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There were some ambiguities between the respective roles of different decision making groups during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Comptroller and Auditor General issues latest report

Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG), Lynn Pamment, has today, 6 May 2022 published a report on the ***Governance and Decision Making during the COVID-19 Pandemic***.

The report evaluates the effectiveness of overall governance and decision making processes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lynn Pamment found that at the commencement of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Jersey recognised that the existing emergencies legislation did not provide the best route forward for managing the pandemic. Indeed, plans for replacement legislation were already under consideration.

In addition to the Council of Ministers and Emergencies Council that were already established on a statutory basis, a non-statutory Competent Authorities Ministers Group was established to allow consultation between Ministers before decisions were made. There are however some ambiguities in the respective roles and responsibilities of different political level groups. In particular, there is ambiguity in the roles of:

- the Emergencies Council in an emergency-like situation but where a State of Emergency has not been declared; and
- the Competent Authorities Ministers Group

The C&AG notes that the agendas and minutes of the Competent Authorities Ministers Group are key to demonstrating high quality, transparent decision making. Whilst the C&AG recognised that decisions were necessarily being made at pace, in a number of respects Lynn Pamment found that high quality, transparent decision making cannot be demonstrated.

The C&AG found that there was an absence of systematic mechanisms for prompting declarations of conflicts of interest, assessing their impact and documenting the steps taken to manage those conflicts. In addition, the C&AG found that, although expert advice was often obtained and relevant officers were present at the meetings, advice in some key areas was not routinely presented to decision makers in clearly structured, written reports. This makes it harder to demonstrate that all relevant considerations had been taken into account.

Lynn Pamment said:

“The Government of Jersey moved quickly to refine and establish decision making groups at political and officer level to respond to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was against a background where the need for updating emergencies legislation had been recognised. However, there were some ambiguities about the respective roles of the different groups.

The mechanisms used for identifying, recording and managing potential conflicts of interest at political and officer level need development. In addition, there is an opportunity to standardise the structure and content of reports submitted to political decision making groups to ensure they cover all matters needed for high quality, transparent decision making.”

The report *Governance and Decision Making during the COVID-19 Pandemic* can be found at: <https://www.jerseyauditoffice.je>

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Notes to Editors:

- The Office of Comptroller and Auditor General (‘C&AG’) was established in 2005 and operates under the Comptroller and Auditor General (Jersey) Law 2014
- The remit of the C&AG includes the audit of financial statements, corporate governance, internal control and wider consideration of public funds, often expressed as ‘value for money’
- The 2022 Audit Plan can be found at: www.jerseyauditoffice.je
- Lynn Pamment took up the Office of C&AG on 1 January 2020 for a fixed term of seven years. Following the introduction of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Jersey) Law 2014 the term of office is fixed at seven years and is non-renewable.
- The Office of Comptroller and Auditor General is known as the ‘Jersey Audit Office’.
- Contact details are: de Carteret House, 7 Castle Street, St Helier, Jersey JE2 3BT / T:716800 / E: enquiries@jerseyauditoffice.je

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- Other press releases/ statements may be made on an occasional basis and not necessarily dependent upon the publication of a report. They will be subject to the same embargoes where set
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- The C&AG is prepared, on an occasional basis, to provide articles for publication in the local media, following a specific request and consideration of the relevant topic
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