rolls
out through the summer and the autumn.

I think it is fair to say that it has been very challenging in terms of transferring budgets and
staff to other Departments, and that process is still ongoing. There is still debate between, for
1410 example, Infrastructure and ourselves about where lettings sit, and there are a range of other
operational issues which we are still working our way through, which is the case actually across
all of Government.

My biggest concern, as Chief Executive, is that if we face significant financial challenges going
forward – which is likely – the places we would have most likely made savings, which would have
1415 been in catering and in some of these other areas, we no longer have those functions within our
Department. So, for example, if we were to have the level of pay rises in this financial year next
financial year, we would be looking at redundancies, and those redundancies inevitably would
have to now come from frontline staff in terms of education support or teaching staff. So the
flexibility that the Department once had in terms of making the adjustments, a lot of that is now
1420 sitting with either Infrastructure or Health. So that is going to be a particularly challenging thing
for us in the next financial year.

The Caairliagh: Thank you, Mr Crowe.
Mr Speaker.

1425 **Q103. The Speaker:** Thank you, Chair.

Just really on that question of the amount of leeway you have, given that most of your costs are staff costs, there used to be – I do not know if I have still got the term right – ‘classroom support assistants’, who were off the payroll in this sense that they were not part of the establishment, or the headcount I should say, and were paid for otherwise. I take it that situation changed quite a while ago. Are they now part of the established headcount, classroom assistants?

1430 **Prof. Barr:** Yes, those are a part of the established headcount and their pay is benchmarked to whatever Civil Service pay awards take place. So, when there is a Civil Service pay award, that impacts obviously on the Department in terms of the number of civil servants we employ, but that also impacts then on our ESO numbers.

Q104. The Speaker: So there are no short-term contracts that you can bring to an end?

1440 **Prof. Barr:** No, and this is a legitimate concern for us. Because, obviously, caretakers, cleaners and catering staff having gone to other Departments, the savings that we might have made ourselves through adjustments to catering are now being made by other Departments.

The other thing which we are monitoring very closely is, of course, that other Departments have taken the staff and budgets but that we are not then still left to do some of the work. That is something where again I think there are going to be some interesting discussions as the autumn unfolds.

The Speaker: Yes.

1450 **Q105. The Caairliagh:** This, of course, going on from what Mr Speaker said, surrounds this idea that centralised services are going to be cheaper. I understand on the ground, in the schools, it is a nightmare.

1455 **Prof. Barr:** Certainly at the monthly meetings of secondary heads, Madam Chair, they are reporting that they are having a lot of difficulties in terms of budgets, honouring suppliers, suppliers approaching them when of course they no longer hold the budgets – the budgets are held elsewhere. I did say to headteachers that this would be a bumpy road, that operationalising this would lead to these kinds of issues.

1460 My main concern is obviously that the schools do not suffer excessive disruption, that we are not in breach of health and safety and that our young people are safe and secure in schools. I have said to headteachers to let us know about those issues as they unfold, which is why we have set up that central collection e-mail account for people to send in the issues and problems that they have.

1465 I have also undertaken that both the Director and myself would raise those issues at senior officer level if necessary and if they were sufficiently serious, and I am expecting inevitably that there will be a few cases where things that should have happened – testing of fire alarms or payment of invoices, or whatever else it might be – have not been happening as they should.

1470 We all wish shared services well because there are a lot of savings attached to this, and obviously if it does not work the other great concern for us as a Department is that Government then comes back to us looking for further cuts and further savings. So we are trying as a Department to engage positively with this and to try and make it work as best we can, Madam Chair. It has not been easy on our headteachers and I have thanked them for the work that they have done; and as I say, they have really tried to engage with this in a proactive manner.

1475 **Q106. The Caairliagh:** I know it is a nightmare to operate. I am talking about non-educational staff, perhaps janitors and people like that at ground level, when they have to deal with two or sometimes, including Education, three different Departments in order to get a particular supply for the school. So, an administrative nightmare and bureaucracy gone mad, I would suggest.

1480 Of course, the Minister can always take it up politically and get some political support for perhaps changing the course of direction. I think, really, shared services is still being measured as to how successful it is or not, so perhaps the Minister can take it up.

