

3.9 Deputy S.C. Ferguson of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding costs associated with investigations into police officers:

Will the Minister inform the House what is the total cost of the investigations into police officers over the past 4 years for each year, and what is the cost of the suspensions in terms of salaries, pensions and social security contributions plus the cost of extra over-time and temporary staff to cover absent officers in each of these 4 years?

Senator W. Kinnard (The Minister for Home Affairs):

It is a lot to answer in a very short period of time but I will do my best. Firstly, investigations of this nature are undertaken, as you know, by the Force's Professional Standards Department but it is part of their normal work. Their role is primarily to enable the force, obviously, to meet its statutory requirements in terms of the Police Complaints Law and the disciplinary procedures. As the type of the investigations the Deputy refers to are undertaken as part of the department's routine work it is not possible to identify additional costs unless particular special measures were undertaken, such as calling in a force from the United Kingdom to carry out an inquiry. While this practice was common prior to 2001, since that time a number of local officers within the force have undertaken training and they are able to undertake this work; obviously with independent scrutiny by the Police Complaints Authority and periodic audit by the H.M. Inspectorate of Constabulary. There are no significant additional costs outside the normal costs of professional standards work, which all police services are now expected to undertake. In terms of suspension; suspended officers are dealt with in terms of normal staff costs of the force and the loss that is sustained, because of their suspension, is reflected in the temporary loss of their services rather than any direct financial cost. So, from that perspective, it could be argued that the cost is nil but I will give an indication of the remuneration costs - because I think that is what the Deputy really perhaps is asking, although it is not clear - of suspended officers on the assumption that that is what she is requesting.

The Bailiff:

Deputy, your time has expired, I am afraid.

Senator W. Kinnard:

Perhaps if she asked me a supplementary I could give it to her, Sir.

3.9.1 Deputy S.C. Ferguson:

Yes, I have a supplementary. It seems to me that if the accounting system cannot produce the figures then the Minister is really saying that the accounting system at police headquarters is perhaps a nonsense. Given the large sums that must be involved in this; the cost of the Professional Standards Unit for a year, obviously, and given that there appears to be an appalling lapse in management controls and procedures, in fact the word incompetence springs to mind. Will the Minister tell us what steps are being taken to remedy the situation and will the Minister undertake to supply the House with a proper summary of the costs of all these investigations?

Senator W. Kinnard:

I completely refute the assertion that there is any incompetence in the Professional Standards Unit. As I have said, Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary has already given an indication of his complete confidence in that department and indeed States

Members will have a copy of his full report when it is produced. What I have done is outline the situation that, in terms of the Professional Standards Unit, they undertake this as part of their normal work and I was trying to clarify what the Deputy was asking. If she is asking how much remuneration individuals have received, I can give her that, because that is governed by the relevant legislation which has been passed by this House at various times. The current law gives officers an entitlement to full remuneration during their suspension - because we must remember that suspension is not punishment - and, as far as can be calculated, the costs of remuneration for each of the years from 2003 to 2006 respectively is £53,000, £72,000, £181,000 and £55,000. That is a total over those years of £361,000. While these payments may be considered regrettable, Members, I think, have to agree that if we were not to confront integrity issues within the Island, this could run the risk of reputational and economic consequences. In respect of additional staff cover, there is no provision for this and absence cover is covered through redeployment within the police force. So it follows therefore that there are again no significant additional costs. Members will also be interested to know that there is only currently one officer suspended, pending a hearing in 2 weeks' time, and the present indications are that there will be no suspensions in place by early July. I also remind Members again that suspension is not punishment and that is why the policies of this House and the laws of this House allow for remuneration during suspension. In other forces it may well be possible ...

The Bailiff:

Minister, you must try to be more concise in answering supplementary questions.

Senator W. Kinnard:

I will try. I am getting tired actually, Sir.

3.9.2 Deputy of St. Martin:

Would the Minister confirm in actual fact, if £360,000 has been paid for officers who have not worked, because they have been suspended for all sorts of reasons, that that £360,--- has been lost because we have received no work from those officers? So, it has cost the Island £360 for officers who have not worked?

Senator W. Kinnard:

That is the bit I was trying to really address, I am afraid, when you stopped me in full flow. What I was going to say is that in other forces, of course, it may well be possible to move an officer temporarily to another town or to a department some physical distance from the location of the inquiry. In an island, of course, that is very, very rarely possible. So, what the management of the force is doing it is continuing to look for opportunities and alternatives to suspension but there are obvious physical constraints to us being able to do that when we are an island police force. So the issue, again, is there are circumstances when an investigation is going on when you have to remove the officer from the place where the investigation is being undertaken. We do not have the ability to send someone down the road to another town and also, again, it is the policy of this House, and it is within the law of this House, that when someone is suspended they are eligible to be paid during that suspension.

3.9.3 Deputy S.C. Ferguson:

I would ask the Minister again to supply us with the figures and perhaps she would confirm that. Also, I am sorry, if there are so many suspensions and so many

investigations, then in the big wide world of business this is normally a failure in management. Will the Minister tell us what steps are being taken to remedy the situation?

Senator W. Kinnard:

I refute again the assertion that there are so many suspensions. As I have said there is one currently which is about to be heard in 2 weeks' time. It looks as if there will be no suspensions outstanding come July. I think it is important that this House recognises that the integrity of our Island police force is essential for our international reputation and for the reputation of the integrity of our force within the Island. Law enforcers must be above suspicion and I think it is essential that Members of this House recognise that and I would have hoped that they would support that view and support senior officers in ensuring that our Island police force is highly respected for the professional body that it is in the vast majority of circumstances. There are occasions when there are a few circumstances which have to be dealt with and the force should be judged on the way in which the procedures are put in place and the way they are dealt with, not the fact that these investigations take place. To have no investigations at all could in fact be an area of concern, as indeed it has been in other places at other times.

Deputy S.C. Ferguson:

The Minister has not answered the question.

The Bailiff:

You will have another opportunity later, Deputy.