

CAYMAN ISLANDS

2017/2018 Session of the

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

REPORT

of the

STANDING

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

on the Report of the
Office of the Auditor General on the
Social Assistance Programs
Follow - up on Past PAC Recommendations – July 2017

Laid on the Table of Legislative Assembly on this day of 2018

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REPORT OF THE STANDING PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE ON THE REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS: FOLLOW - UP ON PAST PAC RECOMMENDATIONS – JULY 2017

SUMMARY REPORT

1. REFERENCE

The Standing Public Accounts Committee of the Cayman Islands Legislative Assembly, established under Standing Order 77(1), met to consider the following Report prepared and submitted by the Auditor General:

Social Assistance Programs: Follow - up on Past PAC Recommendations – July 2017

2. DOCUMENT CONSIDERED

In accordance with the provision of Standing Order 77(3), the Committee considered the following Auditor General Report which was referred in the House of the Legislative Assembly:

- Follow - up on Past PAC Recommendations – July 2017

3. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

The following Members of the Legislative Assembly are the present Members of the Standing Public Accounts Committee: –

Mr D Ezzard Miller, MLA – Chairman

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, MLA – Member

Mr. Austin O. Harris, Jr, MLA – Member

Hon. Bernie A. Bush, MLA – Member

Ms. Barbara E. Conolly, MLA – Member

4. MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee held one (1) meeting to consider the Report:

(i) Wednesday, 6th September 2017 *(hearing)*

5. ATTENDANCE OF MEMBERS

The attendance of Members at the meetings is recorded in the Minutes of Proceedings which are attached to and form part of this Report.

6. PERSONS IN ATTENDANCE

In accordance with Standing Order 77(8), the following persons were in attendance at the meeting held with witnesses on **Wednesday, 6th September 2017:**

- Ms. Sue Winspear, Auditor General, Office of the Auditor General
- Ms. Angela Cullen, Director of Performance Audit, Office of the Auditor General
- Hon Kenneth Jefferson, JP, Financial Secretary and Chief Officer, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
- Mr Matthew Tibbetts, Accountant General, Treasury Department, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development

7. WITNESSES CALLED BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

In accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 77(4), the Committee invited public officers and a former Minister of Government to give information and explanation to assist the Committee in the performance of its duties. The following persons appeared before the Committee to give evidence on **Wednesday, 6th September 2017**:

- Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs
- Ms. Felicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS)
- Ms. Tamara Hurlston, the Director, Needs Assessment Unit (NAU)

8. PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE OF THE COMMITTEE (S.O 77(6))

The Committee agreed that in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 77(6), all meetings at which witnesses were invited to provide information should be held in an open forum. This decision was taken to promote openness and accountability in Government.

9. INTRODUCTION AND PAC COMMENTS

9.01 The Audit and Report of the Auditor General was a follow up carried out in the Cayman Islands. The objective of the report was to assess the responses given in the Government Minute of October 2016 to determine whether in the OAG's view, past (OAG and PAC) recommendations had been implemented.

9.02 The Committee re-endorses the twelve recommendations previously made by the Auditor General and the additional two recommendations made by the PAC in 2015 as summarized in Appendix 2 of the Report. The Committee urges the Government to implement the recommendations as a matter of priority.

9.03 The Committee was concerned that KPMG was commissioned to prepare an Outline Business Case that appeared to only consider two options for welfare payments to those in needs 1) keeping the current system in place, or 2) moving to an integrated operation where social service recipients can go to a one-stop-shop for all public assistance programs.

9.04 The Auditor General was concerned about the terms of reference given to KPMG for the outline business case work as it did not address prior audit recommendations. The Auditor General stated that when the Office of the Auditor General's (OAG) audited this area in 2014 and 2015, it recommended government create an overall strategy to determine what were the policy objectives to be achieved by the social assistance programs. The Committee agreed with the OAG's concerns and doubted that terms of reference for the business case provided value for money.

9.05 The Committee recommends that the Government consider the creation of a standard rate payment for welfare recipients, whether they are classed as indigents, seamen, veterans or those receiving temporary assistance.

9.06 The Committee is concerned that the government is integrating systems that are not currently working and there doesn't seem to be a plan to correct the issues that are not working in those units before integration and recommend the systems not be integrated.

9.06 The Committee is also concerned that the chief officer in the ministry had redirected the unit's budget for staff to recruit staff to deal with housing repairs, which exacerbated staff shortages. The Committee recommends that staff shortages are rectified as soon as possible.

9.07 The Committee agrees that the Department of Children and Family Services and the Needs Assessment Unit were failed at the ministry level by the lack of any strategic policy dealing with social welfare.

9.08 The PAC recommends that the Needs Assessment Unit and Department of Children and Family Services remain separate entities whose function must be

coordinated through policy from the ministry including the provisions of adequate resources.

10. GOVERNMENT MINUTE

10.01 The Public Accounts Committee wishes to draw Government's attention to Standing Order 77 sub-order 7 which reads;

"The Government Minute shall be laid on the Table of the House within three months of the laying of the report of the Committee and of the report of the Auditor General to which it relates."

The PAC expects the Government to honour the requirements of this Standing Order.

10.02 The Public Accounts Committee is particular interested in the Government Minute stating with clarity and timelines how the progress on the implementation will be reported to the Legislative Assembly.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Committee is most appreciative of the efforts of the Auditor General and her staff in presenting very fair, comprehensive and informative Report and for the support, assistance and constructive advice given throughout its deliberations.

The Committee also thanks the staff of the Legislative Assembly for the assistance provided.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO THE HOUSE

The Committee agrees that this Report be the Report of the Standing Public Accounts Committee to the House on the following Report of the Office of the Auditor General: *Social Services Assistance Programmes: Follow - up on Past PAC Recommendations – July 2017*

Mr D. Ezzard Miller, MLA – Chairman

Hon. Bernie A. Bush, MLA – Member

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, MLA – Member

Ms. Barbara E. Conolly, MLA – Member

Mr. Austin O. Harris, Jr, MLA – Member

Legislative Assembly of the Cayman Islands

THE STANDING PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES of Meeting with Witnesses
Wednesday, 6th September 2017 10:15 am

Social Service Assistance Programs
Follow - up on Past PAC Recommendations – July 2017

Minutes and verbatim transcript of the meeting of the Standing Public Accounts Committee held in the Chamber of the Legislative Assembly Building, Grand Cayman on Wednesday, 6th September 2017 10:15 am.

Present:

Hon. D Ezzard Miller, MLA – Chairman
Mr. Christopher S Saunders, MLA – Member
Hon. Bernie A Bush, MLA - Member
Mr. Austin O Harris, Jr, MLA – Member
Ms. Barbara E Conolly, MLA - Member

Ms. Manesa Webb, Committee Clerk

Apologies: There were no apologies.

Attendees:

Ms. Sue Winspear - Auditor General, Office of the Auditor General

Ms. Angela Cullen, Director of Performance Audit, Office of the Auditor General

Hon. Kenneth Jefferson, Financial Secretary and Chief Officer – Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

Mr. Matthew Tibbetts, Accountant General: Treasury Department – Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

Witnesses:

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer - Ministry of Community Affairs
Ms. Felicia Robinson, Director - Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS)
Ms. Tamara Hurlston, the Director - Needs Assessment Unit (NAU)

1. Meeting to Order

There being a quorum present (Standing Orders 77(2) refers), the Chairman called the meeting to order at 10:15 am.

2. Welcome

The Chairman gave a brief welcome to the Members and thanked them for attending the Public Accounts Committee ("PAC") hearing. He also welcomed the Auditor General, Ms Angela Cullen, Mr. Kenneth Jefferson, Mr. Matthew Tibbetts, and thanked them for attending the hearing.

The Chairman advised the Committee that they would be dealing with the continuation of the Social Assistance Programs, from the report *Follow - up on Past PAC Recommendations – July 2017.* Mrs. Sue Winspear, the Auditor General, offered opening remarks on the background and current standing of the general report and financial audits. The Chairman then opened the floor to questions from the Members of the Public Accounts Committee.

3. Continuation of the Follow - up on Past PAC Recommendations – July 2017: Social Service Assistance Programs

- Follow - up on Past PAC Recommendations – July 2017

The meeting commenced at 10:15 am and the Chairman invited the witnesses to the Chamber and asked them to state their names and take an oath by holding in their hand the Bible.

The following persons appeared in their named capacity as witness before the Committee for this Report:

- Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer - Ministry of Community Affairs

The Committee continued the meeting with the next witness at 11:00 am. The following persons appeared in their named capacity as witness before the Committee for this Report:

- Ms. Felicia Robinson, Director - Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS)

The Committee continued the meeting with the next witness at 1:30 pm. The following persons appeared in their named capacity as witness before the Committee for this Report:

- Ms. Tamara Hurlston, the Director - Needs Assessment Unit (NAU)

The Chairman thanked the witnesses for attending the meeting of the Standing Public Accounts Committee held in the Chamber of the Legislative Assembly Building.

4. Any Other Business:

There was no other business.

5. Scheduling of Next Meeting

The next meeting was confirmed for:

- September 20th, 2017 at 9:00 am

6. Adjournment

There being no further business, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 4:00 pm .

OFFICIAL VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT
STANDING PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE
THURSDAY
6 SEPTEMBER 2017
10:18 AM

[Meeting with witnesses]

FOLLOW-UP ON PAST PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Verbatim transcript of the Standing Public Accounts Committee meeting held 6 September 2017, at 10:18 am, in the Chamber of the Legislative Assembly Building, George Town, Grand Cayman.

Present: Hon. D. Ezzard Miller, MLA, Chairman
Hon. Bernie A. Bush, MLA, Member
Mr. Austin O. Harris, Jr., MLA, Member
Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, MLA, Member
Ms. Barbara E. Connolly, MLA, Member

In attendance: Ms. Anne Owens, Acting Financial Secretary/Chief Officer, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
Mr. Matthew Tibbetts, Accountant General

Audit Office: Ms. Sue Winspear, Auditor General
Mr. Garnet Harrison. Deputy Auditor General
Ms. Angela Cullen, Director of Performance Audit

Witnesses: Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs
Ms. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit

The Chairman: There is a quorum present and I would like to call the meeting of the Public Accounts Committee to order. And, as members will recall, this meeting is a Special Meeting to deal with the Auditor General's report in regards to Social Services addressing the needs. We postponed the last day because we were promised a copy of the KPMG report with an outline business case by the 30th and unfortunately we still have not been given a copy of that report by the Ministry. So, we will try to find out from the chief officer and others, some of what might be contained in that report and why we have not received it.

I will ask the Clerk to call in Ms. Dorine and whomever she has brought to assist her.

[Short pause]

The Chairman: Good morning Ms. Dorine. Thank you for coming. As you will recall, this is a Special Meeting of the PAC to have dealt with the Outline Business Case (OBC) as produced by the consultant KPMG.

In the meantime, I think, Mr. Austin, you need to put something on record.

Mr. Austin O. Harris, Jr.: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning to all. Certainly, I just want to state, as I did at the first hearing as the Councillor with responsibility for the Ministry of Community Affairs, that I wish to recuse myself from this morning's proceedings and various questions. Although I was not a Member of the Government at the time for which these questions are based, in order to avoid any perceived bias, I wish to recuse myself from today's proceedings. However, prior to leaving the microphone, I want to congratulate the Ministry of community Affairs for their hard work. I know that despite our economic success and, going through our periods of austerity, the demands on Community Affairs continue to grow. I know this because I have seen it myself firsthand in just the first short three months that I have been there.

Despite the limited resources and those growing demands, the Ministry continues to do an admirable job in providing for the needs of the many persons who come through their doors. And whilst the reports of the Auditor General and, of course, the recommendations of this honourable Public Accounts Committee have made some serious recommendations, I also believe that the Ministry have taken those recommendations seriously and much progress has been made and in due course, I am sure even this Committee will

be satisfied with those results. But thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you for those opening remarks, Mr. Austin, and I can assure you that the PAC is not satisfied with the progress that has been made on the various reports, because, just to give you a little history, based on the update that was given on the 16th August 2017, we have a situation where the 2002 Cabinet made a policy position on criteria for poor relief and part of that recommendation was that the Poor Relief Law needs to be reviewed, and here we are 15 years later and the Poor Relief Law has not been amended.

We had the 2013 internal audit report which made some recommendations of which the Committee has not been given any evidence that those have been implemented.

We have the 2015 Auditor General's report and here we are being told that some of these things, only two of those recommendations have been completed as of 16th August 2017. We have 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (counting) in progress. We hope to get budget approval for 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (counting), and we see projected deadlines of 2020 and 2021 for implementation.

Mr. Austin O. Harris, Jr.: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Certainly, as I have stated, many of those concerns relate to events that occurred prior to my arrival in this honourable House and, as a Member of this Government, I take them for what they are. I am simply stating that a great deal of work has gone into addressing the Auditor General's recommendations and the Public Accounts Committee recommendations. Many of those, as you stated in the cover letter provided by the Ministry of Community Affairs, are dependent on budgetary financing and approval in October and I can state unequivocally that going forward, many of your concerns and that of the Auditor General's Office will be addressed in due time. Thank you, sir.

The Chairman: I just happen to think that due time is unacceptable for the people who are out there suffering at the moment. But let us get back to what this meeting is about.

As usual, Ms. Dorine, when you answer the first question for the record, please give identification of who you are and who are the other members here to assist you. And, if either of those answers a question, we would appreciate at the time they are answering, for them to give who they are and what position they occupy.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Thank you sir. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer of the Ministry of Community Affairs. I have with me the Chief Financial Officer, Mr. Joel Burke and the Director of Children and Family Services, Mrs. Filicia Robinson.

The Chairman: I believe Mrs. Filicia Robinson, you are scheduled to come at 11 am?

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Well, I think that Standing Orders if I recall correctly, does not allow you to attend this hearing then, because you are a witness later. And I think the Standing Orders prohibit two witnesses from being heard at the same time.

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: Thank you.

The Chairman: Ms. Whittaker, we were told at the last hearing that we were going to get a copy of the KPMG Outline Business Case by the 30th August and to date we have not received it. Can you explain for the record and to the PAC the reasons why the PAC cannot see the outline business case done by KPMG?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Mr. Chairman, I did email you letting you know that due to the PAC and other committees, that I actually had a delayed annual leave and I made my sincere apologies of not sending it on the 30th but did send it on Friday afternoon . . . my response that is, on Friday afternoon.

For the record in terms of the OBC, it was presented to the Minister responsible for Community Affairs. As per the protocol of having Cabinet papers, my position stops as a chief officer, is to draft Cabinet papers and then pass them on to the relevant Ministers, then, obviously, the relevant Ministers at that time will look at when that goes before Cabinet. So, that is where my role as the chief officer stops. So, in terms of the OBC, once the OBC is approved by Cabinet, then, the Minister responsible for Community Affairs . . . If I can explain how the government OBC and strategic assessments have gone, the protocol that is in place is the same as annual accounts, not that the Government changes the document but as the OBC is completed it goes to the strategic review team—and this is not just with ours but OBCs and strategic assessment that the Government have done— and then they go to Cabinet and Cabinet then reviews those strategic assessments for OBCs. They then give approval for those OBCs and they do their public relation on those. Where we are now is that I have presented the OBC for the Minister because I don't go to Cabinet. I am not a Cabinet member. My role stops when I present the Cabinet paper to the Minister responsible, sir.

The Chairman: In—

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Sorry, Mr. Chairman, through you: I am just looking at the RFP as to the terms of reference to the OBC and it says, for ease of the public: "On behalf of the Cayman Islands Government (CIG) the Ministry of Community Affairs, Youth and Sports, invites potential candidates to submit proposals to develop an outline business case due to Cabinet by the 30th November 2016." [UNVERIFIED QUOTE] I am just curious, Mr. Chairman, and through you, sir, was the OBC completed by the 30th November 2016? And if so, then, why is it going to Cabinet pretty much almost a year later if it was done on time? I am curious.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: For the record, Mr. Chairman, we went out for tender on two separate occasions for this OBC. The first time we went out there were no bids on the document. And then we tweaked the document to ensure, because some of the accounting firms that were willing to bid on this were not sure what the details were. And so, we tweaked it and went back out a second time. Between the months of September and November, without further discussion in the House, I was unable at that point to attend to looking after certain things within the Ministry, so the delays were due to me not being available during that period.

We had to get advice on the contracts and so we actually awarded that contract in January 2017 and the Outline Business Case came in March. During March we put it into SRIU and there were further recommendations that were made by SRIU and we went back to the accounting firm and got those recommendations addressed and we then got final approval. We submitted that back in July to SRIU and we then got final approval from SRIU, like I said in the last meeting, on the 11th August, to say that it was in an acceptable format as an outline business case.

The Chairman: So, the terms of reference supplied to us are not the terms of reference on which the contract to KPMG was selected?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: That is the terms of reference. I did say that between the months of September and November as chief officer, which I would not have had discussions in this House, for I was not available during that period sir.

The Chairman: That part of it is not relevant though. But just so I can follow: The terms of reference that went out did not require proposals to be presented to Cabinet by the 30th November 2016?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: No sir, because due to when the tender documents came back in we weren't, as a departmental tenders did not address that until November and we then got some advice over the Christmas holidays about what the contract should look like, and so we actually awarded that contract sir, in January.

The Chairman: Just to get back to the denial and the authority on which the Ministry is refusing to give the PAC a copy of the report, do you have any statutory authority or specific policy or precedent on which you can rely and of which you could give a copy to the PAC on which you can ground your refusal to give the document to us?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: I have not sought advice but I know that if something is . . . like I said, this OBC was requested through Cabinet to be done and the procedures that they have in place is that OBCs and strategic assessments (because they set up the SRI Unit) must go to Cabinet sir. So, I can seek advice to see what, as a civil servant if I can take documents that Cabinet has not considered and pass them outside of Cabinet. So, I can seek that advice to see if I can pass on documents that are under Cabinet consideration, sir.

The Chairman: One other question on that particular angle: Has the Ministry made a presentation to caucus on the OBC?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: We submitted the paper . . . normally the procedure is . . . but caucus has not met since . . . I was on vacation between the 16th . . . I went on vacation at the end August so they did have caucus, I think, on the 28th but I was actually on annual leave. What the procedure will be is that as soon as caucus is ready to go through the OBC . . . I don't know, there was not one this week, so I am quite sure that the Government with the Cabinet papers, the normal procedure is that they ask us to do a presentation on it. So, as soon as the Cabinet convenes and has that in caucus, the normal procedure is that they will ask us to do a presentation on the OBC, so I am quite sure that is the normal route.

The Chairman: Okay. One other—in the terms of reference it refers to a project definition document. Is there any particular reason why that document was not sent along with the terms of reference, because that seems to be an integral part of the terms of reference because the terms of reference is less than two pages.

It says in the first line: "Terms of reference—OBC should identify and analyse the current issues

raised in the project definition document for this project." [UNVERIFIED QUOTE]

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: That is probably an oversight on my bit, that I did not attach it. That would have been the SRIU document which . . . my apologies, I did not realise that was not attached when I sent it; my sincere apologies. We would have paraphrased the project definition document that was given to us through SRIU into the front page, but so that the—

The Chairman: Just for the general public, can you say what the SRIU is?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Okay. For the general public, government has . . . under the Deputy Governor there is a strategic reform . . . can't remember the full initials. But what they are, what the Government decided was that all the major projects that the Government is undertaking would go through that to do a proper outline, a strategic assessment and an outline business case. So, that Unit was set up, I don't have the specific date, and so, everything that the Government does from major projects, whether it is capital or initiatives like the one that we are working on, they want to make sure that a strategic assessment has been done. After a strategic assessment, an outline business case is done.

The Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Matthew Tibbetts, Accountant General: Mr. Chair, just for the public's benefit, the SRIU is the Strategic Reform Implementation Unit.

The Chairman: Strategic Reform Implementation Unit?

Mr. Matthew Tibbetts, Accountant General: Correct.

The Chairman: A lot of words for . . . wings flapping.

So, this OBC has not reached Cabinet yet so therefore there is not a decision made on what aspects or whether any of the OBC will be accepted by Cabinet?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: I don't know what is Cabinet's final decision but from the indication I have gotten, there are some recommendations around our area that are under the Needs Assessment Unit (NAU). The bigger recommendations, like I said in the last PAC, are around health insurance, around those transfer payments. The recommendations around the health is what I have put in my response to PAC, that those will be 2011 because as reforming health reform, obviously the Government . . . because there is another OBC which I am not sure has actually gotten to that stage; I have not checked recently. So, it was envisaged that our OBC to do with the transfer payment and the OBC of health care would be looked at together.