The Minister: I think, through the Chair, it will take at least a year, if not longer, for this to settle down and for us to get our bearings as to how successful it is going to be.

1485 As Prof. Barr has just said, we already know we are getting issues within the schools, and those people who are involved, the catering staff, their first point of contact is not actually back to Health – they come to the headteachers or to the bursars, and so all of a sudden it is taking a time and causing us issues. But we will try to persevere with it because, again as Prof. Barr has just said, there are significant savings to be had by some Departments through this.

1490 **Q107. The Caairliagh:** Minister, is there a sort of policy drive change going on here, do you think, with the Council of Ministers' idea of centralisation of services for Education to perhaps bring the schools back into the central base, rather than devolved management, which was brought in many years ago by a former Minister for Education, Dr Mann? As Prof. Barr said, in those times, in those years, money was plenty, there was no problem with that, and of course
1495 the schools have done particularly well in managing their own resources. Do you think that perhaps there is a policy direction change here to bring everything back into the centre?

1500 **The Minister:** I honestly do not think so at the moment, Madam Chair – call it a hidden agenda or whatever you will to get round the DFM and bring it back into Departments. I do not think so at the moment, but I think it has certainly been looked at by us. We have looked at it to see what the potentials are there, but at the end of the day the schools are... *[Inaudible]* to the people who deal with it and they are trying to make those savings. They are fully aware that we are watching them and if push comes to shove it could well come to DFM being taken away from them. But I think at the moment they are working with the Department to make those savings.

1505 **Prof. Barr:** I think, Madam Chair, if I can just add, obviously DFM has already been, in a sense, moved in a different direction, because of course the heads no longer have control over caretakers, cleaners and catering staff; and on the curriculum side, if we move to a coherent core of curriculum across the Island, that again is a significant sea change.

1510 I think it is fair to say that there are elements within Government that would be quite keen to see us remove further elements of DFM. It is something, as the Minister has said, that we are keeping very much under review, and there are, as with all these things, pluses and negatives attached.

1515 **Q108. The Caairliagh:** Okay, well, I have one final question, because I think we have pretty much covered everything.

Mr Speaker, do you have anything?

1520 **Q109. The Speaker:** Just, if I may, to end on: you, Prof. Barr, were in charge of the successful restructuring of higher education provision in the Isle of Man from the Business School as part of the HE provision at Isle of Man College. Can you just perhaps give an indication of whether we are making further progress in developing at the College an HE provision on the College site? The Nunnery, presumably, is still going to be vacated for other purposes – we assume, unless you can tell us any different at this stage, and you may not wish to. I am really interested in how
1525 you see higher education and further education consolidating at Greenfield Road.

Prof. Barr: If we just start, Mr Speaker, with higher education, what we have seen this year is a 25% growth in on-Island education – that is clearly related to changes in relation to off-Island fees – and we are anticipating further growth in higher education.

1530 It was reported to me yesterday that Isle of Man College has validated another two full degree programmes and has another three or four HE programmes which are due for validation. We think, as a Department, that HE growth will continue on Island. It has significant economic implications for the Island in the sense that, in terms of cost, typically it costs the Department £6,000 less to provide on-Island degree education than to send somebody off Island. That does not include, of course, the amount of money that those individuals who stay on-Island are then contributing to the VAT pool, and so actually the savings to Government could be in the order of 1535 £10,000 per student individual.

There is also a risk, Mr Speaker, that others may follow the example of Cambridge, Imperial, Cardiff and Warwick and charge the Island at the full overseas rate. The financial liability to the Island is estimated to the Department to be, in that scenario, a minimum of £3 million and a 1540 maximum of £5 million in terms of cost. This is one of the reasons why we have not challenged Cambridge's interpretation of those regulations, because if we were to lose that legal challenge there would be then something set in law that would allow a lot more universities to charge us at that overseas rate.

