Sir, last time we debated this topic in this assembly my speech was directed at our ignorance of the problem Guernsey is facing with the abuse of prescription drugs.

Well Sir today I would like to thank HSC, not just for this policy letter which I fully support, but for the work the committee is doing in reducing the amount of prescription drugs making their way onto the black market. The prescription of Fentanyl, and extremely deadly drug, has fallen and it appears the diversion of this drug onto the streets has been reduced significantly.

Sir, as well as access to NICE-TA drugs, there are a growing number of local patients wanting to try medical cannabis for their condition. The issue is that although our legislation permits the prescription of medical cannabis, the criteria for accessing it is extremely narrow.

There are a few conditions that medical cannabis can be prescribed for, but even in these cases you need to demonstrate that you have exhausted all other drugs beforehand. Why – there is no logical reason for having to try often addictive drugs, with horrendous side-affects, before you can be allowed to use a natural plant remedy that humans have used for medical purposes, for thousands of years.

Sir I believe that islanders should have a choice when it comes to their own care pathway. Patients that believe that their medical condition could be eased by the use of medical cannabis should have the option to try it right from the beginning.

If this policy was adopted tomorrow I believe that we would see many patients with improved health and at a cost nowhere near that which we have to pay for some prescription drugs.

Sir, whilst I am fully supportive of HSC and the policy letter we have before us today. I’d like to hear from the president whether or not her committee would consider re-examining the policy on the prescription of medical cannabis, with a view to making this exceptional, natural medication, an option for all and not just a few.