I don't know what Cabinet . . . I know in our area, we have a lot of support in terms of how and what Needs Assessment does, but in terms of the health care sir, I don't know where the OBC is with the whole reform of the health care. It was envisaged that the transfer payments for health which falls under our OBC and the thing to do with CINICO, there are also projects to do with CINICO and projects to do with health care which are major initiatives, which were supposed to be going alongside ours. I am not sure that those two dovetail the way that it was originally expected that all three OBCs would have been done together. So, that might be the only thing.

I am not saying that is what will happen because I am not a Cabinet member, but I am saying that would create . . . if those other two OBCs with the health are not completed, then that section of the OBC may be something that Cabinet may want the full picture in terms of health care, but we are not the Health Ministry. That is the only thing I see that may take a little longer and that is what I have put in my recommendations, because that requires changes to how health care is being offered, and changes to legislation to do with health as well. That is one of the reasons that we held off on the Poor Relief Law.

We have the regulations ready but we said, to come to the Legislative Assembly to revamp the Poor Relief Law and if we have to do some changes to the Health Insurance Law and ours at the same time, why bring a full piece of legislation to revamp social assistance when we know that the health care transfer payments are going to become part of that? The regulations are ready, we are going to seek Cabinet's approval for those regulations but we are saying for a piece of legislation for a Poor Relief Law, we have that done but I am saying going forward the health insurance piece of these transfer payments which were put into the 2015 audit will require health insurance reforms and I am not here to speak about that sir.

The Chairman: No, you are not going to have any questions on health care. That does raise many red flags because this is new information that none of this is likely to happen now until two other OBCs are completed sometime in the future.

I guess the question is, and maybe I misunderstood you but, how are you going to ask Cabinet to consider regulations for a Poor Relief Law when the Poor Relief Law is not yet passed?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Mr. Chairman, what I am saying is that one of the recommendations of the Auditor General which is outstanding, are the regulations that are ready. We have those prepared. We have discussed them with our former Minister. There was some recommendation about not having those regulations in place and if we don't have regulations and have policies, then the decisions obviously are a little weaker because there were some discussions previously about not having regulations in place for the Poor Relief Law itself. So, the Ministry is trying to tighten up the policies and procedures so that we will have more legal strengthening while we wait on the regulations because we have policies for all of the transfer payments. But, as you are aware sir, if there is a law there should be some regulations in place.

The Chairman: Right. Well, I guess the question is: Are the regulations that the Ministry is proposing now, have to do with the 1997 Poor Relief Law? Or are they regulations that are expected to fit beneath a new Poor Relief Law?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Mr. Chairman, for 2018/19 we have the revamped Poor Relief Law as a legislation to look at, and we will also be taking the regulations we have drafted in line with that. But we are also mindful that we need to have some sort of legal policies in place. So, what we are doing is that we have the draft regulations in place and we have them ready for consideration by our new Minister because our previous Minister would have looked at them prior to having, obviously, the OBC concluded. So, the Ministry will be looking at the whole Law in 2018. But we need to be mindful that we need to tighten our policies and procedures if we do not have the regulations in place sir. So, we are in the process of doing the new Law which will begin on the 2018 but we also need to have a look at all of our policies and procedures and make sure they are legally grounded in the absence of regulations.

The Chairman: Auditor General.

Ms. Sue Winspear, Auditor General: Sorry, Mr. Chairman and through you, and from my clarity it may be relevant than anybody else's.

The Chairman asked originally whether the OBC had been to Cabinet and I am left now not certain whether it has or has not, and if it has not, to the Chairman's point, does that mean all of the update that is given here is still dependent on approval that has not been given?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: In terms of the recommendations there are five and let me go through them. There are four that are around a strategy for social assistance strategy. The OBC would form the basis for a strategy, so when I said that we will begin in 2018, we have funding in the 2018/19 Budget to do the full strategy. Now, once the full strategy is done, recommendations 2, 3 and 4 comes in after the strategy is done. I don't know if that clears it up a bit.

The Chairman: How can you make allocations in the 2018/19 Budget on the implementation of strategies or regulations or legislation that is not in place?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Our 2018-2019 budget has funding in there to do the strategy sir. We have expertise within . . . so just to explain to you and the listening public and the other members of the PAC and the Auditor General: When we do a policy—take for example the Youth Policy and the Gender Policy and we have had culture policies—what the Ministry does is to set up a team of local expertise to do the strategy. So, we will bring together everyone across government that deals with these transfer payments and a committee will be set up. We will then look at the lack of expertise that we do not have around that table and see what technical assistance, whether we get it from outside of government or on the Island, but we need to have a look as to can anyone within that committee spearhead the writing of that strategy. So, that is something we are in the process of doing now in preparation.

So, the funding that we have in the 2018/19 Budget is to get the strategy done and any technical advice that we do not have in-house, when the committee is set up I will know what technical advice we do not have, because when government does a cross-ministerial policy, they actually take all of their technical expertise they have in-house and what we get then is if we do not have it around, we either take one of those staff officers . . . for example, if we find someone in that committee, a government employee who has the expertise that can write a strategy, we then would have to take them off of their fulltime post and put them on this. That is what I am in the process of doing to see who the expertise are in social assistance that we have within government and we then start looking at that strategy.

We have put minimum funding in the 2018/19 Budget in case we require (not that we will need it) any technical assistance to complete the strategy. But from looking at all the government policies that are in place there is always some technical advice that you may not have around the table.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Through you, Mr. Chairman.

I guess I am a bit loss so I am just trying to get my own bearings. What is the major difference between an outline business case and a business case, because I am under the impression that they have two different meanings and I am hearing more business case type information here now as opposed to an outline business case? So, I am just trying . . . maybe my understanding of it is different and so I just want to understand what definition the Government is working with between an outline business case and a business case.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: The outline business case for this particular assignment was that government obviously wants to have a look at social assistance and how that provide that going forward. The outline business case was to give options of what they should do, so it is not like . . . if we were doing a capital project we would have had costing and what the different options were to cost that capital. In this particular outline business case the options would have been—*Do you continue providing the services you do or you don't? So* the outline business case would give the Government whether or not to go for a full business case on this particular project.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you for that answer.

The thing, Mr. Chairman, is that if this business case is to provide options which are pretty much what my understanding is also, then, once the Government gets the outline business case, the Government must then choose an option. What I think is really important right now is that we, at least, the public understand the options that are now presented to the Government, whether it is 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 (counting) or, at least get some commitment from the Government to provide us in terms of what those options are, because once an option has been selected, the next step now is to do a business case with the option selected. My issue is we go out and we spend (if my information is correct) $180,000 for an outline business case which is then to give us an option and once we choose and option, are we now to believe that we are to go out now and spend a couple of hundreds of thousands dollars more for another option that we have chosen, because this is a business case for options?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Through you, Mr. Chairman.

This outline business case gave two options which are to do nothing; what that would look like and what the integrated approach as per the audit would look like. So, once we have looked at that integrated approach and what it would look like, unfortunately by the time we actually got this business case finalised we were already into SBS because one of the recommendations is that we should look at budgets and see how the budgets should come forward to parliament, going forward. So, basically in 2018 we will then . . . some of the missing things to do an integrated approach are with the database. Obviously, it is one thing which we have started to look at, which I said in the last meeting we had here, is that the system was looked at by the Needs Assessment Unit and it can have all of the integrated things that will be added. The reason why there was only a cost that I gave for $5,000 and I think I need to clarify that more, in that would be to pay Computer Services if they have to work overtime.

So, Computer Services did the database that we are using for the Needs Assessment Unit now and so it is not that the database would cost us $5,000 to upgrade; that is in case the persons who are assigned as per Computer Services that have to work overtime and government pays Computer Services fees overall for when they are working in the Ministries as a central payment, but if there is overtime the relevant Ministries are responsible for paying that overtime as that would have not been within their budget.

The Chairman: I just need to understand something. The outline business case gives two options: do nothing or go to the integrated format. Is that correct?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Yes sir, to do nothing or to do the integrated approach.

The Chairman: Okay. So, no consideration was given in the terms of reference to improving on what was being done as opposed to integrating what is currently being done?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Through you, Mr. Chairman.

The Auditor General's report did suggest that we do a strategy to integrate across government as per recommendation No. 1.

The Chairman: Yes, but I really do not care what the Auditor General's report says. The question I am asking of you in the Ministry is: Why would the Ministry put in the terms of reference that the only two options were to do nothing or go to a full integrated system which is going to take years to do? I can tell you that I tried to integrate those systems in 1989 and while there was not a software or hardware problem, there were legal issues which those people who had the silos, used to construct and to block integration. And the only thing I was trying to integrate was individual

information so that the police, education, hospital, social services, all had access to John Doe information.

The question I am asking is: Is the Ministry therefore convinced that the only way to improve the system is to integrate what we have?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Through you, Mr. Chairman.

The OBC we sent out was asking what were the options and the options we got back were to do nothing or to integrate. We have had a look at the actual clientele. This is in terms of the transfer payments, in particular for the seamen and the veterans and the whole issue of insurance for seamen. For example, there is a recommendation—

The Chairman: Well, let's not get into areas that you don't have authority to correct.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Okay.

The Chairman: Let's stick with poor relief and other social assistance because we accept that you do not have the authority to comment or to correct those areas which you do not have responsibility for.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Okay. Through you, Mr. Chairman, I can give an update what I have done this year with the Needs Assessment Unit. As part of my performance agreement I was requested to restructure the Needs Assessment Unit. It took the initial start obviously, because of a number of different issues we did not really get started until January on that project. What we have done is to actually gone in and we were able to put systems in place to clear the backlog of the permanent financial assistance. Originally, we drafted the criteria for the Needs Assessment Unit. We are in the process of tightening those policies and procedures.

We are also getting the policies and procedures completed with how they operate differently. I was able for the indigent medical as what was happening with that, in particular the assessments were backing up. In July and August last year I got the then Minister's approval for all persons who are handicapped and elderly, that, they should be assessed every three years and that has now been looked at. So, the problem of our clients having to go every three and six months who are elderly and handicap, I've put that in place. We have also ensured that any of our indigent medical clients that require immediate health threatening, that that decision is made by the Health Ministry and we deal with the assessment after the fact, because those are life threatening things. And in terms of the permanent financial assistance, we are now looking with that in the seaman's and the reassessment has started because we can now take information that we have on the seaman's file and I have assigned staff members from the Ministry who has that, to upload that into FAST database and so, by the end of the year we will have all of those current permanent financial assistance reassessed.

What I don't want is to put in full time staff for short term projects and so, we have hired two part-time staff. We have hired also a Caymanian social worker full time as well to help with the backlog and the reassessment. I am hoping but not promising because October is right around the corner, but I know by December we should have our clients getting a better experience at the Needs Assessment Unit.

I also took the staffing and by the end of October there will only be five posts vacant. I had put five temporary staffing for housing. When I saw that we did not have any staff in 2015/2016 for housing repairs I requested the Minister to reduce the transfer payment for housing and give me funds for five posts financially for the 18 months to do assessments on the housing repairs and to do project management. So, the only vacancies we have now are three needs assessment persons for house repairs because we can only do 15 to 20 houses in a given year and they have done the assessments, even for next year and the following year. So, to fill those three vacancies at this point until December, I am now looking at what the organisation requires differently.

There are three vacant needs assessment officers' posts which I am in the process of seeing how to better use that. One of the suggestions is that we should hire a social worker that can deal with our mental health patients because we are having a lot of mental health patients going as far as wanting to take out some law suits on us, based on how they are treated and so, we are mindful of that, therefore we are trying to use those three posts to probably bring in someone who can deal with our mental health patients. And because we are having a backlog of our rental assistance being paid, we are going to be employing a needs assessment officer dedicated to making sure that those payments are done along with the finance.

We've looked at the finance structure as well and instead of the compliance officer, we think we need to have someone underneath the finance and admin manager and do a finance administrator. So, those two administrator posts will be advertised shortly and by the end of the year the Needs Assessment Unit will be fully staffed, including those five that are only supposed to be temporary, as those will be filled as well. So, the thirty-three posts that they have which included five that were supposed to have only been temporary for housing, will be fully filled because I made the decision as chief officer. I could have taken those temporary houses and give them to another department come the 2018-2019 Budget but I've left

those in the Needs Assessment budget so that we can actually hire additional persons because the Needs Assessment for the housing repair would have been completed sir, as we can only do 15 to 20 homes and they have done more than those assessments on housing repairs.

The Chairman: Why only 15? Is it because of available funds?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Because of funds sir. Each house can cost . . . we give a maximum of $25,000. We can go over $25,000. We got a few in this current year that are going to go over $25,000. I think one of the houses we are going to have to tender for because it is over $50,000. I think there are two that are over $50.000.

The Chairman: In repairs?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Because one of them is a special needs child of which we are looking at to see whether it is best to put them in a government house already without going into the details of that particular family, is very much in need of having . . . because that has publicly been out there previously and I prefer not to get into that but off the mic, sir, I can talk to you about that.

The Chairman: No, no, no. I don't have any interest in knowing individual things.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: So, I am saying there are some clients sir that are, when we look at it, in dire need of the houses to be repaired based on the special circumstances. We have not made a decision on those but I said if we have to do those, then, that will cut down, but normally, I said 15 to 20 and $25,000 is the maximum that we should be spending on the repairs sir.

The Chairman: I thought we were told in Finance Committee, and I am going on memory here, so I could be wrong, but was there not some $800,000 budgeted for house repairs?

[Inaudible interjection]

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: That's over the two year. So, it is $360[,000] for the year 2018—

The Chairman: No, no, I am talking about this financial period we are in now.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: It was $583,000 sir. Originally, it was high, but, a reminder, I did say that I took the decision to reduce it so that we could have the staff.

The Chairman: I am talking about what we approved in the budget.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: It was $583,000 to date. We have spent $170-something and the rest of the homes should become . . . I think we have one more meeting in two weeks and we should have the rest of those homes repaired with the balance.

The Chairman: But 15 times $25,000 as average is only $375,000. So, we still have $125,000 that we could do another four houses beyond the 15.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: There are some houses already sir, that because as part of the criteria, the Minister can give special consideration to go over $25,000 as long as we do not go to $50,000 which is the threshold for tendering, because we know tendering is $50,000 and above. So, there are some homes that would have been more than $25,000.

The Chairman: Okay. Can we get back to the poor relief regulations because I have before me the 1997 Poor Relief Law and [section] 3 says: **"The Governor in Council, may, from time to time, make regulations embodying the conditions under which relief may be given."** In support of your position that you need regulations to reinforce your policies and procedures, is there any particular reason why the Ministry did not recommend to the former Minister or to the new Minister? It is the same Government and I don't understand the fact that the new Minister has to review something that his Government did in the last term. Why did they not use this provision of the Law to put the regulations in place?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: I don't know how much details I gave but I said we took a while to get the regulations, as I said previously, because of other pressing legislative drafting that the Government was doing. And also, the legislative drafter who was working on the regulations left government and then we got reassigned another draft person and so, we got those regulations and submitted changes in January. We are still awaiting legislative drafting to give us back. . . The then Minister gave approval for the changes that needed to be done based on the feedback we got from the legislative drafting. So, legislative drafting has had our comments back from January. So, we need to chase

back down again to see what other . . . because as you know, what legislative drafting does as other pressing legislation comes up—

The Chairman: Can you think of anything that is more pressing than helping people who are suffering?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: I am saying I will check back with them but as soon as those regulations get back to us we will present those to Cabinet. I will check back again and see how much longer legislative drafting requires, sir.

The Chairman: But again, if my memory serves me correctly, I believe this Poor Relief Law and Regulations that have been budgeted every year since at least 2010, and you are saying that every year you get pushed back because legislative drafting cannot get it done?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Mr. Chairman, the regulations were in 2013/14 budget that we had to have those regulations done. We did have the 2014/15 and like I said, we did not get back those regulations with comments until around 2016. I can't remember when the legislative drafting . . . I don't have that handy sir, but the person who was dealing with that, who had a very heavy work load, left the government and therefore those were not dealt with. But we did not get them back until 2016 (I can't remember the exact date).

The Chairman: The exact dates are not important. I think what is important here for the public to understand is that for multiple years the Government has placed greater priority on other legislation than poor relief legislation.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: I would say that the Legislative Drafting Department, based on the staffing they have, legislation normally takes a long time. So, I know they have quite a workload. And our regulations were—

The Chairman: How many pages are your regulations that you have in hand now?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: I don't know if I brought them but I know the law is the various thing but the regulations are at least . . . I don't have a recollection. They are less—

The Chairman: Fifty pages?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: —less than 20 pages sir.

The Chairman: And you are suggesting to this Committee that Legislative Drafting Department has been so busy since 2013/14 that they could not draft the regulations and get them put into place under the old law to help properly define relief for poor people who need help?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Mr. Chairman, like I said, their workload, I would not have permitted them to conclude all of the legislation that they had on their agenda, and—

The Chairman: I think we need to call the legislative drafting people down here because I need some explanation to this. I mean, this is unbelievable.

All right, we will leave that for now and decide whether we want to call them or not.

Going back to the last day of the hearing and today, you put a lot of reliance and a lot of expectation on the OBC. In your view does the OBC provide a coherent strategy for policy direction for social assistance programmes, and if so, how does the OBC which is an outline business case, does that?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Mr. Chairman, based on working within the social assistance programmes for quite a year; I have been in the Ministry from 1996 and it has only been maybe two elections that I did not have responsibility for the area. So, looking at where we are at when we moved it from DCFS [Department of Children and Family Services] where it was for quite some time, and moving it into the Needs Assessment Unit, we had a review done internally in government which gave recommendations about the staff and the staff training.

I think the OBC having two specialists in the area of social assistance as part of their team cemented that. With me not having the expertise in that area but having someone internally within government saying that when we did the review last August of the department, and then having that, was something cemented that we need to look at the staffing and the types of staff that we have and the training that is required for the staff. So, that cements that we need to take a look at the types of staff that we've put in. I think by restructuring the Needs Assessment Unit and putting in some social workers, that has helped because the Needs Assessment Unit is just to say that those officers do not have a social work degree but the recommendations are that we do—

The Chairman: Is there no one in the Needs Assessment Unit now who has a social work qualification?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: We have one officer who, prior to going to the Needs Assessment, had about two years or three years as a social worker. And we then had another officer who had about two or three years working, not as a social worker but as an assistant social worker. So, in reorganising initially, we did not transfer any seasoned social workers to the Unit. We have now two Caymanians and one has started in August and another to start as a social worker on the 1st October and then we have one on loan who is overseeing the PFA backlog now and just within a month and a half we can see the difference.

The reason that the OBC is recommending that we have some social work training or some social workers within, is that when the clients go before a needs assessment officer, we need someone who understands how to deal, from a social perspective, with the issues that that client has when giving the assistance. A lot of complaints we are having . . . I think from the perspective of having the integrated approach in terms of having the staff trained and having an integrated approach in terms of having the committee across government and an integrated approach in terms of having a standard rate, I think for our end and not the health end, that will go a long way in terms of making sure that we provide the right assistance, the correct dollar value assistance to our persons in need and that they are treated from a staff perspective, sir. So, I think that is cemented in addition to my number of years working in the area, from a policy perspective and from actually looking at the recommendation that was made by someone who was looking at transfer payments within government last year and given their recommendations, I think the OBC has cemented that clearly but gives a way forward; a more detailed way forward.

The Chairman: Okay. But correct me if I am wrong. We had an integrated approach for poor relief where it was all being done under the Social Services Department. The only reason to have taken off the NAU and set it up separately was because that was not working to the person's satisfaction. So, we went ahead and took the NAU and set it off and identified it as, according to answers given to me in Finance Committee over the years, because it was basically going to be a financial assessment and a financial review of whether the person needed this poor relief money or not. And now, we are having difficulties because that unit has not been resourced properly. We were also told in 2015 on this same report that we were going to recruit, I believe, it was eight or nine needs assessment people in order to adequately staff that unit. That has not been done, so it has now been determined that the NAU is not working and we are going to go back to what we had before, where we are going to have Social Services doing the same thing.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Mr. Chairman, I will go from the . . . because I think that the whole idea with the staffing issues needs to be cleared up with the House. We started off originally in 2013/14 trans-date. The recommendation to move the Needs Assessment Unit in the first place came from an efficiency review that was done by civil servants when the Government was looking at how we look at larger spending departments. So, there was recommendation that the social workers were not able to do child protective matters because they were spending all of their time ding needs assessments.