We, as a Department, are very keen to consolidate higher education provision across the Isle 1545 of Man. One of the issues that we have identified is that there is no strategic HE policy for the Island. We currently have Health with HE arrangements with Manchester Met and with Chester, we currently have Social Care with HE arrangements with Queen's University Belfast, we currently have Isle of Man College with University of Chester, and we currently have Economic Development looking at arrangements with Salford and Manchester. All of those universities charge independent fees, all of them have their own exam boards, their own regulations and therefore their own training requirements. So, in terms of a coherent educational policy, the 1550 Department's view is that all of this needs to be pulled together and integrated.

We are of the opinion that we could very quickly reach the milestone of 1,000 FTE, particularly if we also included all of the level 4 and above provision that is delivered through 1555 OHR, and you could pull the whole lot together into an integrated package.

I have currently got our HE adviser, Geoff Draper, the new Isle of Man College Principal, working on a paper which will indicate the types of savings that could be made and the way in which this could present an integrated HE focus for the Island. This is not about discouraging people from go off Island, but to help the hard-pressed middle to allow their children to still 1560 have access to HE on Island if they cannot afford to go off Island. It is about enhancing choice for those individuals and also for those individuals who sadly, for one reason or another, because they become homesick or just cannot make the adjustment... that they have the option to do higher education.

So we are *very* keen as a Department to progress that as our HE vision across Government. 1565 Obviously, because it is cross-Government, there are people with a range of views and a range of agendas in relation to what might happen in terms of HE going forward, but we think this is actually potentially something which could save the Government between £1 million and £2 million pounds and provide an integrated higher education package, and that is our strategic direction of travel as a Department in relation to HE.

We also think, in terms of FE vocational training, that that is something we want to continue 1570 to develop and I have tasked the College to look at the Scottish Vocational Qualifications, because from time to time we find in England they tend to change the qualification specs every two years, which then costs you money to buy new teaching materials – because they are a business – and how we actually then manage that, and the Scottish vocational system is a little bit different. So we are looking at potential ways in which we might move that forward, and I 1575 have asked Isle of Man College to look at that going forward.

Obviously, we have been working very hard with Economic Development in terms of meeting the needs of the engineering sector. We are working with them in terms of IT and computing, in terms of the skill sets are so needed going forward.

1580 So there is a lot of work, Mr Speaker, that is going on on all of this, and obviously we think this could be potentially a very exciting time for the Isle of Man in terms of moving ourselves forward.

1585 That 1,000 FTE benchmark is incredibly important now, because if we got to somewhere approximating that figure we could actually set up our own university college because, as you will be aware, the threshold of 4,000 FTE has been dropped in England to 1,000, and we do have in Chester a university partner and sponsor who would, although it is not necessarily in their best interests, actually help us along that journey.

1590 **The Speaker:** Very interesting. Thank you, Chair. I think that was worth hearing. Thank you.

The Minister: Madam Chair, can I just point out that those savings that Prof. Barr mentioned are annual savings, not just a one-off – whether it be the £10,000 one or the £1 million to £2 million.

1595 **Q110. The Caairliagh:** But it was per student, wasn't it? Approximately £6,000 per year per student could be saved, rising potentially to £10,000?

The Minister: Yes.

1600 **Q111. Mr Crowe:** Can I just add, Madam Chair, that being a member of Economic Development I am fully aware of the good work being done by the engineering apprentices and IT. DED and Education are working closely on those aspects and I think what I would like to say is I have learnt a lot this afternoon, and thank you for coming, but it is the key point of working with other Departments so Education does not stand alone but it works with all the other
1605 Departments – Health, Social Care, DED and Infrastructure – so there is corporate Government overlaying the whole of this now; and you, as part of that, seem to be doing your utmost to try to fit into a changed environment as far as the economic situation is concerned.

The Caairliagh: Thank you, Mr. Crowe.

1610 We set ourselves a target to try and get as much done as possible. I think we have achieved that and we have reached the stage where we do not, as this moment in time, have any further questions or subject matter for you.

1615 I would like to thank all three gentlemen for attending and I wish you well in making the necessary changes and growing Education to a standard that we will all be proud of, going forward. Thank you very much.

The Minister: Thank you Madam Chair, and thank you to the Committee.

The Committee adjourned at 4.33 p.m.