The Chairman: That is not going to apply now to this integrated approach?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Yes. So, in taking the Needs Assessment Unit out, what we did was to transfer what we could at that point when we did in 2013/14 without making the Department of Children and Family Services weaken on the ground because we did not get any additional staff during that financial year. In the following year we got two staff personnel because of the budget constraints and that brought us up to, I think, originally . . . I will look back at the figures. I think they transferred with 16 or 20 . . .

[Short pause]

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: So, in 2014/15 we were up to 20. Right? We only got two officers in 2014/15. And in 2015/16 we were up to 23 so that would have been three staff. So, the only time that we got major staff added to the Needs Assessment would have been in 2016/17 and so, I will give an update as to where we are at. So, we got 11 posts because I just said to you, Mr. Chairman, an update earlier but I will slow it down. So, we got 11 posts approved in the 2016/17 budget. Five of those were specifically for housing repairs and the other 6 were to add to the complement of the Needs Assessment Unit.

The Chairman: Can I just stop there because I need to clarify something. Five of those 11 posts were because a separate unit was set up to assess people as to whether they qualified for housing repairs or not, and we put 5 of those staff members in that unit?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Based on 2015/16, because we were not getting the assessments done quick enough on the housing repairs, the suggestion was that we needed three needs assessment officers, one supervisor. . . no, two needs assessment officers, one su-

pervisor and a project manager and . . . yes, that is five.

The Chairman: To do 15 assessments a year?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Basically what I did, I said in order to make sure that the housing repair thing, we put . . . this is before we got the six, so I threw the five in. When the Government had a look at what they could afford they gave six additional posts which were 3 needs assessment officers, 1 compliance officer and 1 accounts officer. The 3 needs assessment officers are the ones that I redid to make it two social workers and a coordinator. Those people will be in their posts by October.

The compliance officer, I met with our CFO recently. I did say to you that I did not have a job description for that at the last meeting, but when we look at what is happening with the rental assistance on the ground where people are not getting their checks on time, we are suggesting that post becomes a finance administrator, which means that your payments will get processed quicker, because what we are trying to do is to make sure that we have the correct staff. And then there was an EO—

The Chairman: I'm getting confused.

On what basis and what justification was used to get these 11 persons because it seems like you got 11 positions to do a specific thing? In the middle of having gotten those, whether the policy changed in government or the Minister changed or whatever, there seems to have been some redirection of resources in that we took some of those and put them in housing assessments. And now you are taking some of those into managerial positions. Are those the same positions we are talking about?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: No. Okay, let me slow it down. So, five for housing and I will just go through it. Originally, it was recommended that we needed one project manager part-time, one supervisor at the Needs Assessment Unit part-time until December 2017. And the reason I am saying until December is because we do not know whether they will get housing repair money in each budget because it depends on what the Government budget looks like. Right? So we may get [$]100,000, we may get [$]200,000. So, one supervisor and three needs assessment officers.—

The Chairman: Mr. Bernie has a question.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Mr. Chairman, I am very clear on one thing; we approved $750,000 for home repairs and housing. I am 100 per cent sure of that.

The Chairman: In Finance Committee?

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Yes sir.

How many homes have been repaired?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: I did take a look at that but I did not bring it with me. In 2015/16 it was roughly 12 to 15 homes at a cost of [$]172[,000] and I think . . . I will double check that, I should have brought that with me. That is just based on memory looking at what I printed out. And the 2016/17 we have spent to date [$]100 and . . . roughly [$]150[,000] and we have balance of [$]383[,000].

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Mr. Chairman, through you: 2015/16, 12 to 15 homes and what was the average or what was the amount?

The Chairman: One fifty.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: One fifty. And 2016/17 was 12 to 15 . . . and you got $150,000 again?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: I think it was roughly [$]172[,000].

[Inaudible interjection]

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: About [$]172[,000].

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: So, let's get it clear in my head again please. Through you, Mr. Chairman: In 2015/16 we did 12-15 homes?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Correct sir.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: How much did we spend?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: One hundred and seventy-two thousand [dollars].

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: One hundred and seventy-two [thousand dollars].

And in 2016/17, how many homes?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: I have not counted them sir but I know it is roughly $150,000 spent to date with—

The Chairman: Out of the—

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Seven hundred and fifty thousand.

The Chairman: Right.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: I also went on the thing and confirmed that.

The Chairman: I think . . . Mr.—

Mr. Kenneth Jefferson, Financial Secretary/Chief Officer, Ministry of Finance: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just to say that just looking at the Appropriation Law for the 18 months ending December 2017, the amount that I am seeing in the original Appropriation Law for housing repairs is the figure of $556,977, so let's just call it $557,000 for housing assistance allocated to the Ministry of Community Affairs; So, $557,000.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Five fifty-seven.

The Chairman: Out of which we have spent [$]172[,000].

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: and [$]150[,000]. So, that would make it [$]322[,000].

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Oh, okay, yes, I am on track now.

Now, Mr. Chairman, through you again: I am listening to this thing and was getting a little confused like yourself. Am I reading that the NAU and DCFS are being merged again?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: There's no decision made about merging DCFS and the NAU sir. What I have done is due to—

The Chairman: Is that not what is being recommended in the OBC which is going to Cabinet and Cabinet basically has a decision of do nothing or go to integration?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Go to integration but it does not say how the integration occurs, so we are still looking at how that integration occurs. The integration would be including the health portion.

The Chairman: Forget about the health. Certainly, integration in the areas that you are responsible for, are the Department of Children and Family Services, the Housing repairs and the NAU. If it does not include NAU and Housing, there is no integration, you are just sticking with the—

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Yeah.

The Chairman: —Department of Children and Family Services.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: That is something that we are looking at sir in terms of how . . . what I have done as a temporary measure was to use the expertise across what I have within the allocations for approved budget and staff and see how we stabilise the Needs Assessment Unit. So, what I have done is to assign staff from DCFS to assist, because on my performance agreement I needed to restructure to make it function better—

The Chairman: Okay.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: —outside of the OBC. So, what I had done is to make best use of the resources that I have under me as chief officer and move persons around, sir.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Through you, Mr. Chairman, just for my own understanding: Are we to assume now that the Government that pulled the NAU out is now the same Government that went back and asked for an outline business case to put it back together? Was this a Minister's decision or was it like a Ministry's decision. I am trying to understand the genesis of how we got here.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Through you, Mr. Chairman, when we started . . . following the general election in 2013/14 there was a recommendation obviously that was done, as I said, to separate the Needs Assessment. We started it within the DCFS as a pilot project but at that time we also had the social workers. We had brought in the Children's Law and the social workers were not having time to do their cases and so, I made the recommendation to take the Needs Assessment out so that we could deal with the child protection, because at that point we were having lots of issues in terms of not getting child protective matters looked at. It started as a pilot programme so it was always envisaged that the Needs Assessment Unit would run separated from.

There were two things that we could have done. We could have left it underneath DCFS at that time as a pilot programme because we did start it as a pilot programme prior to moving it in October 2013. We moved it because we had someone with strong financial background that could assist with putting the financial pieces in place, but it was a pilot project to see how best to remove it from DCFS so that both

areas did not suffer at that point. So, we moved it out as a second unit and things have improved by having it as a separate unit in terms of the child protective matters. So, it was removed on the recommendation that in order for the Department of DCFS to function at that time, that we were not getting either done; we were not doing social assistance and we were not doing child protection. At that point there were a lot of child protective matters before the court that the social workers were not getting to and so, as chief officer, I did make the recommendation at that time that it needed to be out so that the DCFS could get along with doing its child protective matters and dealing with the elderly at that time. And trying to do it as a pilot meant that the social workers who were in there were actually spending a lot of time more on welfare. So, that is what the review found that they were doing a lot of needs assessment as opposed to attending to child protective matters.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Through you sir: So, based on that and this is where I am a bit loss and trying to understand. Based on all that was happening we went out and the Government made the decision on your recommendation to create a needs assessment unit, and that, I assume was done without a business case or an outline business case or something. And we have gone out now and are looking to basically pay $180,000 for an option as to whether to go back or leave things the way they are. I am a bit loss, Mr. Chairman. I am trying to find the value for the money that we have spent of the public in this regard. And based on those reasons given to create the NAU, I am now trying to understand what has changed for us to consider putting the NAU back to way it was before. So, I mean, I am—

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Through you, Mr. Chairman, I don't know where the confusion is. The outline business case is talking about how we integrate. There is nothing in that outline business case that says that the NAU must go under the Department of Children and Family Services. There are no final decisions as yet.

The Chairman: Can you define "integration" as it is used in the outline business case? What do you envisage "integration" under the outline business case to mean?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: The outline business case talks about an integration of the clients that we serve, and those clients are the seamen and veterans, the persons seeking poor relief, the mentally and the disabled and then we would have your, not permanent clients but your persons who may get on hard times and need to get assistance from government. So, what the integration would be is that in terms right now, for example, we do not know what the figure is for an elderly person, a handicapped person; your permanent clients then. What is the cost of living . . . knowing based on an individual, what is the right figure to give. I think what the integrated approach is saying is that each year we are increasing funding to the seamen, we are increasing funding to the poor relief, we are increasing the amount that we are giving for rental so that people can meet their needs, but what is the true amount that that client requires.

The OBC has recommended a standard rate which is what we are looking at and if that is accepted within the recommendations, then—

The Chairman: The OBC includes a standard rate for all of these agencies?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Correct sir. So we would look at all of the clients and would obviously go out and have . . . like I said last time, different clients have different needs; for example, we may have—

The Chairman: Which is what I don't understand how they are going to have a standard rate when obviously a handicapped person on permanent poor relief or a mentally-ill person on permanent poor relief is going to have an entirely different set of needs to which a standard . . . unless you are going to set it so high that it covers everybody.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: No, what it says is for those special circumstances that would be tacked-on difference. So, we would have a standard rate for everybody.

The Chairman: But isn't that what is being done now?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: No sir.

The Chairman: It is a standard rate now.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Yeah.

The Chairman: Five hundred and fifty dollars—right? And then you would tack-on to other benefits in the case of seamen, in the case of the permanent poor relief, whether they get health insurance, whether they get additional vouchers based on the number of people in the household, for food or electricity? Isn't that what is being done now?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Yes. But just take a specific incident. We may have a person who is receiving seaman's [grant] who does not have insurance but may be getting indigent medical. Because of the income some of these . . . right now our threshold point is a cutoff of $3,000; that is a guestimate for temporary poor relief. Our cutoff point for the seaman's—

The Chairman: Expense or income? Is the $3,000 expense or income?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: We are saying income.

So, basically the seaman's is set at $3,000; the poor relief is set at $2,000 because we have not upped that to the $3,000 in line with the other two. And—

The Chairman: Why?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: —the temporary is $3,000. We don't know if that is what the figure should be and I think we need to know that. For example, someone may have . . . one of those older persons may have a rental. They may be getting rental. When they apply to us and when we check they might be renting their facilities . . . at the point we check they might be getting $3,000 and they do not qualify. Some of those rental accommodations could go away, because most of those older persons, that is what their income is. It is not from pension that they are getting because their pension is very little or non-existence but the income that they put in on those application forms is around the rental accommodation that they are getting.

Even with the seamen, I have one gentleman that I finally made a decision to put him on, is that he has rental and sometimes it can be [$]2,5[00] and now that we have gone to $3,000 he qualifies fully. But he used to bring his application in every three months and it would be coming to say, *My rental is now [$]800 this particular month that I am getting because I have everything rented,* and then he will come back another month and say, *My rental is $1,500 because I had to drop the amount for these,* because a lot of them have these accommodations on to their existing properties. So, those cases, we are denying them (the seamen) for poor relief based on when we go out and do the bank checks at that particular time. It would be good to know what it takes for someone who is an elderly person to live off of and we do not have these fluctuations because we know that they do not have any steady income above that threshold sir.

The Chairman: Is it envisaged in this integration that we are just going to have one type of person who is entitled to relief and we can get rid of all of these unnecessary names like seamen, veteran, indigent, poor relief and we have one criteria and one benefit, whether that is an age plus income invitation or whatever?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: That is the integrated approach they are talking about; is if they are all one category, they are all elderly or handicapped, then they are entitled to the same criteria and benefits.

The Chairman: Getting back to the concept of what the outline business case means by integration. The last time you were here you talked about creating a one door and a one stop window. How are we going to have a one door approach, which I would assume means that all clients are going to come through that door, whether they need financial assistance or they need counselling or they need social work or whatever; if they are not going to be fully integrated and absorbed into each other?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Mr. Chairman, that could be a possibility but obviously that is something the Ministry will have to put forward before government and see if that is something—

The Chairman: So, that decision has not yet been made?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: No sir.

The Chairman: Okay.

How then can we be told in the SPS [Strategic Policy Statement] if none of these decisions have been taken, that that is what is going to happen? And how are you justifying (and maybe the financial people can help with this) putting money in the 2018/2019 Budget to do things that are not yet decided? And why is there not some urgency to get this decision made prior to the budget being finalised?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Mr. Chairman, obviously, we are in discussions with the Minister about the best approach. We are trying to finalise those discussions sir, because this involves staffing issues. But that is a decision sir that we are in the process of seeing what is the best way forward. If that is something that Cabinet considers, if we put it before Cabinet, it is something that I will be able to say at that point sir.

The Chairman: But the budget is being presented on the 13th October. The SPS was presented on the 24th August and the Minister did not see the importance of having this decision made, because this has been in

trend from May with the new Minister and from January with the Minister before that, to get this decision made. On what option are we going to take on the OBC?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Mr. Chairman, in terms of the integrated approach, there would not be a lot of changes in terms of budget because we already have the staffing within the budget. The only thing we have new in the budget, obviously, is if we have to go for a more technical support while we are trying to strengthen that social assistance agency and we have actually made sure that the Needs Assessment Unit staffing structure has the full staff complement to carry out the social assistance sir, in the reform.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Through you, Mr. Chairman, I just want to understand this because I now recognise that this is politics that are at play and I don't want to pull the civil servants into political decisions, so I am trying to understand this OBC itself. Was it a political decision? If that is the case, then we will deal with that differently. Or was this more of a civil service decision to get the OBC done?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Mr. Chairman, like I said, as the chief officer I do the civil servant part, so I will go through that and then I will know where to draw the line on where to go into the political arena.

I basically said during the sitting that the Government had made a decision to have all of their major projects go through the SRIU. They accepted that because the Auditor General had done a thorough review of the social assistance with the audit that there was no need to go back out and waste government funding to go and do a strategic assessment to see how we should revamp social assistance. So, they accepted the Auditor General's report as a strategic assessment, because normally we would do a strategic assessment first and then go on to an OBC. They said there was no need to do a strategic assessment because the Auditor General's report with the recommendations could be used as a strategic assessment.

The OBC is a previous government and the current Government. That is how they are looking at all of their major projects and they go through the SRIU. So, the outline business case was the decision of the Government to see how best to get their policy of social assistance dealt with. So, the OBC would now form a policy decision of Cabinet in terms of how they approach social assistance going forward.

The Chairman: But certainly the Minister is responsible for policy decisions; the final say on policy decisions is that of the Minister. But certainly, once the Minister makes a policy decision, it then becomes the duty of the chief officer and administration to implement that policy. Correct?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Yes sir.

The Chairman: So, previously the Minister made a policy decision based on recommendations from the administration, that having financial assistance in the Department of Children and Family Services was detracting and reducing the ability of the DCFS to deal with the implementation of the Children's Law and to deal with that whole relevant stuff. And he accepted that and made the policy decision to separate. Is that correct?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: You are talking about in 2013/14?

The Chairman: Yes.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Yes sir.

The Chairman: And that is the same Minister who has responsibility now?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Yes sir.

The Chairman: Okay.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: But he was not the Minister until after the elections, because I had a different Minister.

The Chairman: But he led the Government?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Yes sir, but I am saying in terms—

The Chairman: And it is fairly obvious to anybody that whatever they do, gives them credit that it is collective.

So now, the administration has decided that the NAU is now working the way we expected it to work and irrespective of whether that Unit has been properly resourced, because given the evidence we got in 2015 in terms of the staffing and resources that it needs and what it has today, it has not been . . . that is the evidence that has been put before this Committee by yourself. It has not been staffed as the Needs Assessment Unit expected it to be based on the workload for needs assessments for financial assistance.

We had to divert a total of five people to deal with assessments for 15 people for houses per year. And now the administration has recommended that we pay $180,000 to KPMG? Is that the correct figure?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Yes sir.

The Chairman: Okay.

To do an outline business case to bring the Needs Assessment back in some integrated form, whether it is under the Director of DCFS or whether they remain two separate entities but they are integrated in some kind of backroom arrangement, i.e. administrative staff data sharing or whatever, and you are now waiting on the Minister to decide whether he wants to accept that recommendation as a policy or not.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Through you, Mr. Chairman, the outline business case was completed on the 11th August. The final paperwork to the Minister, obviously, was presented on the 20th or 21st August. I am not sure that there were caucus or Cabinet meetings. I was on vacation. I know they had a caucus meeting but I was on vacation during that time, so I am quite sure that the Minister responsible will be looking at the OBC and will bring the Ministry in for presentation at whatever caucus meeting or Cabinet to further explain the best way. So, I am quite sure within the next couple of weeks and like I said, because of people being on vacation and Finance Committee, PAC and all of those other things, since I've presented that paper to the Minister I was on leave. I think the PAC was on and Finance Committee was on. So, I am not sure if there was even . . . I was due to go to a presentation on the 28th but because I had no annual leave due to Public Accounts Committee and Finance Committee, I took the days off. So, in all fairness I was due to go to caucus on the 28th August but I was on annual leave, so I am quite sure that he will be bringing the Ministry and everyone else to have further discussions about social assistance sir.

The Chairman: Okay.

So, at this point in time the Minister himself has not made a decision of whether he is going to accept the outline business case recommendation to go to integration. So, at what point in time is he going to make that decision? And then . . . because he has to make that decision before he invites you to make a presentation to caucus. Or, are you suggesting that he is not going to make that decision independently and is going to wait to find out what caucus thinks about this and then he is going to make a decision as to what recommendation, because if he takes a paper to Cabinet, that Cabinet paper must contain a recommendation to be implemented?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Mr. Chairman, without getting into how Cabinet operates, but the procedure about how this current Cabinet operates and I have not taken advice about how far down I go down with what Cabinet operations are, but this Government has made a decision that all papers go to caucus first to be viewed before they end up at Cabinet. So, without getting any further than that, I said I was due to go to a caucus meeting on the 28th and I don't want to get into any further details than that.

The Chairman: So, you are saying that this Government operates under a policy that all Cabinet papers go to caucus before they go to Cabinet? How do you handle confidentiality? Or, are there not people in caucus who are not members of Cabinet?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Not caucus I should say. What I am saying is that all of the Government Ministers meet and maybe using the word caucus from my end is different. So, if it is a Cabinet paper that is a simple decision, the Minister responsible will take that Cabinet paper. Let's take for example your audited accounts or if—

The Chairman: No, let's just deal with the OBC. Tell us what happens with the OBC.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Yeah, so I am saying for this; this would go to all of the Cabinet Ministers and Councillors. Maybe using caucus is the wrong terminology but this would go to all of the Cabinet Ministers and the Councillors. So, caucus is not the word I should say, it should be whatever the term is for the Ministers and the Councillors.

I was scheduled to present to the Ministers and the Councillors on this area, sir.

The Chairman: So, the budget . . . and maybe the Financial Secretary has the budget then finalised.

What is the date at which your Ministry expects the budget to be finalised in order to have it prepared for presentation to the LA on October 13th?

Mr. Kenneth Jefferson, Financial Secretary/Chief Officer, Ministry of Finance: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, as you said earlier, budget day is envisaged for the 13th October this year and that would be a presentation obviously in the Legislative Assembly for the two financial years, 2018 and 2019. With a budget day of the 13th October we have set an

internal deadline for government agencies, statutory authorities, government-owned companies, et cetera, to have their numbers essentially submitted back to the Ministry of Finance for consolidation and to produce the budget; to have that done by Monday the 11th September. That is going to be from all indications very difficult if not impossible, to meet. Once that process is done, there will be a further review by Ministers of Government to look at the submissions that have been made, and to be, obviously, brutally honest to the Committee, it normally is the case that unfortunately, despite the allocations having been determined in the SPS, that submissions subsequently received to that, exceed those allocations. And so, there is a period of time, unfortunately, again, in which some further reductions have to take place. But internally, we have set Monday 11th September as a date for which the returns should be made to finance. There will be, unfortunately, some slippage there but we are not going to deviate from the 13rh October as a budget day because that has been determined by the Ministers, and so, we will meet as late into the nights as possible to meet that date.

The Chairman: Again, I don't know what to make of this. If I understood you correctly, KPMG basically took three months to do the outline business case; is that correct? They got it in December and delivered it back to you in March?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Correct sir. They delivered it back on the 31st March.

The Chairman: Okay

Do you consider, given the complexity of what we are talking about, that anybody could do a proper job in that timeframe of three months?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: If I can explain to you how we went about the OBC, we actually set up a committee which included all of the ministries that were concerned, that the consultants could meet with on a regular basis. So, for example, the Chief Officer of Health, the Policy Officer for Health to make sure we had someone from the Ministry of Health. We had the Financial Secretary or his representative because he is in charge of CINICO, on the Committee. We had the Director of the Needs Assessment Unit; the Director of the Department of Children and Family Services; the Policy Officers from the Ministry on the Committee. I was on the Committee. And we also included Education because we realised in terms of getting people to work it was important to have them on the table, and so, we also had a representative for the Chief Officer for the Ministry of Education. So, when the consultants (I don't have all of the details) spent . . . they also had access to the Auditor General as well. So, the consultants had committee meetings without the Auditor General. They would have met with the Auditor General as a separate issue, but the committee was about those persons whom I outlined.

Initially, we met with the consultants and [gave] any guidance they needed about database or any information they needed. So, we gave them to go to all of these persons to make sure they collected as much information from those individuals, including the Health Services Authority as well. There were lots of meetings with the Health Services as well to get information. So, what we did was to make sure that the consultants were not out there . . . the reason we went with this particular consultant was because they had two specialist persons that had dealt with welfare reform outside of here. So, we wanted to make sure when we were getting the recommendations that we had someone on their staff that could give us that information. They also had an expertise that they were able to bring on board for advice from a health perspective and so, that was also someone they brought as part of their team.

The team from KPMG was a local team but they had two subject matter areas, one in health and one in social assistance in order that they could get the OBC completed.

The Chairman: You said those people had overseas experiences. Did they have experiences with a number of countries similar to Cayman and did they use any of those a kind of benchmark as to what those countries were doing?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: They have, I think, within the United States but would have had expertise. They would have benchmarked from the OBC some of those countries as well, which are within that as well.

The Chairman: And those countries have the integrated approach in place and it is working to the satisfaction of both government and clients?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: I don't have all of that on hand now, sir, within recollection in terms of the whole OBC and what it entails, but I know they had benchmarked it and I can't remember right now, as I said, those countries, but I was satisfied with the recommendations that they gave in terms of the social assistance side from the Needs Assessment Unit sir.

The Chairman: Can I ask you, Mr. Auditor General, how much time did these consultants spend with you? And, was their discussion with you about the structure and this integrated approach? Or, did it involve any

discussion with your findings and whether we could possibly take corrective action to overcome those findings in the current situation?

Ms. Sue Winspear, Auditor General: Thank you, Chairman.

As the Chief Officer mentioned, she consulted with us. I did want as a point of personal explanation to give some of the comments that we gave at the time. It was a one-off meeting Angela and I had with KPMG and with the Chief Officer and several other officers and then Angela followed up on the first meeting of the steering group. We did at the outset express concerns around the terms of reference as we understood them for the work KPMG was going to undertake. From this morning's hearing, those reservations remain, because our first recommendation in the 2015 audit report was about developing a strategy around the social assistance programmes. So by that, we aren't talking about how government organises itself in its back office to deliver services; we are talking about what the policy is that they are trying to achieve for older people, for unemployed people, for disabled people.

We saw the first step before you getting into the reorganisation and consideration of options, being the development of a strategy; so, a policy position.

Government recently has gotten an older people strategy. It also has gotten the Disabled Law that came in, so there are good-based documents there to work on. But the response to Recommendation 1 says the outline business report delivers the strategy. From today's conversation I seriously doubt that it does do that, and that was the concern we expressed at the time.

The Chairman: You have not been given a copy of the OBC report to see whether your input was—

Ms. Sue Winspear, Auditor General: No, the Ministry . . . although, I guess, with my statutory powers I could insist on seeing a copy because I have access rights. The Ministry has not supplied that to me.

What we said was in the context of what the terms of reference were, that a five/six week period from January to the end of March was insufficient to the strategy work. There could be some useful work done around the existing programmes and the organisation of those, but for me I am not persuaded that coming up with a "do nothing" or an "integrated approach" is addressing the fundamental issue which is how are our people in need in Cayman best served by the social assistance programmes.

The Chairman: Yes, my concern as Chairman of this Committee is that we seemed to have paid $180,000 for secretarial services which were edited by the two overseas consultants who had some individual expertise in two different areas; one of which is really outside the scope of the Ministry that is having this OBC done. Because if I understood correctly, we were told earlier that the Health Ministry is having another OBC done to determine how they are going to handle the part of their Ministry that would be integrated into this section. Is that correct?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Mr. Chairman, the transfer payments for the health recommendations are made in this OBC about the transfer payments for health and how we go forward with the transfer payments for health. My discussions around health is saying that obviously there are some underground changes that are being done with the Ministry of Health in terms of how they approach health and there might not be the need. I am not saying that there will be. One of the huge transfer payments is the whole indigent medical transfer payment. That might not even be a transfer payment based on what reforms that the Health Ministry does in terms of health care.

The Chairman: But does this OBC, as it currently stands, envisages and/or recommends that those transfer payments and the Health Ministry be incorporated and integrated into this system that they are proposing?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Mr. Chairman, if they remain transfer payments in terms of paying for medical purposes, they would be in this unit. But I am saying that amounts may well reduce if the Government makes a decision on how they approach health care differently.

The Chairman: So, the question is: Does the current KPMG OBC that we are talking about, include integrating those health care functions?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Mr. Chairman, yes.

The Chairman: Well, how is that possible if the Health Ministry is doing a separate OBC on how they are going to handle their stuff? Or, is this OBC intended to override whatever that OBC recommends?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Maybe I am not clear but it is my duty to make sure I am clear. The transfer payments for health are the indigent medical, the seaman's and veterans and I think there is a third . . . there are three transfer payments which total $31 million. The OBC recommends that they come underneath one integrated approach. The OBC also shares concern which government and everyone is aware of, the growing amount for persons that we declare indigent. I am

aware that there were discussions about how we ensure that that cost is not continued to increase over the years. So, I am saying that right now we are spending $31 million on health care. Based on reforms . . . and that is what would be transferred into this integrated approach but that amount could well reduce based on how we approach health care overall. So, I am saying the transfer payment, yes, but the amount could go up or it could go down based on how we approach health care reforms, which is separate from the transfer payments, sir.

The Chairman: So, this OBC includes how to handle something that might not exist in the next budget based on reforms over which you or the people who are doing this OBC have no control?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: The OBC is based on the audit which includes the health care of $31 million. When they did the social assistance the health care was included and social assistance as the transfer payment, the $31 million.

The Chairman: So, it came out then from this Committee?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: From the audit sir, it included it.

The Chairman: But I think it is correct in saying that the audit talked about the processes of identifying who were entitled to that care—right?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: So, for example, for those $31 million like I said, that the Needs Assessment is not responsible for, the seaman's and veterans insurance is covered by the CINICO Law. And there are recommendations about what we should be giving the seaman's and veterans, which in the integrated approach it would be looked at when we have . . . that would mean an amendment obviously to the CINICO Law and the reforms for health insurance, but I am saying there may be reforms differently for health insurance that we may not have to go that route. I don't know what those health reforms are.

The Chairman: I accept that; that the OBC includes it in case you have to do it.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: The OBC includes it because the audit included it and the OBC—

The Chairman: Stick a pin.

The audit was a separate thing. Are you saying that the OBC is generated solely on the Auditor General's report of those areas?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Of those areas, because the Auditor General's report was used as a basis for the strategic assessment. So, the OBC would be around the Auditor General's report, sir.

The Chairman: So, the OBC only deals with the problems that exist and gives no cognisance of the good things that are being done by these various entities?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: The OBC has taken into account that, sir. They have actually looked at what is working and what needs to be looked at:

One of the major things coming out is the whole database and how we are collecting from the three different arms of what is in the database of CINICO, for example; what is in the database for the seaman's, for example, in the Ministry, we actually have them put into the accounting system of IRIS. We do not have a separate database for the seaman's within the Ministry, because we put them on, straight into IRIS and we have a spreadsheet as to how we put them on and that is not the best way of dealing with that as well—right? The database with CINICO would have the seaman's and veterans that are on there. The database for the indigent medical, obviously, is paid through the Ministry of Health as well. So, one of the major things that is coming out of that is that we need to have one database, one door and to be able to look at what we are giving out to the same clients.

The Chairman: Okay. So, in this OBC the SPS indicated that due to the changes that this integration could bring about, would offer two things: better service to the client and reduction in cost to the Government. Is there any timeframe in the OBC that lays out what those projections would be and how is it arrived at?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Mr. Chairman, yes, they have actually done that and to show what the reductions could be.

The Chairman: Do you have a copy of the OBC there with you?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: I was travelling with a huge file with everything and so I brought just the things for PAC. I did not bring a copy of the OBC with me today, sir.

The Chairman: Okay. It would be interesting to know how long we have to wait because we already know that we are not going to get very much in terms of implementation in 2018/2019 of this OBC because of the underpinning legislation which would now recommend and basically it will come down in 2021. So, how far beyond that does government have to wait to see a reduction in the cost? And how does the OBC envisage a reduction in cost if the demographics; that is, the older persons—certainly the number of older persons are not going to decrease but instead increase. So, where do the savings come from?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: The savings coming from looking at the standard rate and how you apply the standard rate across, and also looking at how we look at reforming . . . making sure, for example, that persons . . . because it may be cheaper to . . . for example, take the indigent, the amount of money we are paying on indigent, we may be better using that on making sure that everybody has a standard health plan and for those persons who are there rather than having to pay . . . because what happens right now through the indigent medical payment is that when someone gets into a situation like a serious car accident, blows their coverage that they have through the private sector, because it is an emergency and they have to be flown off, for that brief period of time that person has to be declared indigent when it is a life and death situation.

For pre-mature babies, if we look at what is spent through that big amount that comes before the LA for indigent medical and do an analysis of it, it is mostly for people who have blown their insurance that have to be flown off or for pre-mature babies that the funding is spent on, and that is why they can't get that figure correct when they come for budget time. And we can't predict when someone's health insurance coverage does not cover when they get in a major car crash and they have to be flown off and can't be attended to here. So, I think the recommendation around the health is how to look at the health insurance coverage.

The Chairman: I don't want us to complicate the issue with that—right? We will deal with the Minister of Health as soon as possible on that because we do have their accounts that were tabled the week before last and we have to set a meeting date for those accounts before we leave today.

Where are the savings going to come from on poor relief? If you are going to do a standard rate, that standard rate would have to be set at a level that would cover most people and the complications or additional assistance being needed, depending on whether you are a mental patient or a handicap patient, et cetera. Going above that, how is it possible to project savings when the demographic, the numbers of people who are going to seek help are increasing and we know that up until now, and I would suspect for the foreseeable future, certainly within the next 10 years, retirement pensions are not going to give people enough money to live above the poverty line. So, you said that the OBC is projecting savings; do you recall what kind of timeframe that is?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: The OBC projected if we go on to the same current thing that we are doing, what government is going to have to increase these amounts by. So, what the OBC is saying is that the funding we are spending now, let us take the next couple of years to see how we better use that funding because if we look at the staggering projections of what we would spend, on all of those categories it is a huge figure that they would increase if we do not do something about an integrated approach. So, they are not talking about savings, they are talking about savings from the Government not having to increase the budget over the . . . because we are going to have to increase based on the trends we are seeing now.

The Chairman: Right.

So, the driving force behind integration is to reduce the benefits that people get so that we will reduce the amount of money that the Government is spending. I would assume that if we are going to have an integrated approach whereas now we may go to the NAU for financial aid and may have some social issues but those are not paid for or evaluated at that time, but if we go through a single door to a single window, we are going to be evaluated in totality. So, the likelihood of somebody getting less is very remote, unless the genesis of this whole integration is to reduce the benefits provided to people and therefore reduce the budget.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: I don't know if I have said this before, but we have something that is called "temporary poor relief" which is rental. And I think the Public Accounts Committee—

The Chairman: Yes, but that is a small part of your budget.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: What I'm saying is that what the integrated approach is saying is look at the clientele, look at all of the elderly, handicap, and instead of having them going through the door for needs assessment every three or six months, increase that so we would give . . . they are already getting it sir. They are already getting the seaman's which is a permanent one; they are already getting the PFA which is a permanent one which is $1,100 they are getting. With this

standard rate I don't know . . . let's suppose it comes out at $2,000. They may be already getting rental of $800 but they are only getting it on a temporary basis, so what we would do is to carve out from the transfer payments of what we have under, I think, 20-somethiing million under the Needs Assessment Unit. We would know what our clients or handicap or elderly as to what is the standard rate and we would be applying that rate to our clients. So, we know what we will have left in what we call the 'able-bodied person'. So, the Legislative Assembly and Cabinet would be better aware that we have say, $300 thousand to $400 thousand for people who may get in temporary situations.

Right now, the figure we are bringing for rental assistance and food vouchers and stuff, includes the elderly, the handicap and the mentally ill. They have to go through the same process. So, that means that they have to go through the same door every six months like everybody else who are temporary, whereas, if there is a standard rate that we give them and move that out as a standard rate as opposed to having call it temporary, we now know what it takes for a person to live off of. So, at that point we would be able to look at the clients who are able-bodied and make policies around that to say which able-bodied we will be assisting and what timeframe we will be assisting them for. We would liaise with the Ministry for Labour and they will know that, unless there are children involved which we take care of through DCFS assistance. Basically, they are expected to go and find work within a timeframe, and there will be certain criteria about getting that assistance as an able-bodied person.

The Chairman: The question I would ask is: Why are you not doing all of that now? Why is integration necessary to facilitate that? Certainly, you must be doing that now in order to prepare your budget requirements.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: No, all of our . . . it is something I inherited and it is something we have been trying to get a grip on in terms of who the clients are. The staff that I've assigned from DCFS I have asked them to start to do that process and when we have the fulltime staff on board in October, they need to look at separating out . . . I was hoping that for 2018/2019 budget I would have been able to separate out the permanent persons from the temporary persons. But because they are paying those to . . . the rental, for example, is not paid to the individual, it is paid to the landlord. So, what I am asking to do now in this—

The Chairman: Well, it must be paid to the landlord for a particular individual.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Yes. So, what I am doing now is to try to get that set up in their database so that we can run that and know who the permanent persons are. And by the end of December I am supposed to restructure that whole exercise with putting the additional resources from across, including my finance team, and will be getting that done by the end of December making sure so we can separate out . . . I was hoping to get that done before we did the SPS but we were not able to do that separation sir. But before we do the 2021 budget, I am expecting that we take out and we know who those clients are.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Through you, Mr. Chairman, I am curious—was there any public consultation done or were the customers engaged during this process so as to get feedback from them in terms of the effectiveness or the efficiency of the different units?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: The Needs Assessment Unit does not get, but we have recently agreed for them to get where they know who their clients are in terms of when they come in. We are also hoping that by looking at their database and looking at this other system that we recently put in, in terms of how they serve their clients better, that we can have this done. One of the things that we are putting forward and I think the Government through their customer service, we have put forward that the NAU would be one of the units we would look at in terms of making sure that we have the customer service. So, we will be putting questionnaires for our client and that is something that we envisaged that we would put into the 2018/2019 budget to know what the client is feeling.

As part of the OBC, once it crosses Cabinet there are consultation periods with our clients during that time as well. Before we go into the strategy and just to explain to you, there's not a huge amount in the 2018/2019 budget for further implementation. It is about going out looking at our database, looking at getting the strategy; that is what the funding is in there for. We did not put any additional staffing in the unit because we need to know what is required. When we come to ask for funding in the future we would like to know that we have the database and all of those other things and we can say based on this . . . but we want to finish the restructuring first.

The Chairman: In terms of the implementation of the OBC, we are really looking to 2021?

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Yes sir.

The Chairman: Okay.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Okay.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Never mind, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Are there any other questions?

I must tell you that I have some serious concerns that we are integrating systems that are not working and it does not seem to be a plan to correct the things that are not working in those units before we are integrating them, and my concern is that once they are integrated, it is then going to become much more complicated with this one door single window shopping to get those difficulties ironed out, in terms of service to the client.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: Mr. Chairman, I have started the process in terms of looking at the systems at the Needs Assessment Unit. I assigned some social work staff there from January of this year. We have looked at the database through the . . . and I think the director is a witness later so you can feel free to ask her what has been put in place since then and what the systems are looking like. I am, like you sir, I have already come to that conclusion that we cannot integrate unless we know what is not working with the current unit we have and we would want to fix that before we try to move that. And I said that to them too, that if we are going to put this into health we cannot put something that is not functioning properly now and try to merge that in with another system. So, it is that we would take the rest of 2016/2017 to do that and then in 2018/2019 we will spend our time making sure that we have the social systems by the Needs Assessment functioning for the clients, sir. And I thank you for your comment as well.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you.

This is just more something directed to the Chairman.

I joined the civil service, Mr. Chairman, in October 1989 at the Lands and Survey Department and Social Services was located on the second floor in the Tower Building at that time. As a young civil servant we had a lot of time spent seeing the various people coming in and out of the building and some we would get to stop and talk to. So, this is something that at least I can speak of that we have at least 27 years' worth of experience, at least, from then until now.

What really scares me, Mr. Chairman, as a new Member of this Legislative Assembly is that we made a decision to pull the NAU out of whatever the current situation was at the time and we were not sure if we did the right thing. We didn't staff the NAU correctly and we went out and took $180,000 of the peoples' money to pay someone to come and give us an option as to whether to integrate it which would put it back to the way it was or leave it the way it is.

Mr. Chairman, at the start of this meeting I was delayed in taking a call from an Honourable Member of Government, a Minister, who I spoke to late last night trying to get a family housing accommodations because the house that they were staying in was actually foreclosed by the bank and we were trying to see if we could buy them some time in which for this man to move his family.

We have people in this community, Mr. Chairman, who are hurting badly and I really have a fundamental problem seeing that we took $180,000 that could have been used for something else to come back and give us options. Now, options of which we have to go out and consult with the public, but before that, it has to go to the politicians on the Government side to decide what options they are going to go with; whether they are going to put it back the way it was or leave it the way it is. I don't know. But the thing about it, Mr. Chairman, is that in listening to all of this today, a lot of it was confusing to me. I'm being brutally honest. And it frightens me for people in this country who needs help from the Government because this is a basic function of any government. The thing about it is that I listen to people play politics with this kind of stuff and really and truly I really hate it.

Earlier, my colleague, Mr. Austin, was basically talking about considerable progress and I am wondering now after almost two hours of listening and going through this and hearing the issues that have been raised, if he still believes that there has been considerable progress because clearly it looks as if we have not moved anywhere because we are now looking to go back to what we were or we are not sure or whatever. These are the kinds of things, Mr. Chairman, that we cannot play politics with, because at the end of the day I still have a constituent who still needs some place for his family to be next week and the bank is now basically telling them to get out of the house. We still need that and with all of this I still need to be able at the end of the day to call my constituent to say to him something positive at least, that help is on the way. He is having a problem finding accommodation because the minute people hear that government is paying, they don't want to rent to him because government does not pay on time. You know, these are the real problems, Mr. Chairman, and at the end of the day, every Member of this House is to make sure that the people who need help in this country that we can help them. And 2021, 2020, 2019, 2018 is too late. We need something done and done now to help our people who are hurting.

Anyway, Mr. Chairman, I needed to get that off of my chest because this is bothering me.

The Chairman: If there are no other questions, Ms. Whittaker, thank you and your staff for coming. And we live and hope.

Ms. Dorine Whittaker, Chief Officer, Ministry of Community Affairs: I would just like to thank the Committee and say that I am committed to restructuring the Needs Assessment Unit to make sure that it provides the service to the clients. It may seem a little slow from our end but we have made some strides and I am hoping by the end of this year or when I come back before Finance Committee in October that the Members will have a view . . . not a complete changed view but some hope that what the services are that we are providing from our end are actually meeting our clients, because that is my major commitment, that the clients are receiving the service that is issued, sir.

The Chairman: Thank you.

[Recording ended after Chairman said 'thank you'. Did not hear when he called for suspension for lunch]

Proceedings suspended at 12:24 pm

Proceedings resumed at 1:44 pm

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

The Chairman: Let the record show that we have a quorum. We will get started and will invite the Director of the Department of Children and Family Services to the Chamber.

[Pause for witness to enter Chamber]

The Chairman: Good evening, Miss Robinson. As usual, we invite you to identify yourself by name and position when answering the first question, and identify for the records the names of staff members you have with you.

As you are no doubt aware, we are dealing with the recommendations that were made by the Auditor General in 2015, most of which have not been implemented and some of them relate directly to the Department of Children and Family Services, and so, we want to ask a couple of questions.

We have heard a lot of this outline business case that was done by KPMG and you have been party to from the meeting we had a couple of weeks ago. I guess the first question is: Were you a part of the group that was put together to provide KPMG with input on what was going on in the Units?

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: Good afternoon, Filicia Robinson, Director of Children and Family Services. I am accompanied by Paulinda Mendoza-Williams who is the Deputy Director of the Department of Children and Family Services.

Mr. Chair, with respect to the Committee that was put together by the Ministry with the OBC, I was a member of that, representing the DCFS.

The Chairman: Okay.

Do you believe that the outline business case that was produced by KPMG provides a coherent strategy and policy directive or social assistance programmes for which you have responsibility?

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: Mr. Chair, if I can just provide some correction to that, my direct responsibility is for Children and Family Services. The issue of social assistance has much broader parameters and actually involve services that do not necessarily come under the portfolio of the Ministry of Community Affairs, because—

The Chairman: I only want to question you about the areas of social assistance for which you have direct responsibility.

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: Well, that would be the Department of Children and Family Services.

The Chairman: All right.

Do you believe that the outline . . . well, let me ask you in a different way: It is our understanding that the OBC is recommending an integrated approach to the whole gambit of social services, including those offered by Children and Family Services which I assume would include counseling or whatever that embodies, into some kind of integrated unit that does everything that I think the . . . what we were told is that they are setting up one door, one window shop. How is that going to affect . . . or is that in concert with your vision for the Department of Children and Family Services being able to provide the services that you think may be necessary going forward?

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: Mr. Chair, let me just say that it is not my understanding that the OBC is available for discussion, however, I will comment based on my participation of the process, and the recommendation that I am aware of—

The Chairman: Well, let me correct that misconception, because the Public Accounts Committee has the authority to summon any documents that exist in government. I have been very generous in not doing that and trying to get it brought to us—shall I say, in a

more friendly way? And you all cannot come here, and not you directly, but your chief officer cannot come here and every question that she is asked, the answer refers to the OBC, including any questions asked about the Department of Children and Family Services and your department not be included in that. So, feel free to answer any question. And it is not off bounds. They introduced it, not me.

We came here to discuss the Auditor General's report and the inadequate, absolutely inadequate response that we have gotten of that over two years. Your chief officer has introduced this OBC as basically the solution to anything and everything. And what we need to find out from you is if you share that philosophy and if you are confident that integration of children and family services with the other services under one roof with one door and one shop window represents your vision for the Department of Children and Family Services in the Cayman Islands.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Through you, Mr. Chairman: You are the professional. We need to know what your opinion is and if it is going to help our children and their families—simple!

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: Mr. Chair, the OBC address issues particularly around the service provision that is available through the Needs Assessment Unit. The DCFS also provides services to children and families. Our area is a little bit more specialised; it is not in terms of direct service provision in terms of goods or in financial assistance. However, there is a relationship, because in addressing the needs of children who may be vulnerable or families of whom there may be some risk factor, we rely heavily upon the support of the NAU to address those vulnerability issues. Very often they may be associated with issues of housing. It may be issues related to underemployment or unemployment, financial stressors. It may be related to health issues. So, there is a close relationship and we need to work with that particular arm of the services in order to address the complete needs of our clients to the extent that we are able to.

We also have a particular responsibility under the law in terms of reviewing the assessments that are made by applicants who are recommended for indigent medical coverage and we make recommendations to the Minister under the law with respect to those approvals.

The OBC process which reviews the existing services and the issues that were impacted upon quality delivery to our clients, recognise that there were issues. Some of them had to do with a silo approach of different agencies operating within their own systems, having issues with respect to the sharing of information because of the separate budgeting processes which provides for discreet approvals or inability to sometimes capture persons who may cut across so many multiple needs. What was found and what they documented as a result of our input was the fact that sometimes clients were frustrated and their services were not met in a timely manner or in an efficient way and sometimes the resources were not best utilised because of that approach. To the extent that the OBC makes a recommendation then, for not an integration of the agencies in one, but the recommendations specifically from our discussions, is for an integrated case management approach.

That approach says that we treat the clients' needs from the perspective of what the clients need as opposed to from a programmatic point of view, where rather than to say, *You cannot be serviced here, you need to go there,* the approach says, *I am going to treat you as an entire human being with health needs, social needs, physical needs and all of the other pieces that may come with that. And we are going to do a complete assessment and seek to connect you into the services that can address your needs.* And that is the concept of the 'one-stop'.

It is about 'some one-person' as a case manager taking responsibility for meeting the complete needs of the clients in connecting them, whether they need employment services or whether it is the health services follow-up or whether it is mental health services or whether it is assistance for daycare provision for having their children enrolled in school for after-school services, for counselling services, but taking that responsibility and ownership to reduce the frustration, and also to ensure that it is a timely response to those needs. To the extent that that is the recommendation, professionally I support that approach.

The Chairman: We were given evidence this morning that the reason the Needs Assessment Unit was created and separated from the DCFS was that the DCFS was not able to do its job under the Children Law because you were, at that time, treating the whole person. So, what was happening was that you were spending a lot of time dealing with financial assessments and dealing with that side of the unit as opposed to dealing with the needs of children and families. Is that correct?

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: I am happy to respond, Mr. Chair.

Prior to the separation of the Needs Assessment Unit from the DCFS—and I need to comment on the systems approach that was taken—we would have followed what we call in our profession a generic approach, meaning that the workers did not have specialized areas of functions. So, as a generic social worker they dealt with all types of cases and our numbers will confirm if you look at the numbers of clients who visit the NAU and the number of cases of child

abuse, report matters, vulnerable families, that the applications (and I think this is also a global finding) for welfare or social assistance services usually are higher than the number of reports you may get per month or per year of abuse and neglect.

The Children Law imposed new obligations upon the department and social workers found it difficult to meet that mandate which is highly scrutinised and supervised by the court, and rightly so, they found it difficult to meet that new mandate alongside the other administrative tasks that were required to facilitate the speedy processing of welfare applications, and that really was part of the rationale for the separation. When that separation occurred, what happened then is that our social workers moved from being generic social workers dealing with all matters, to focusing specifically on child protection matters at DCFS and the NAU was assigned the responsibility for focusing on applications for welfare or social assistance. Unfortunately, that process emerged into an approach where it was framed as simply financial assessments and the element of looking at the social care and the other needs of the client, somewhere got lost.

The Chairman: So, your preference would be to continue to do what you are doing now, i.e. use the specialist approach as related to the services that the Children Law requires you to perform?

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: In terms an integrated approach, Mr. Chairman, I believe it is important for us keep the gains that are being established in terms of doing a more intensive approach to protecting our children. That is clearly required and we cannot regress.

With respect to the issue of social assistance, there are some concerns which we are aware of in this House in terms of the responsiveness and the issues that clients face in terms of being able to deliver those services in a timely manner. And the clients have also raised other concerns.

The Chairman: Right.

At the meeting we had a couple of weeks ago, we were told from evidence given, that NAU was never resourced (and we were told that again this morning) because there were 11 positions created for the NAU but they never got put in place because we took 5 and put into some housing thing that had to deal with 15 people per year or 15 houses (I don't know how many people were in them), but they were only allowed to deal with 15 houses per year based on the financial allocation that they had—right? I won't ask you to comment because we have the Director of the NAU and she will have the opportunity to defend herself when she comes. But I certainly got the impression from evidence given to us a couple of weeks ago, and also in 2015, but more so in this recent response to the lack of implementation to the recommendations, that the integration which was being recommended by the OBC, was that NAU was going to be brought back together with the Department of Children and Family Services and basically because you had this specialised social workers in that area, they were going to provide supervision of the NAU from a social services point of view. Is that incorrect in what the OBC recommends?

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: Mr. Chairman, I am not aware that the OBC provides that recommendation. The recommendation specifically speaks to an integrated case management approach, not an integration of NAU and DCFS. That is not my understanding of the recommendation within the OBC.

The Chairman: And being a part of the OBC, how did the consultants in consultation with the committee of which you are a member, believe that integration would take place?

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: The consultants and the members of the committee, Mr. Chairman, considered several elements that needed to be addressed. One of the points of integration was the issue of data in sharing data access; how do our various agencies get the information on the clients in a way that reduces the time, the waiting period, but also eliminates some of the frustration that clients have being sent from one place to the next to give their same story over and over and await decisions. So, the integration speaks to the issue of how that data can be available to the various social partners.

The other aspect that it does speak to for consideration is having a single window access at the front. So, the data is the back side of it and the single window is at the front. And it did speak to giving consideration to how to have a comprehensive assessment of the client from the outset so that if they need health services, housing services, permanent financial assistance and all of the other services, that all of that is assessed at the same time and we are able to give them a decision rather than them coming back several times piece meal, piece meal, to address it.

The Chairman: Okay. So, your view of integration is that the client will come through the single door, will be dealt with as to what you referred to earlier, generic social workers, who will determine what their needs are and they would then be directed to the agency that best suits their needs or the multiple agencies? Or, are these people at that door expected to be capable of deciding and have the authority to decide

what services the person needs and to provide the services at that point?

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: The view at this point is that when a client presents for services, the individual who is assessing that client, ideally should have the capacity and the skills to be able to do a comprehensive assessment to be able to decide or determine whether or not, *Yes, this client perhaps does have some mental health issues and therefore we need to connect them with this knowledge in terms of what is available.*

If we see that this client also has some level of disability because of either age or some physical disability, it is about how we connect them to services or anticipate that they may need services based upon understanding of where that condition may lead to; and that that worker is able to, based upon the conversation and the interviewing techniques used with that client, make some determination as to whether there is some indication, perhaps some level of depression or something where this guy needs to be connected in some counselling or mental health services.

whether or not they are able to share, based upon their conversation, about what is happening with their children within their household, that perhaps this is a client who has some level of exposure to domestic violence and therefore we need to connect them with this particular service, and in the interim, have a conversation with them as to what their options might be if they have to leave that household; connect them with who can help them with their children and so on.

So yes, there is a range of skills that we believe if we are going to be addressing our clients' needs adequately, those persons who are serving them need to be able to conduct that assessment in a way that addresses all of those needs rather than a tick box exercise of do I make the requirements of financial assistance.

The Chairman: But is not that getting back to what we had when you were being overrun by financial assessments? And is not that a risk of going back to that system?

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: We are not saying to go back to generic social workers; we are saying go back to dedicated social workers to particular areas, which is what we now have.

The Chairman: Right.

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: But the NAU does not have. The NAU has any Needs Assessment Officers and they do not have social workers.

The Chairman: But was it not part of the reason to separate NAU from social workers because there is always a risk of social workers doing financial assessments and getting caught up in their professionals, other than all the myriad of things that you just mentioned that the person need?

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: Mr. Chair, the financial assessment does cover a lot of administrative tasks and that is the area that I think they sought to address, all of the paperwork and the waiting around for the bank checks and sending out that sort of detail which is more of an administrative task. But what we have is the Needs Assessment officers doing that administrative work but also attempting to do assessments and what we are saying is that a more comprehensive assessment is required which also requires a more specialised skill.

The Chairman: Would it not be better, and I am just asking, to upskill the Needs Assessment officers to them recognising in a very superficial way, of course, because they would not have the detailed training, that the person needs to be referred to your department? And would not it be a check and balance if they recommended to a client that they need to go and visit the DCFS but they are going to give them this financial assistance now, but when they come back next week Monday they are not going to get this financial assistance unless they have in fact gone and can prove that they did go to the DCFS for that detailed assessment of what your true needs are?

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: Mr. Chair, what I think you are referring to, and it is in support of what we are saying, is that it requires not just a financial assessment but a case management process and that is really a social worker area.

The Chairman: I agree. But how does the OBC address case management in an integrated environment? Who is going to be responsible for the case management?

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: I think the Ministry sir—

The Chairman: The Ministry?

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: —needs to make a decision—

The Chairman: Oh!

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: —with respect to . . .

The Chairman: So, none of those decisions have been made? So, we are talking hypothetical in terms then? Because if those basic decisions have not been made and were not identified during the consultative process with KPMG, when are those decisions going to be made before you make a recommendation to do something? We were told this morning that the paper is ready to go to Cabinet to accept this integrated form of social assistance.

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: Mr. Chair, may I please continue with the answer that I paused on because I saw responses coming from the floor?

The Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: The Ministry has to make a decision as to when that case management approach is going to be integrated. There were or there are some other outstanding matters that were prioritised to be addressed, particularly the issue of the backlog of Permanent Financial Assistance applications. Whilst DCFS has lent the NAU a social worker to go into assist in that process—

The Chairman: Forgive me ma'am. But we have six positions for the NAU approved in the 2016/17 budget.

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: Pending the hiring of the social workers.

The Chairman: But this was available from July 2016 and you are telling me that in August and September 2017, three months before the end of the financial year, we have not yet recruited the 6 persons out of the 11 that were available to the NAU and you are lending social workers over to the NAU to assist them with financial assistance? Are you overstaffed?

I am not factitious but . . .

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: Mr. Chair, the DCFS provided assistance of a social worker because the PFA application situation had not been resolved for some time. We offered the assistance to support those clients who had been waiting for a substantial period to get that service for that to be facilitated. I am not able to speak to the delays in the recruitment. I can say, however, that the recruitment process for the social work staff has been completed and, as far as I am aware, those staff members should be in place by the 1st October.

To the questions of whether or not DCFS is overstaffed, we are certainly not overstaffed. Our caseloads under our contracts, our social workers should have no more than 27 cases. We have exceeded that number by far, which is not good in terms of what the standards are in terms of adequate case caseload management.

The Chairman: So, what is the risk of . . . how many officers have you lent to the NAU?

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: We have provided support through one of our social workers.

The Chairman: One, just one?

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: One social worker. We continue to provide support as needed through our Community Development Officers if assistance is needed in carrying out investigations regarding older persons; if assistance is needed in working with persons who have got mental health issues, we provide support in dealing with them. There are circumstances where we are called to deal with clients who present particular challenges. Because we have got the social work skills within our agency, then, we provide the support.

The Chairman: So, would you describe the relationship between NAU and DCFS as effective or lacking in that the NAU is not asking you for enough support from a social worker point of view?

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: Mr. Chair, I would want to perhaps frame it differently to say that I believe that a substantial amount of social work intervention is needed to support the clients of the NAU.

As to whether or not we are able to give more, our children who are our primary focus for caseloads, they also require more and we are attempting to address that, so we keep them safe and we address their issues. But no, we do not have adequate resources but we are attempting to do the best that we can with what we've got.

The Chairman: Anyone have any questions?

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I would also like to thank Mrs. Robinson for coming here today.

Mr. Chairman, through you sir, I just want to refresh, and I am not sure if you saw the Auditor Gen-

eral's report but I just want to put things into context so people can understand why we are here today.

On reading recommendation 1 of the Auditor General's report in regards to Government Programmes— "Supporting Those in Need", I want to put this here in order that everyone is clear. The recommendation was: **"The Government should develop a coordinated social assistance strategy, including clear priorities and its specification of desired results to provide overall the erection for planning and delivering social assistance and monitoring the results achieved."** That was the recommendation.

The Government's response in October 2016 was**: "The Government accepts the recommendation. In order to implement the recommendation, a formal approval from Cabinet is required."** It goes on to say: **"As of August 2016, this recommendation is in the scope of the OBC."** Where I get a bit fuzzy, Mr. Chairman, and I must make a confession, that, first of all I do have, as a matter of record—I am just going to put it out there—a document that was prepared in March 2011 - "Cayman Islands Government Phase 2 Review of Public Services— Department of Children and Family Services." It has some very good recommendations and everything else inside of it.

I also have, Mr. Chairman, as a matter of confession, a draft copy of the OBC and I want to read one thing that really just kind of jumps out at me in the draft. It says: "This OBC has been prepared with consideration given . . . sorry. It says on page . . . that is all right, the page is irrelevant. It says: "During the kickoff stages of the project we were informed that it was approved by Cabinet for the OAG's report to provide a strategic context for the engagement. The OAG report did not highlight specific options for consideration." [UNVERIFIED QUOTE]

The part, Mr. Chairman, which I want to highlight here, is where we are required by this body to review the work of the Auditor General. The Auditor General went in, made a recommendation saying that we need clear priorities and an overall direction for planning. That was the recommendation. To go out now and pay $180,000 for someone to come back and say that we were going to basically use the OAG as context, it is like we have created a loop for $180,000. And I really feel bad for people at the departmental level to be caught up into clearly a web that is done at a ministerial level and then you guys are basically stuck here to deal with it.

The truth in fact, of what is clear, Mr. Chairman, is that there is no clear strategic direction from the Ministry in this regard, so how can we realistically expect the department to implement something when there is no clear planning nor direction at the ministerial level? And what it is that we are stuck with now is that we are now trying to figure out what we can do to make something work when in fact this has to be done at the ministerial level and the departments are clearly affected. So, we went through two hours of responses that I am still confused with many of the answers, and now we have the civil servants here from the departments and I think Ms. Tamara is up next and I really have to ask the question: What exactly are we to expect from the departments when it is clear that the problem is of the Minister and at the ministerial level?

To be fair, I am going to be honest with you dear. I had all of this information a long time because unlike many people I will not be sitting and have part of my, I guess, political future decided by people who can't give me information. If there is one thing I have learnt to do over the years, I've lived good with people so I can get any information that I want and I can guarantee any civil servant that there is no document floating around in government that Chris can't his hands on; I can tell anybody that. So, it matters not to me if it is a Cabinet paper or whatever, someone will have to put it there and I will get a copy from whoever put it there or someone who knows who have it.

Mr. Chairman, I just want to say for the record, I have sat down having all of this information, listening to all of these answers and the truth of the fact is, this is really and truly a waste of my time and a waste of the public's time because we are going around in circles, and I am going to tell you right now, it is going to come back to one thing, the people who need help are not getting it and I don't know what it is that we are going to achieve here because we already know that the people are not getting help; we already know there is no strategy and what I would like for us to do is to spend the remainder of our time today to see what it is that we can do to get help for people. What I don't want is for the people who need help to be sitting and struggling and suffering while people inside there are building fiefdoms, kingdoms and playing politics with people who need help.

As I said this morning, I have a constituent right now who has no place to stay because of eviction and all of this, really and truly, I would like to know at the end of this where my constituent and his family will be come next week because I need something for them. The rest of this, to quote my good friend from Savannah: "It is pussyfooting around."

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Austin O. Harris, Jr.: Mr. Chairman, just a moment.

I know I recused myself from these discussions but I want to raise a point of order from a procedural standpoint. The Member, just moments ago quoted from a document that is not yet a public document. These proceedings are being broadcasted to the public and I question whether or not it is appropriate at this time despite the fact that the Member also

openly bragged to being in possession of a document that is not a public document that did not come from the Government themselves. It is a question of those issues being raised procedurally in these discussions that I agree are very probing and necessary. Mr. Chairman, and I wish some clarification on that point.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, when you are finished with Mr. Harris, through you I would like to ask—

The Chairman: Let me just respond to him.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Okay.

The Chairman: I think that the problem we have, Mr. Harris, is that 1) the Government has refused to give us a document which we believe we are entitled to have. We have not gone the route of summoning and calling people to the Bar and summoning a meeting of the Legislative Assembly to have a vote as to what disciplinary procedures we can follow. We prefer not to go down that route.

The chief officer has quoted extensively from the document for the last two meetings that we have had here. The fact that somebody else happens to have a document . . . and I am not so sure that once the document was presented by the consultants to the Government, that it is not FOI'-able and therefore is a public document. So, I don't think I have the authority to rule the Member out of order as you requested, because he happened to have a copy of the document and he referred to only one section and he tied that back to the Auditor General's report which is before us.

Mr. Austin O. Harris, Jr.: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate that. And to your point, all of the issues that you raised may very well be active and live and, of course, as you identified, there is, you know, available avenues for recourse, but I would like it stated on record from a procedural standpoint because obviously, I too, like the Member, are new to this Government, new to this Public Accounts Committee and I would like to make sure that as you are a stickler for details sir, that that matter be reviewed and a response identified at some point in time.

The Chairman: None of this would be debatable had the Government been willing to give us the document.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Chairman, as I said before, and I am new to this House, and some people may say I am new to politics but here is the reality: I have people who need help. I have a constituent who needs to go find a place for his home. I received a call from a Minister this morning saying that basically he is not able to help and I am not going to be sitting here for the rest of the afternoon. You have a quorum. I am going back to my district to look after my people and go help my man to find someplace for his family. So, with that, I will be gone for the rest of the day. You all enjoy the rest of this proceeding. I ain't wasting my time down here.

The Chairman: Well, I appreciate your position and you are entitled to that. I still believe that I have a responsibility and the Public Accounts Committee have a responsibility to get some factual basis to what we are doing because from 2015 there has been a lot of ducking and weaving—right? And what we are trying to find out here now is that we have been told this OBC is going to be the saviour, the give-all and every question that we have asked, the Ministry has used the OBC as a solution to that problem. And what we are trying to find out by bringing yourself as the Director of DCFS in, is, are you fully appraised of what we are being informed and what we interpret as to what expectations are going to be from your department if and in fact this OBC becomes government's policy? That is what all of the questions are about.

Let me ask some more generic questions.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Me too sir.

The Chairman: Sorry. You go ahead. Give me time to think.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Through you, Mr. Chairman, Madam Director, what resources are needed outside of bodies? What other resources do you need?

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: Mr. Chair, in response, is this in relationship to NAU and improving their services? Or is this globally in terms of providing social services?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: Okay, DCFS.

Since the Children Law came into effect, DCFS has focused primarily and I think the Deputy Director who is here joining me, would agree. We focus quite a bit on protection of children, public education and trying to have persons report, matters of abuse, neglect or where children are vulnerable. And I think a considerable focus has been placed on that element of our work. I am trying to strengthen the protective interventions, to be able to respond more quickly, develop comprehensive case plans and look at how we build connections within our communities in order to better protect and keep our children safe.

More recently, earlier this year, the MASH programme was established, again without any addi-

tional resources, but simply taking DCFS frontline intake workers into that setting. They respond to all of the reports that come in with respect to child abuse and neglect. Those reports come from many sources. It can be from within anyone in the community because under the law anyone can report. We all have a duty under the law to protect children. Some of us in our professional capacity, we have a higher duty in the sense that we are mandated, we are required to submit those reports. So, we address that on a day to day basis.

That requires us as need be to develop plans and work with all of the partners within our community and across the services. Some of that means that we have got to look at alternative places to place these children or alternative families who can work with them. We do need a lot of help from our community in having safe spaces. Our foster care programme has been around for a very long time. We still struggle to find suitable homes for children. We believe children thrive best in family units. We want to be able to grow that aspect of our work but we do not necessarily have an agreement or resources to give our foster parents any significant contribution to caring for these children. And sometimes that is problematic. It is problematic, not just because of the numbers that are needed, but also the extent of the responsibility.

Many of our children are what we call therapeutic children. It may be that they have some level of disability. It may be that their mental health needs are so acute that they need really, really intensive supervision and support and care to help nurture them to a place of wellness and their primary families are not able to do that. So yes, that is a basic need that we've got, and that need can be met with persons within our community stepping up to say, I want to help take some responsibility for changing what is happening to children in the Cayman Islands.

We do need the resources, staffing, to be able to move from just simply responding to reports of child abuse, to be more actively involved within the community to address the needs of families that are vulnerable. So, before it gets to a reported matter of child abuse, we want to be able to be out there addressing those little, little things that grow into big things.

We need to be able to have the resources and the staffing to address that, so that when we see our young people going on a route towards becoming involved or what we call in conflict with the law, we can work intensively to pull them back again from going into that coerced. So yes, there is a lot of work for our children that we need the support to do better.

Outside of our children you will know that the DCFS also have responsibility for older persons and recently the Older Persons Law was passed as well as the Older Persons Policy. It is the expectation that that policy will be rolled out and that the law will come into effect. So yes, to do that, we need resources as well, to be able to manage that. We have persons within our community who are aged. We have got an aging community like any other community in the world and we have a significant number of persons who have retired at 60 but they are looking for significant places to make contributions but also to bring them together to keep them going. We need workers to be able to facilitate those sorts of interventions for our older persons. So, Mr. Chair, is that enough, or would you like me to continue with our wish list?

The Chairman: There is nothing wrong with your wish list. My only concern is that I can't imagine you getting into that under this integrated formula.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Mr. Chair.

The Chairman: And the question I . . . you have a question?

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Yes sir, I want to follow up.

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: At this point sir, we are doing all of some of that.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: I want to follow up. Okay, you have said some of the things you needed; some of the things but not all of it.

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: No.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Outside of people, I am going to give you two cases where one of your workers took me to task for a case that just happened in the court and is over now, where a pedophile was almost what some would say as condoned by people in the association. And when they got to court it was only one thing the court could put in jail for which was what he had done on the phone.

There is another case which I spoke to on the radio where a three year old child was molested by a landlord. I was called at 11:30 at night. I had to book the family into a hotel. Two years later they were going to take a 5 year old child and expect to get a story of what happened, and the case has gone nowhere.

In your protection of our children, in conjunction with the police and their work, how much are you integrated? How much say do you have in there? What can you do there? These are just two cases off of the top of my head but there are many more that I can bring out right now that I have the facts on. What do you need for cases like that where pedophiles are getting away or are just getting slapped on the wrist for minor stuff? And that is part of protecting our children and it is a problem here in this country. We all know it but no one wants to talk about it. What do you

need? Will this magic wand that they keep throwing every time they talk about it, help us to protect our children?

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: Mr. Chair, can I ask for clarification of what the magic wand is because I don't want to assume it is the OBC?

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: The OBC love; the OBC.

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: Can I just state for the record that the OBC is not intended to be a magic wand? It was a framework which assessed what the needs under the social assistance programme are. So, having clarified that—

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Yes ma'am, I will clarify myself in saying that if you listen to some people talk about it, it is a magic wand in some peoples' mind ma'am. But go ahead. I just want you to let us know what we can do to assist you or what you need for these types of cases that are happening and they are getting away. What can we do, please?

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: I will speak to DCFS and our work with the police and the approach which we are trying to strengthen with respect to how we ensure that there is timeliness as well as quality investigations, and that the services for the affected parties are in place while we wait for the legal process to take its course.

I made reference earlier to the fact that the MASH had been set up, which is the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub. The concept is that under Children Law . . . well, let me be specific. It is the responsibility of the Director of Children and Family Services to ensure that children are protected. The Department of Children and Family Services has the responsibility. It is the agency with the mandate to ensure that the matters of harm are reported to DCFS, investigated and actioned. We follow up because in some instances there is an indication that a crime has been committed. We do not get reports of crime; we get reports of suspicion of neglect. So, the investigation has to be carried out and when that is done we are able to establish jointly with the police what the facts are. It is important for us as an agency to be able to respond to those reports within 24 hours.

So yes, our staff, there are occasions when they work many days after hours. Our staff members are not paid overtime or an on-call-out allowance, but they have to go to respond to those reports. Usually, they will respond with the police together. There is almost a sure indication, if it is a report which takes physical abuse or sexual abuse, that, they will need also for us to liaise with Health Services to have an examination done on that child. So, we have to work closely within very tight timeframes because we want to have best evidence and best evidence is really early evidence.

So, I take your comment about an interview being conducted two years later. I do not know in the circumstances you have mentioned, whether or not this is simply a follow up interview, perhaps because the case is being prepared for court and there is a review process going on. But there is usually an initial interview which will collect the facts. When that initial process is done it is determined what services or what interventions are needed as to, can we keep this child in the setting safe or not. So, we will walk through that process, the police will determine whether or not they will need to go ahead with the criminal investigation aspect of it. But as far as social workers are concerned, our responsibility is to follow through to also determine what services this child and this family needs.

We use not only government services in terms of counselling interventions but we also use private providers to ensure that the children or their families get the services.

What do we need? I think we need to acknowledge that we need our adults to reframe from harming our children and this is a community message which is foremost. There is no problem to resolve, no need for an investigation or for criminal processing if there is no abuse. So, firstly, we need adults and young people and children to value each other significantly and not cause harm to each other. And I think you would agree that that is primary. In the event though, that harm happens, we need to be able to have sufficient resources to respond adequately. We need our staff to be trained in terms of the particular interventions that are needed to do justice to our children. We need to have the funding for those services for training; that is, not just a one-off training but a continuous upskilling of our staff.

Child protection is one of the most dynamic areas of social work. The approach is dependent on the policies; it changes on a regular basis. Why does it change? There is an urgency to protect children and if something is not working, an approach is not working, if a piece of legislation does not offer the quality of protection that we consider to be best, then we need to be able to look at that legislation, implement the changes and follow a particular model of intervention that is outcomes driven.

What do we need as an Agency? We need to move from simply outputs to outcomes. We need to focus on making an impact and change for our children and our families. As an Agency, what is it that we need to do that? Perhaps that is something that . . . well, not perhaps, it definitely goes outside of my scope because we have a framework where we report

on outputs. So, that is something I think we need to change, because when we report on outcomes and we focus on outcomes for our young people and our children, it means that we are also focusing upon accountability. It means that we do not have social workers or staff or persons working in child protection services who are operating without a sense of urgency. So, we need a sense of urgency that if we are going to change the direction of our Islands and if we are going to make the impact that is necessary in terms of best wellbeing for our children, then, all of us need to treat the issue as an urgent one; not one that can be deferred or one that can be deprioritised, again, based on resources.

Would you like me to continue?

The Chairman: No, I would like you to stop right there because, I guess my question to you is: Why is not that happening? Why have we not changed from outputs to outcomes? And, have you made that recommendation to the Ministry and it has been ignored?

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: Mr. Chair, DCFS is focused on outcomes at this point. We are looking at best outcomes for our children; we are putting in place the measures to make a difference for them; we are looking at the services that they need; we are committed to providing that, so we are also in our change process which says "better outcomes".

The Chairman: I am glad to hear that. Can we talk about urgency a bit? The evidence we have before us is that there is no urgency by anybody; certainly, not at the implementation of these recommendations or making policy changes that are needed based on the Auditor General's report and what is contained in this OBC. For instance, we are operating on an approved policy to determine applicants' eligibility of 2002. There has been several recommendations that that policy be amended to modernise it, but it has not happened.

We had an internal audit in 2013 that made certain recommendations for changes to policies and procedures and here we are in 2017 and they are not done.

The Auditor General's report that we are talking to today, was done in 2015. This is 2017 and August 17th update from the chief officer dated 1st September 2017, says, of 14 recommendations made in 2015, 2 out of 14 have been completed. We have in progress 6 out of the 14. Note some of the completion dates are 2019, 2018. We are not providing budgetary allocations for these corrective actions until 2018, 2019. Others are 2020, 2021. So, I understand your need for urgency in the Children and Family Services and the additional resources that you may need. But I regret to tell you that evidence before this Committee is that there is no urgency in this at all.

What response have you gotten that may give us some comfort that the specific request for improvements to services to the clients for children and family services are going to at least have attempts made to address them in the 2018/19 budget? Remember now, you are not going to have an annual opportunity to make these requests. You got one opportunity now that is going to be tabled on the 13th October, so what is not already in that is not likely to get into it. The next opportunity, short of Cabinet using a particular clause in the PMFL to extend the budget to move monies around from somewhere else to address some of your needs, you are not going to get the opportunity again, until November 2019 for implementation in 2020/2021.

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: Mr. Chair, can I respond?

The Chairman: Yes ma'am.

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: The good news is that for some of the things that we need to do, we do not necessarily need new money, we just need to have a new approach and a new commitment to doing it.

The issues where we need money for, we have made representation within the budget for those resources. So, we are proceeding with our preparations to be able to upscale our programmes and to provide the improved responses in anticipation that we will get at least some of those resources.

The Chairman: Certainly, you have my support and I wish you well.

Ms. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: We appreciate that sir.

The Chairman: But again, I get back to the fact that the evidence before this Committee suggests otherwise and that is very troubling.

Are there any other questions?

Thank you very much ma'am for your time.

Mrs. Filicia Robinson, Director, Department of Children and Family Services: Thank you, Mr. Chair and the Committee for the opportunity to speak.

[Pause as other witnesses enter the Chamber]

NEEDS ASSESSMENT UNIT

The Chairman: Good evening, Ms. Tamara Hurlston. When you answer the first question you can identify yourself for the record and you can tell us who the officer is that is with you.

As you know, we are dealing with the implementation of the recommendations of the Auditor General in the 2015 report or lack thereof. A lot of it seems to be surrounding your Unit, so we have some questions for you and hopefully I can give you the opportunity to defend yourself.

As we understand and from evidence given to this Committee to date, a decision was taken in 2013 to separate the Needs Assessment Unit from the Department of Children and Family Services which when they were together they used to be called Social Services. The advent of the Children Law of the Social Services became the Department of Children and Family Services and then, you were carved off and set up as a unit.

We now have been given evidence that the Government hired consultants KPMG that did an outline business case which seems to be recommending that the NAU be reintegrated and now there seems to be serious diversions between the Director of Children and Family Services and the Chief Officer as to what that integration means. So, the first question to you is: Are you aware of the OBC and were you a part of the consultative process?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Good evening, Chair, and everyone else. I am here with my Deputy Director, Matthew Hylton and my name is Tamara Hurlston. I am the Director of the Needs Assessment Unit.

In regards to the OBC, I was a member of the steering committee. I attended a few meetings and so I was present when KPMG was consulting with the Ministry and the relevant departments which included the Ministry of Health also.

The Chairman: Well, the genesis of what they have been told is that was largely driven because NAU is not (to avoid any long wind) getting the job done and clients are not being serviced to the level that they expect it to be.

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: The NAU like you correctly said, was established in 2013 and the reason was because of a review of DCFS, and it was at that time determined that social workers were better used doing social work programmes and clinical intervention, and the Unit would be able to get through the assessments at a quicker pace and to ensure we had the right documentation.

The original organisational chart calls for 40 individuals to run this unit which would include finance individuals. It also included needs assessment officers, as it was also determined that they did not need social workers to be doing assessments. As was said earlier when I was listening, social workers are better used to do this clinical intervention and the programmes that will be required for the same clientele. We do share the same clientele with Health and we also share with other agencies such as the Department of Counselling and Rehabilitation, et cetera. But the functions of the Needs Assessment Unit was always to conduct needs assessments, not just for welfare recipients but it was actually intended to be the assessment unit for government where we would do all assessments and means test. For any means test required, it is for anyone from the public at the requirement of the Cayman Islands Government.

We were established with a staff complement of approximately 16 individuals which were transferred in 2013. We grew to approximately, I think, it was 18 individuals the next year. Sorry, I have some information here. The budget when were established called for 18 individuals and we actually only had 16 employed that year. In July 2014 we had 20 persons budgeted and we only had 18 on staff. Moving on up to 2015 when, I think that was when the Auditor General's report in May was done, we had 20 individuals hired but 24 persons in the staff.

In July 2015, they were budgeted for 25 individuals, we had 21. And I don't mean to keep reading through everything but I just want to show where we were never adequately staffed or resourced.

The Chairman: Not to interrupt you but the question I would ask is: There always seemed to be 4 or 5 officers short of what was budgeted. Was that a lack of persons available or was it a lack of recruitment, or why were not those additional persons that were budgeted for, hired?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Over the years we tried to recruit as quickly as possible because we understand the challenges that we have. Unfortunately, on many occasions our recruitment has been placed on hold. For this current year—

The Chairman: No, no, no, slow down a little bit. Now we are getting to the cooking and I don't want the public to miss this.

You are saying that your recruitment exercise was not allowed to be completed, by whom?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: That is correct. I report to the Ministry so it would be at ministerial level.

The Chairman: So, when you get a budget allocation for people, you still need ministry approval to advertise to do recruitment because normally it would be

some . . . well, I don't know how they would set up the committees; three or four people, somebody from your unit, somebody from the Ministry and probably somebody from the Portfolio of the Civil Service just to make sure that—

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Right!

The Chairman: And that then leads to the recruitment and you are saying that it was in that process that you were not allowed to hire the people that were budgeted for?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: That is correct.

Currently we have 34 persons that are budgeted. We have 28 staff—

The Chairman: Well, it gets worse.

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: We have 27 staff currently; two of them are actually temporary staff hired in August as Needs Assessment Officers. So, for the majority of the year, up until that point, the financial period, we operated with 25 individuals.

The Chairman: But 34 were approved in the budget.

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Thirty-four positions are in the current budget.

The Chairman: And you did not get any help until August and it is temporary now?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: It is temporary needs assessment officers in August and they are dealing with the backlog of the PFA and trying to get through determining who needs to be reassessed of the poor relief applicants. They are not dealing with the general public work coming through the front door seeking services immediately, so that does not really relieve my existing staff complement. They are still dealing with the same caseload they always did. The reason why they were unable to deal with the backlog of the PFA applications and reassessments is because of resources, which was said previously on many occasions, including in PAC, I think on two different occasions.

The Chairman: Yes, we were told. I think when we dealt with the 2015 report we were told that you were trying to hire 8 or 9 people, and this morning we were told, yes, those positions were approved but 5 of those went to some housing repair unit that was limited to 15 assessments for the year. We still have not heard where the other 6 went, so the other 6 are still vacant except for 3 temporary?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Like I said, we have 25 permanent employees, so that leaves 9 headcount vacant when we look at the 34 budgeted in the current budget.

As far as the Ministry handled the housing, that is the TP for housing assistance, the NAU conducted the assessments. We were allowed to hire two assessment officers and that was on a temporary basis. They recently got permanent contracts to assist with the housing assessments. And the Ministry also employed other persons from the Ministry and from DCFS to assist them in getting through those persons who applied for housing assistance.

A lot of the clients are the same as NAU so in the end it did end up that the needs assessment officers existing at the NAU still ended up having to do those assessments, you know, considering we are short-staffed.

The Chairman: What is the backlog on these? And clarify for me whether this backlog is new clients or if these are people who need to be reassessed to see if they still qualify.

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: We have two issues. The first issue is the backlog of applications; those are persons who either may be receiving temporary assistance or no assistance at all. Those applications, the majority were received from DCFS. Some applications are stemming as far back as 2008. That is the backlog and that was approximately 360 applicants. Some of those individuals—

The Chairman: Slow down, slow down. I have to write this down—360 backlog applications and some of them go back to 2008?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Correct.

The Chairman: Are you sure the people are still alive? They would likely to have starved to death.

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: We are finding that some are deceased.

The Chairman: Okay. And you are saying that many of those came across from DCFS?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Correct.

The Chairman: So, you are saying that you are currently dealing to the best of your ability with your new clients walking into the door?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Correct.

The Chairman: None of these backlogs are people who come to you today and you give them an appointment to come back next year?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: No. When someone applies through the NAU for the permanent poor relief, we actually assess them at that time and if they need temporary services we are able to provide it at that time until we could have dealt with the backlog of applications that now exist. So, those who have come through the doors of the NAU and needed other assistance, we provided that. So, in lieu of getting the $550 stipend you may be getting assistance with your utilities, your rent, your food, whatever other allowances we could give until we could get through the backlog.

The permanent poor relief requires more of an assessment than it does with the temporary because we have to do property check, bank checks et cetera, so it takes a little more work.

The Chairman: In your professional judgement, if you had your full complement of staff, would you be able to service more clients and be able to assign some people to that backlog?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: If we were able to hire the full staff complement, yes, we would. What I would project in dealing with the backlog and the reassessment would be over a 12 month period, and what I would aim to do is to put the newly employed individuals on that project. The problem with reassessment it is not a temporary situation. Our permanent poor relief recipients are supposed to be regularly reassessed as was expressed in the Auditor General's report. So, just getting through them now with temporary staff is not going to solve the issue.

In order for us to do proper case management where we can see the needs of a staff and refer them to the relevant agencies, we will need the resources. And I do believe if we had the full staff complement, the ORG chart which calls for 40 individuals in different capacities which includes accounts, needs assessment officers, supervisors, compliance officers and the needs assessment manager, to ensure they are in compliance, we would be able to get through these applicants in a timely basis, I would say within a year, giving the public notifications for the reassessment, that persons will be aware that we are doing this project and they should come forward with their information.

The Chairman: And, have you been given any specific reason by the Ministry why you can't recruit these people?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: For this fiscal year, this budget period that we are working in, because previously it was always the lack of resources because the budget would not allow, which was correct. Even though we were not able to always hire everyone in the budget, we knew we needed more. We got the budget passed in May last year, and commitments were made to hire the Needs Assessment Manager and all of the other resources that we may need. Since then, we have had an internal review that the Ministry initiated, and I think that was in July or August; I don't have the exact dates. From that review it was determined to put all recruitment on hold essentially, because they thought perhaps we had the staff complement that we needed and that we did not necessarily need more staff. Unfortunately, that is not the case, the demand is higher.

As you all can see, we have a lot of complaints from the public. We are so short staffed we can't even answer the phone. And on many occasions, my frontline staff personnel deal with the persons who are in the office and are unable to answer the phone to deal with queries. These are some of the challenges that we have and we have requested from the Ministry to allow us to hire the full staff complement so that we can deal with some of the issues and complaints from the clients.

I think something as simple as hiring a receptionist, someone to deal fulltime with our phone calls and also to deal fulltime with our NAU info email which is where we receive all of the requests for services, that would alleviate a lot of complaints from the public because our clients just want to know that someone is dealing with the case and that we are not just leaving them behind. Unfortunately, we have approximately 1,800 families that we are giving services to and I have 12 officers fulltime on those services. I have four accounts officers processing thousands of payments and this includes food, rental and all of the other services that we provide and I just don't think it is sufficient.

The fact that we have an org chart that calls for the resources that were required when we were developed, shows that we were never staffed and therefore giving us a fair chance to see whether or not the Unit is working. I think it is unfair to say it is not working when the resources were never provided.

We also need legislation. The Poor Relief Law is from 1997. It needs to be reviewed. I think it is also said in the OBC that it needs to be reviewed. It has been said by the Auditor General's report that it needs

to be reviewed. We have no regulations. The regulations as I am aware of have been in draft from 2009/2010. I have heard that it is being reviewed as recently as 2017, but still we do not have any regulations.

The Chairman: On what basis are they reviewing regulations that are not put in place? The only need to review regulations that have been drafted is that they were put in place and were not achieving the objective, or the circumstances and the demographics changed and therefore you need to tweak the regulations.

So, they had regulations drafted and now they are reviewing them again and then they are reviewing again but they are not implemented into law?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: There are no regulations implemented and, as I heard earlier, I think they said they were with Legal Drafting and the last revision was done in January 2017, I believe. But, no, we do not have regulations. And the challenge we are going to have here is that without having the proper legislation in place, we are unable to assist our clients in becoming self-sufficient because we need to ensure. We do have some teeth which would be the legislation that will allow for the clients to take part in programmes and to do other initiatives that will enable them to become self-sufficient and would entitle them to the services, holding the clients accountable for whatever services they receive from government.

The Chairman: It is very unusual. I don't know, Mr. FS if you know of any other department in government that had positions budgeted on a regular basis approved and they were not recruited. We are familiar with, *We did not get enough and we recruited all of these and need more.*

Mr. Kenneth Jefferson, Financial Secretary/Chief Officer, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Unfortunately, I really can't address that. It does seem curious.

The Chairman: Unusual. That is unusual.

Let me bring you back to this OBC. What is your understanding or interpretation of what integration, which we understand is being recommended by the OBC, because we were told this morning that the consultants were asked to consider . . . ? They made two recommendations: 1) do nothing, and 2) go to an integrated form. What did you ascertain in your dealing with the consultants integration to mean?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: I was at meetings and I was consulted for my feedback on several issues. In the finalisation of this document I was not as consulted. In my understanding of the integrated approach my staff has also had concerns. We are just hearing things in the public and not understanding what it means. They have actually thought that it meant that we were going back into DCFS and we have had meetings with the Chief Officer for the staff to get a better understanding on exactly what was happening with the Unit. Fortunately, I can say that I am not sure what the integrated approach is. I know that recently there has been hiring of a recruitment process that took place for a social work coordinator and two social workers but I don't know how that plays into the integrated approach or if that is part of the integrated approach. So, I am not sure exactly what that means.

The Chairman: Well, based on the evidence given to us this morning, the integrated approach has not yet been accepted as policy. And we were told this morning that integrated does not mean putting NAU back with DCFS. It was alluded to that there would be some kind of integration of the database and some of the back office functions, whatever they are; administrative or whatever. So, that social work supervisor and social worker, I would guess, based on the evidence before this Committee this morning, were not related to that integration because that decision has not been made yet, although, if I read between the lines in the SPS and evidence given to us a couple of weeks ago, it seems that that is a foregone conclusion that that is going to be the accepted policy position of the Government, to integrate these services. And there seems to be some allocation in the Budget or the Strategic Policy Statement is predicting that with some things there will be improvement in services and reduction in cost and stuff like that.

Do you see any reduction in demand of services from you over the next 8 to 10 years based on the demographics that you are aware of?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: I don't see a decrease in demand and I don't see a decrease in services. As a matter of fact I see the opposite. I have petitioned to the Ministry in revising our criteria on several occasions which was mainly to increase the benefit amounts that we give to our recipients, because there was a scream in the public that this just was insufficient and because we have met with Statistics and Economics and saw certain trends like rent is going up, certain trends like the amount we were supplying for food was insufficient, and this is all basically within budget constraints. But we have always advocated from the first year that we implemented our criteria which is 2014 and that criteria was developed with myself and the Ministry support, mainly the Deputy Chief Officer at that time, and we have revised it every year ever since and on most

occasions it is with increasing the amount of benefits that we are giving.

We are seeing more and more persons coming that never came in before; more and more foreclosures which is requiring persons to seek rentals, and based on that trend it would appear as though we are going to need more funds in order to deal with the issues we have.

We have had appropriations reshuffled. I think I met here a couple of Fridays ago in regards to increasing certain areas such as food and rentals and that is because of the heavy demand, because of the increase of cost of living. So, if that trend continues the cost will always increase, at least for the next 8 to 10 years unless there is something that is done dramatically to deal with the issues regarding the other social issues that we have.

I do believe that if we had my interpretation of integrated approach, would be that where we have all of our agencies working together as one, because we have similar clientele and there are programmes within the districts of where they can access different tools to make them become self-sufficient. We can get persons employed. We can give persons parenting classes, counselling job rehabilitation; all of the different programmes that are needed to allow persons to deal with the clinical social issues that they have and therefore become more self-sufficient. That will help us and that is what is lacking right now. But in regards to the status quo and in regards to not having those programmes by the relevant agencies, I don't foresee this going down any time soon.

The Chairman: Both this morning and this afternoon, the Committee has been given evidence to suggest that one of the shortcomings at the NAU is that your assessment officers are not qualified social workers. Do you think that that inhibits your ability to make decision on financial assessments for people?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: No, it doesn't. The reason why the NAU was created is so that we could focus on ensuring that persons meet their financial needs and DCFS could focus on the clinical intervention that is required for the same clientele. Most of my NAU officers come from a compliance background which is what the Auditor General said was lacking where you don't have documentation or proof that persons qualify for services. So, when we hired those Needs Assessment officers, some come from banking or other business industries that require them to have that compliance background. And our officers have been doing spectacular. We have actually turned out more assessments that were done previously, but the reality of the matter is that with the existing staff complement they can only go so hard.

I just want to go on record of thanking my staff for their support and commitment because I have staff in office on Sundays, Saturdays and I have staff in office until one o'clock a.m. trying to get through all of the services, because they understand the need and demand from the public. But unfortunately without adequate resources we will continue to be in this situation and I don't think the Needs Assessment office at this moment would need more social workers. I think what we need is more officers on the ground dealing with the assessments so we can get the services through the door quicker to the clients.

When clients present to the Needs Assessment Unit they are in need of something financial. It is either, they need food because they are starving, their lights are off, they have been evicted, they are homeless and those are the cases that we are seeing, and if they need clinical intervention we refer them to the relevant agency. It is not that we are going to do the clinical intervention. But what we want to see is that they are actually programmes out there that we can refer them to because without the programmes we are just basically throwing money at the problem. But they do have an immediate need and we are serving that immediate need, and that is giving them the basic resources to sustain themselves, but we are doing it at a slow pace, and the reason why we are doing it at a slow pace is because we do not have the resources to meet the demand. So, I think a quick fix would be for us to have the adequate amount of needs assessment officers that we need, so that we can turn over those services on a quicker manner and if we can have the adequate resources we need for accounts so that we can process payments in a timely manner.

There are many issues with the rentals which are in the public right now in regards to persons receiving rentals and complaining that government checks are late. But quite the opposite—the Chief Financial Officer actually conducted a sampling of our rentals and found that in most cases it is not the NAU's fault that the rentals were in any case late. Persons present to the Needs Assessment Unit when they are already late on their rent. Landlords expect that the check will come the next day; that is not possible as we know. The person has to be assessed. We have to get it batched for payment, it has to go to the Ministry and then to Treasury and back to the NAU. And in order for us to expedite that process it would mean having more accounts officers so we can turn them around quicker. But there are some issues that we can't resolve and that is where, you know, if clients present when they are already in arrears. There is really not much NAU can do other than try as quickly as we possibly can to get through the services and the assessment process.

The Chairman: Do you have any member of your staff now who has social work qualifications and what position do they hold?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Thankfully I do. I actually have approximately 23 years of social work experience between my Deputy Director who is a social worker and I also have some of what they were called before; senior social work assistants and social work assistants that were transferred from the Department of Children and Family Services. They also did clinical interventions and they also saw the same clientele, and they come over with experience. So, we do have social work experience down at the Needs Assessment Unit.

The Chairman: And you said that your deputy is a qualified social worker. Does he have any kind of general oversight of what your needs assessment officers do to help them determine, *Well, John Doe needs to go to the Children and Family Services because they have this issue?* And, do you have any authority to say to that person, *Well, we are going to help you this week but unless you go to Children and Family Services and you can come back to show me that you have gone for this intervention, we will deny you next week?* Do you have any authority or was that the kind of thing you were talking about earlier that you needed to be put in the regulations?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Right. That authority would need to be through legislation. We don't have it now. We do in our policy where our criteria states that you should partake in certain programmes like registering with the NWDA. But there is nothing that we have teeth with, which would be legislation that we could mandate that you have to go for your clinical intervention, for your drug counselling, for whatever programmes we saw fit to refer you to before you get your next stipend. Unfortunately, like I said, if there are no programmes or not enough programmes to refer them to, it is kind of hard to hold the clients accountable if we have not put the measures in place as a government.

My staff is sensitised. They are sensitised to different areas such as mental health. We liaised with the HSA and they have actually conducted training for our staff. We have also had sensitization because we have a staff social worker who guides the decisions that are being made when it comes to clinical intervention to do those referrals. So, Matthew, my deputy is very involved with that process. He meets frequently with the needs assessment supervisors to give them guidance on cases. And my staff members have also made referrals upward to management because they see certain issues because we do sensitise our staff. The problem is, like I said, once we have identified the issue, having somewhere to refer them to, whether it is going to be proper intervention, I do realise that other entities are saying they have a lack of resources also. But if we do not have the programmes, again, if we make those referrals we cannot hold the clients accountable if there are no programmes necessarily to refer them to.

The Chairman: You mentioned in your answer a while ago that you have to refer people up to the Ministry. Do you have to refer people to the Ministry to authorise payments? Or, do you have policies and procedures that allow your officers to make those judgements now and award the benefit?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: We make the decision down at the NAU when it comes to providing services through the criteria that we have. Once they have met the requirements of the criteria, we have our financial assistance database—FAST—which we implemented at the NAU that is actually a copy of the HOPE database that the DCFS use. So, it is a clone of that database that we need a little more bells and whistles to. But that is what we currently use and through that database we document services and progress notes based on the case, to do a case review. And the supervisors then review the cases and determine whether or not someone is eligible for services based on a criteria again, and then that is actually processed by our accounts team that then process the payments. Once that is batched for payment it goes to the Ministry's chief financial officer, the Ministry of Finance team and then they run something called a payment batch for all payments. So, we actually do the approval of services at the NAU but the final disbursements of payments are done through the system with the Ministry and Treasury which are for all government entities.

The Chairman: Mr. Chief Accountant.

So, if you assess me today and I need $100 to pay for my electricity, does that get put into a batch that has to go up to the Ministry's CFO before the check can be printed?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: If I can clarify when it comes to the utilities, the payment correctly so, goes through that process, but when it comes to the commitment that we make with the utility company, whether it is the water company or the electricity company, prior to, we say we will honour this payment. Now we now have time to go ahead and batch it for payment which goes through the process at Treasury for us to get the actual payment. But the utility companies have been very good and they honour the fact that we sent through this commitment and they will usually restore the electricity or hold off on terminating it.

The Chairman: Is that a system wide thing where those people who can authorise payment, can't make payment?

Mr. Matthew Tibbetts, Accountant General, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development: Mr. Chairman, normally when someone enters the payment they are not authorised to approve the payment. So, we have someone who enters it and then the Deputy Chief Financial Officer would then approve it, for example, and then the check would be done by either the Deputy Chief Financial Officer with the Chief Financial Officer signing off, or the Chief Financial Officer would run the check run and sign off on it. The check run or the payment run, whatever you would like, or whichever term you prefer to use, comes to Treasury and we actually cut the checks in Treasury. That is the process that we have. We try to ensure segregation duties in that the same person entering it cannot approve it.

The Chairman: What happens in your case if the Deputy CFO in their reexamining of your authorisation for payment says no?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Fortunately we have not had that where we have had a no. The Ministry usually processes our payments. Each ministry has their own payment cycle on when they process payments. We have requested recently that our Ministry do more frequent payment runs because of the fact that we deal with the needy and therefore instead of having two payment runs for the week, we want it more. We requested this previously and we will request it again, and the CFO did make a commitment that he would do more payment runs per week.

Mr. Matthew Tibbetts, Accountant General, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development: Mr. Chair, just to point out as well that we have had a complaint in the past that Treasury was holding up payments and that is something that we want to clarify in that when it comes to the processing of payments we ensure that if the checks were not received by 10 o'clock in the morning, that we actually return the checks to the Ministry by that evening. We had a complaint filed, I think in February of this year, and after further investigation we confirmed that it took less than two hours for us from the time we received the payment run to the time the check was actually ready for the Ministry to collect.

The Chairman: I can tell you that you get blame for a lot of things.

[Laughter]

Mr. Matthew Tibbetts, Accountant General, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development: And it seems that a bit of the time is actually in the assessment where the majority of the time is that it takes.

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Well—

The Chairman: Your offer to the client to give them some help is second guess of the Deputy CFO in the Ministry. What documentation do you send to them for them to authenticate? Or, is it just a process?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Well, at the moment when we process any payment it has to come with supporting documentation. So, for instance if we are doing rent, it is a rental guarantee that we have on file. It is all batched up and loaded into IRIS. In IRIS the CFO can see all the details along with audit as audit also utilises that only access where they can see all of the supporting documents for payments.

We have not ever had to deal with . . . well, with services being blocked at the Ministry level from payment. I think the issue we have is as Matthew started to say, is the fact that it has to go through an assessment process. The clients are complaining in most cases because it is taking so long to go through the assessment process.

In regards to the payments, our Ministry at the moment, or previously only did two payment runs. I am not sure if they are doing more now. But that increase in the payment runs would also help us in getting payments out to the clients in a more-timely manner. But the reality to the matter is that we do not have enough needs assessment officers to deal with the clientele. We do not have enough accounts staff to deal with the mass amounts of payments, the thousands of payments that we process as a department, and without the adequate resources we will always struggle to keep up with those issues.

There are some issues that we will not be able to resolve here and now with the rentals, in that, you know, some of the complaints I have from landlords is that they will tell the client it is because of late payment from government but then they will call us and say, I don't want that particular client. If you have someone else I will take them but not that particular client, and hence why we have persons that stay homeless for long periods of time, because of the issues that are surrounding them. And we have made referrals in the past to DCFS also to do clinical intervention because in those circumstances there seems to be some other clinical support that is needed to assist this family into becoming self-sufficient and it is not just going to be throwing the funds at them and resolving the issue.

So, for the most part, I think on our rentals with the resources we have, we are processing them adequately. The rental guarantee stipulates that we have 21 business days in order to process the payment and that is because we recognise that we have to get through the assessment process, we have to get the service approved and then it has to be batched for payment and it has to go through normal channels, and so that is allowing us that time. And, like I said, the CFO recently did a sample this week of our rental payments and found that we, for the most case, were in compliance and there is nothing on us. We had one case where there was an officer, now on maternity leave, and she went in early and so she left whatever was on her desk and it kind of slipped through the cracks; it happens. I don't have adequate resources to reassign cases immediately, so therefore these things will happen.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Through you, Mr. Chair.

Let me say, Miss, that you are a breath of fresh air.

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Thank you.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: In your opinion, what are the additional bells and whistles necessary for the existing database, please?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: At the moment we are unable to pull statistics. This has been historical from DCFS days when they had the HOPE database. Everything is done manually. The problem with manual information is that you can make mistakes. At the moment we need our current database to do more reporting for us to be able to spit out trends and statistics on a daily basis if we need it. We also need to be able to track services to see when they are becoming expired so that we can do proper case management and contact clients before time. Unfortunately, a lot of our clients sometimes do not realise that their services are about to expire and they wait until the end and then they come through the door saying they are about to be evicted but the rental guarantee would have said only up until X.

So, if we had alerts in our system, if we were able to more reporting, if we were able to do more data management, we would be able to create efficiencies even further. But at the moment that is not possible. We have asked CSD [Computer Services Department] and we have also requested from the Ministry for this to be treated as a priority, because it would alleviate some of the stress that we are currently having with the staffing and also with getting services out to the public. But I know CSD is also understaffed and they have other projects that they are working on. But I do note that there was a commitment made that with approximately $5,000 our database might me looked at shortly. I am hoping that is the case.

The Chairman: That is in 2018/2019?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Mm-hmm.

The Chairman: And that is tied up with this OBC stuff?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: I think if we petitioned, and I assume that each department make their priority listing based on what the Government thinks is priority at that time. And I am hoping that considering this is something in the forefront, our database could be treated as priority by Computer Services, and maybe that is something that we can get worked on before then.

We have been in frequent communication with CSD. There is a particular officer over there who assisted us to get the database to where it is thus far, but her challenge is her being told what her priorities are. And I think maybe if we had a little push to say what is really priority and if we could be to the top of that list, maybe we could be served a bit quicker.

The Chairman: Do you know of any country in the region that uses this integrated approach and uses it successfully from a client's point of view?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Sir, as I stated earlier, Mr. Chair, I am not sure of what the integrated approach is in the OBC. I am not fully aware of what it is intending as far as knowing of any—

The Chairman: Well, hear how it was described to me: Everybody comes through one door and everybody goes to one shop window. So, I would assume that your clients who are now coming to you, are going to be coming to some unit where you are in, where DCFS is in, where the Drug Counselling Unit is in, where the medical part of it is in, and when they come into that, they are going to be met with some kind of triaging that is going to go on to say, *Well, you only want financial assistance, so you come through the one door but now you have to go to that window.* Right? That is how the integration has been explained to us.

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: I can't say that I know of any other jurisdictions that have that type of integrated approach. In my mind what I think that could be something to possibly be done is that we do understand we do service persons for indigent medicals; for instance, that was one of the

issues in that having a client go to so many doors, we did make a referral previously that we could have NAU officers stationed at the HSA which was at the last PAC where it was actually recommended, I think, by you, Mr. Chair, and the HSA graciously provided a space for us. Unfortunately, it was with the intention of hiring more needs assessment officers, so we could train and station them over at the HSA.

What that would alleviate, because the clients are going to have to go to the HSA anyway. I don't foresee an integrated approach where we would have a doctor waiting for you through the same window and can give you medical needs or drug rehab et cetera. What I do see an integrated approach with is that we have proper case management where we would refer you to the relevant agencies where if you are mental, to mental health, which we already do; or, if you need drug rehab, et cetera, and that we all take care of this one client but the different entities are doing their part. So, I don't know of an integrated approach where you would have one-stop, one-window, get all of your needs served there.

The Chairman: Neither do I. But if—which is not what I understand it to be—the integrated approach is to be, and the case management is through data availability (i.e., if John Doe comes to you and you type in his name and he has been to DCFS or he is listed as a mental case at the hospital), would you see that information?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: We have actually made a recommendation. I think Matthew got some information regarding SIMS [School Information Management System] which is another database being used by the Ministry of Education that has more capabilities than the current one we are using. And what I would have foreseen happening is if we as a government had one database but we all had our different parts of that database and relevant agency had "read only view access" to the information that they needed. And you could still hold sensitive information—sensitive if it is, you know, worth someone's health or any other issue. But I think in that form, that is a form of data integration. And I think that is something that the Government could and probably is exploring; that type of integration.

Right now the NAU, because of our release of information form covering all government entities and statutory authorities, we are able to liaise with other government agencies to resource information. We have "view only" access to the immigration database. I think we are the only department that has "view only" access to the immigration database. And then we also receive information from other entities just because we have the release of information form.

Considering we are one government I think that is something that could be done in a more efficient manner. If we did have this one database where we could all do data sharing and see the required information on this one client, and everyone would attend to whatever that specific need is.

The Chairman: Well, I can tell you, I tried that when I was the minister responsible in 1988 and I just could not get agreement on it. There were some legal issues and confidentiality issues (i.e. medical reports and police records and stuff like that). But I agree with you. I believe it can be done in a way . . . well, we were told a couple of weeks ago, that on your application for financial aid, you do not ask the question of the client: "Do you receive aid or assistance from any other government agency?" Is that true?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: That is not true. We have a pre-assessment form that is on our website. If I had known I would have brought one down with me. But on that form it asks you for all income which includes public assistance. I think we lay out poor relief and we lay out seamen, as to whether there is any income that they may have.

For donations, we lay out all sorts of income there and ask them to specify all expenses also, and we also go into the fact of requiring, if needed, bank statements et cetera. So, it is quite detailed. I think it is about three pages and it is just to make sure that we understand the dynamics of the individual family as to what their financial circumstances are. So, we do require all income to be disclosed and we do request it on the form.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Through you, Mr. Chair: You said your system is working efficiently. They said they get payments ready within 78 hours. You said they rarely say no to you, but yet, landlords are saying that it is late. In your opinion, if there is a backlog, why is it, please?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Through you, Mr. Chair, we have several factors in regards to the rental. We have been on the radio explaining to the landlords what the process is and the clients for them to understand. The number one factor would be persons presenting to the NAU when they are desperate and in need. In most cases, the rent is already passed too. There is only so much we can do to get that payment process. We have to go through the proper assessment process to make sure we have the required documentation before we can actually review the case. At that time the landlord, as we understand, they are panicking for their payment because they want to know that once you say you are going to the NAU, it means tomorrow that you are actually going to get that payment and that is just not possible considering the resources that we have,

hence why we have a stipulation of the 21 days within our rental guarantee that stipulates we need 21 days to process this payment, and that is from assessment to payment, because we understand this is going to hit several agencies before we get a check.

[Inaudible interjection]

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Twenty-one business days.

There are several other issues, like I said previously, where we need clinical intervention with a particular family because they have had past history with landlords and landlords are not willing to take certain clientele. We have had issues where we have hosted a family for quite some time in a hotel because there was nowhere for them to be found. We have asked for assistance from DCFS on occasions as was rightfully said earlier, for the community development officers to able to assist in helping these families to locate accommodations. But it has been quite a challenge with some families in finding accommodations because they come with maybe other challenges that we are not really looking at and that is where the clinical intervention would be necessary so that we can assist these families from a social standpoint and also financially.

The Chairman: I am still bothered a lot by the fact that you have nine positions approved for this 18 month financial year that are still unfilled, and everybody is complaining that they are not getting enough services from you.

Do you have any information as to why the Ministry would not want to complete this hiring within a month of getting the budget approved July last year? Is it a position where we now have a savings because we have not recruited these people over this period of time?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Mr. Chair, to answer the latter question, yes we do have a savings and personal emoluments due to not hiring all of the positions within our budget, as we have had in previous years due to not recruiting on time or not hiring all of the positions within our budget.

We did do . . . I think we started a recruitment for the Needs Assessment Manager, which was that position in particular that was requested through PAC and there was a commitment made that we would have had that position recruited as soon as possible. And that recruitment did start in May of 2016. Unfortunately, the recruitment was then placed on hold in November of 2016. We did do the recruitment for the Needs Assessment officers and that was done in July of 2016, immediately as the budget was passed. Unfortunately, that recruitment too was placed on hold in November 2016.

I am not exactly sure but have heard of things being referred to restructuring of the NAU, but, unfortunately, as soon as we got the funds to hire some of the additional resources that we needed, recruitment was placed on hold. I would like to also say though, that I have been told as I wasn't involved with the recruitment process, that we will have a social work coordinator and social workers starting at the NAU shortly, but they do not deal with the assessments and therefore we are still going to have an issue with the backlog of the assessments that are required.

The Chairman: What are they coming to the NAU to do?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: I am unsure. They are not in the current order chart.

The Chairman: Something is not right here. You can't be telling me . . . So, who is it that is sending these people to you? Is it the DCFS because they told us a while ago that they had volunteered one officer to you? Is that the person you are talking about?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: We've had a social worker from June of this year. That was the assistance that we were granted from DCFS. I was not involved in the recruitment process, so, honestly I cannot speak on who were hired and who would be the persons who would come over, so I don't know if it's existing DCFS staff or new individuals, but those persons are to start shortly. What I was told and understand is that these positions would not be doing assessments but would be looking at more of the social functions of what are clients of the clinical intervention.

The Chairman: How are they going to know what social dysfunction they need to address? Or, are they going to rely on your deputy to refer people to them at the NAU to . . . You are the head of the department, right?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Yes, I am sir, as far as I—

The Chairman: So, who recruited these people and who is it that is sending these people to you?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: The post was advertised; I can't remember when. I think it might have been April or May. I think it might have been May of this year. I learnt through the public like everyone else, that the post was being advertised.

The Chairman: This is not for chance the post that a couple of Caymanians applied for and did not get the job and some non-Caymanian is being hired and the Caymanians who did not get the job are now . . . I think the information I have is that they are appealing the decision of the recruitment to the Deputy Governor because they are of view that they are as qualified or more qualified than the person who has been offered the job and certainly more experience in the Cayman environment. Is that the supervising social worker that you are talking about?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Honestly, I was not a part of the recruitment process so I have no clue on what is transpiring in that regard.

The social worker who is seconded to the NAU since June is dealing with the PFA application backlog and not with actual clinical intervention.

The Chairman: Again, with the nine people that you are . . . I guess I need to ask the FS. Are the nine persons who have not been hired a part of the government's surplus that we are bragging about?

Mr. Kenneth Jefferson, Financial Secretary and Chief Officer, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, that was the intervention I wanted to make, and obviously we were at this point a few minutes ago. And I can say that when you said earlier if we had a savings, certainly in personal emoluments, the answer to that is yes. We do have the level of expenditure incurred to date. When compared to budgeted cost to date, the actual expenditure is less than the budgeted level. What I can say honestly is that that difference between actual expenditure experience and budget expectations, to the very best of my knowledge and I think I would have heard about it, but that has not been deliberately engineered at a Cabinet level to say to the ministries and portfolios that you shall not recruit or you shall slow down recruitment. I have never heard of that being espoused at a Cabinet level. So, it is a fact that there are savings at a personal emoluments level but not deliberately engineered at a ministerial Cabinet level. For whatever reasons, a variety of reasons, it would have to be at the ministry level, at the portfolio level, at the office level as to why recruitments did not occur at the same time as envisaged in the budget. It could be three months later, it could be six months later, it could be not at all in the course of the year, but it would have to be at a ministry level, portfolio level, office level and not from any directive on high.

The Chairman: Well, I think the evidence given by the Chief Officer, if my memory serves me correct, was, in fact, that she intervened and stopped the recruitment because she was going to restructure the NAU and she used the managerial position in some other environment within the Ministry. My problem with that is that having done that then, you can't use that to say that the NAU is not delivering the services and therefore we need to hire a consultant for $180,000 to produce a business case for an integrated service, because it is fairly evident from the Director of the NAU that this is not a one-time thing; this has been from the very beginning. Every single year there have been positions approved in the budget which were not recruited and that has to be a hamper to the people who need and who you need to help, because you just simply cannot do the impossible.

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Mr. Chair, that is correct. I would also like to state that just about every year we have also had temporary staff utilising that savings to hire temporary staff which we've had to train in order to deal with the public and to deal with our clients.

The Chairman: But that is a waste of resources.

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: It is very—

The Chairman: Hold on. Are you suggesting that the Ministry denied you to recruit the fulltime people that are budgeted for, but they offer you temporary help which you have to spend time and energy training and then, they are gone and you still do not have any officers?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: That is correct sir. As recently as August we have hired two needs assessment officers who are in temporary positions—

The Chairman: Out of nine?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: We had originally . . . in our budget we have 18 needs assessment officers that was approved in the 2016/17 Budget. We currently have 12 permanent NAU officers on staff and we recently in August received two temporary needs assessment officers.

The Chairman: I don't know what to say, because this is HR 101, you know. Temporary staff should only be used in situations where there is no budget authorization to recruit permanent staff. But you are saying that you have positions vacant for permanent positions which could give Caymanians jobs, and we have lots of Caymanians who are out there qualified in the very areas that you need them, in compliance because they are getting laid off from banks and every-

body is downsizing. So, we are denying Caymanians jobs, and by not hiring these Caymanians in these jobs we are denying Caymanians who need services because you cannot possibly deal with the workload. And, we are criticising you and your Unit for not providing the services and we are using that criticism of your Unit to say that taking NAU out on its own, under-resourcing it from the beginning, is not working and therefore we have paid $180,000 to get somebody to come in and act as a secretary and talk to your people and record what they tell you; to reintegrate something that we know is not going to work because that is why we broke it up in the first place because that was not working. I don't know what else to say.

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: I would just like to say that in regards to the recruitment of . . . sorry, Mr. Chair. In regards to the recruitment that was done down in the ground at the Needs Assessment Unit, we have employed quite a bit of Caymanians; some were unemployed in the banking industry as you suggested, who have a background in compliance. And even with the recruitments that we did last year for the needs assessment manager and the needs assessment officers, it was quite a bit of Caymanians who were shortlisted there also, and with the panel reports being written, it would have been Caymanians that would have been also recruited. So, we do try our best because we understand that there is an employment issue at hand also. And we do try our best to ensure that if we have qualified Caymanians for positions, we give them priority so that we have . . . we are working with the Government.

The Chairman: Okay. I had somebody come to me and complain that they had applied for a job at the NAU and they had been shortlisted. They told me that they were offered a contract but they did not get the job and I told them that that was impossible. Nobody would take recruitment to that stage and then abort it. I hope you can tell me that that is not what happened, but you need to tell me what happened; whether this constituent of mine is correct or not.

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: I am not sure exactly what position you are referring to.

The Chairman: This person told me they applied as a needs assessment officer and they were elated and confident that they were going to get a job.

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: With the needs assessment officer recruitment, we got to the point of panel being formed . . . panel being created; the panel report and signed by all persons that—

The Chairman: The what?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: The panel report which is—

The Chairman: Oh, the panel; the interview panel report.

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Sorry, the interview panel report for the needs assessment officer.

The Chairman: Right.

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: That was done, completed and signed off by all persons who did the recruitment and recommendations—

The Chairman: Which means that those were the people that they were recommending to be hired?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: They would have been recommended to be hired but that panel report was placed on hold so no one would have been contacted to say, *You were successful,* because that was placed on hold.

The needs assessment manager position which was advertised in May, that position, the panel report was also written and it was agreed upon and approved of who the successful candidate was. An offer was made and the candidate did accept but no contract was extended. That too is now on hold.

The Chairman: For over a year?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: From November . . . yes, by the Ministry; over a year.

The Chairman: Anyway, I guess from the Public Accounts point of view, it certainly is good to hear your side of the story because that is not the side that has been painted here in the last couple of weeks. And I empathise with you and I can tell you that pending agreement with the Committee, we are likely to make some very strong recommendations as to you getting the proper resources.

Do you have any idea whether these resources are likely to be re-budgeted, because if you did not use them this year, I would think it will be very difficult to justify wanting them again next year?

Mr. Kenneth Jefferson, Financial Secretary/Chief Officer, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development: Mr. Chair, the Ministry would simply have to

request again and there is nothing obviously to prevent that. And in developing the allocations for the financial years 2018 and 2019, the Ministry of Finance took as its based position, the current 2016/17 Budget which would have then had those posts—

The Chairman: You didn't eliminate positions that were . . . you don't do zero budgeting anymore, whereas if we did not hire in we have to come back and . . .

Mr. Kenneth Jefferson, Financial Secretary/Chief Officer, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development: So, we would have taken a figure as a starting point which had embedded in it the vacancies that we are now speaking about that had not been filled during the course of the year.

Mr. Chairman, if I could just suggest what might be a useful tidbit of information for the Committee. Ms. Hurlston spoke about earlier of 25 persons now being hired in the NAU but only 12 of those were NAU officers, I believe, that would carry out assessments, so that leaves 13. Would those 13 be admin staff and accounts staff? What would be the makeup of the 13?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Through you, Mr. Chair: The makeup of the other individuals would be the accounts staff which are four persons currently; 2 executive officers who deal with the frontline customers coming through the door, ensuring that they get to their appointments and dealing with the landlords et cetera. And then, of course, we have the finance manager. One of those positions is at the ministerial level. It was a needs assessment officer that was . . . the post was redone into a housing repairs assistant coordinator, and that is at the ministerial level, in assisting with the housing repairs programme. And we then have the 3 supervisors, and, of course, the deputy and the director.

The Chairman: I had reason to visit the NAU in February/March to assist a constituent of mine and I must tell you that my experience was entirely different from the picture that has been painted about the Unit. I was pleasantly surprised with the experience that I had. But I noticed that there seemed to be a lot of space downstairs because I had to be brought upstairs, but there was no one downstairs. I would assume that . . . I mean, I could climb the stairs but, how do you deal with clients that cannot manage the stairs if there is no one downstairs in the rented space that you have? Again, is that part of what your resource limitations predict?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Mr. Chair, actually, we open the downstairs portion earlier this year, maybe in January/February and that is where we are now seeing our clients. Our meeting rooms are downstairs. Our executive officers who are the first point of contact with our customers, they are also downstairs. And that was to alleviate the issues we had from our clients where elderly and disabled had to either climb the stairs or take the elevator. I'd like to thank the Government because it was our past Minister who allowed in the budget for us to have funds to rent the facilities downstairs and to renovate it. It has been a great aid to our clients because now they have immediate access from the parking lot into the office and everything is on the ground floor when it comes to the clients and the landlords and anyone else who are coming for services. It is easier accessibility. It is also handicap accessible which was not as per upstairs. We have handicap accessible bathrooms also.

The Chairman: I did not notice an elevator, or, does the building not have an elevator?

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: The building does have an elevator but it is all the way around the front as you go through to the restaurant.

The Chairman: Because I believe when I came in February the only person I saw downstairs was the security guard who helped me out, again.

Anyway, I want to thank you for the information you provided us with. It does paint a substantial different picture and I can assure you that the PAC is likely to recommend that those people you need, to be hired as soon as possible, so thank you for your time.

Are there any other questions?

[Inaudible interjection]

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Thank you.

I would also just like to say thank you all for having the NAU here to express our views and the concerns that we have because, unfortunately, many times, as you said, you know, the public is provided with information that does not necessarily truly reflect the concerns from our staff.

I would also like to publicly thank my staff for being so dedicated regardless of the challenges that we currently have.

The other thing I would like to also point out is that in getting resources with the needs assessment officers and the other positions that are budgeted for, it might be a challenge if we already have some of those positions that would have been converted into the social workers and the coordinator positions that were already advertised. I am not sure what stage the recruitment is at, but that would block some of the funds that are reserved for the other positions.

The Chairman: The information that we were given this morning suggests that out of 11 positions, I believe it was, that 5 and 3 of those went to housing development repairs. And the other two might have been the supervisor and the person that you are talking about. So, it seems like you should have six vacancies based on what information we were given, at a minimum. So, we will do our best to try and make a recommendation to the Government that those positions be filled as soon as possible, and I will seek leave of the Committee to write an urgent letter to the Ministry. This report, unfortunately, is not going to get tabled until during the Budget Session, and I know one thing we want to do is to make sure that the resources that you already have are carried forward into the next year.

Ms. Tamara Hurlston, Director, Needs Assessment Unit: Thank you, Mr. Chair,

The Chairman: Thank you very much.

That concludes this review.

The Auditor General was wondering if we have a meeting scheduled for the 20th September.

Ms. Sue Winspear, Auditor General: Mr. Chairman, thank you.

We talked about having a meeting on the 20th September, if members remember, to fit in with what we thought was the budget timetable at that point, and, of course, the budget documents have gone out now and as the Financial Secretary has already said, we need to have budgets returned by the 11th September which obviously is a slightly different timeframe, which means that I will only be able to then bring the budget to you unless we do it rather rapidly after it has gone into the Financial Secretary. But we know the anticipated time in early October before the laying in the House on the 13th October and the time just before that for the Cabinet to review them. So, I was anticipating that if we were able to do it, either the 27th if we wanted to stay with a Wednesday, or the first Wednesday in October, we could also then bring you the general report on financial accounting which would avoid having to have another meeting on that matter and just sort of be more efficient with your time. But if not, we will go ahead on the 20th as members wish. I am just trying to be respectful of peoples' time.

The Chairman: Are members available for the 27th September?

Mr. Austin O. Harris, Jr.: As much as I enjoy the Auditor General's company, I may very well be off-island at that time with the Government. I may be leaving on the 26th.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: On the 27th.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: What about the 20th?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: The 20th is before you leave.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: We currently have a meeting scheduled for the 20th.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: We'll work with you.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: Okay.

Ms. Sue Winspear, Auditor General: Thank you. Through you Chairman: That's very kind. I was just trying to save your time to avoid having to do two separate meetings on two separate things. But I think that probably means that if we have that meeting just on the budget and members, please understand, it will be one subject, then I will probably—

The Chairman: It will only be one subject because we are going to refer the HSA accounts that were tabled. We need to deal with some of the things that are in that.

Ms. Sue Winspear, Auditor General: Of course. Sorry. From my perspective, of course, you will have your own business but it means I can't bring the other report probably to that meeting. I'll try. I will see if we can do it in time for that meeting. So, we will probably then save that one to be considered alongside the major capital projects piece which we should have ready for the end of October, on the presumption that you do not want another one in the middle.

The Chairman: Yeah, that will be okay because we will have this and we will have to decide on the 20th whether we are going to try to deal with the HSA accounts before the 13th October in order to table the report on that, because I want to keep as up to date as possible.

So, the next meeting will be the 20th September at 9:00 in the morning.

Thank you all very much. This meeting is adjourned until September 20th 2017, and that will not be a public hearing, it will be an administrative meeting. Thank you all very much.

At 4:08 p.m. the Public Accounts Meeting adjourned.