

2.11 The Connétable of St. Helier of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding the deployment of community police officers in the Parishes:

Would the Minister state how many community police officers are deployed in the Parishes, the cost per officer of this service and whether it is planned to increase their role?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand (The Minister for Home Affairs):

There are currently 3 community police officers for the Island and because of their average seniority the cost is about £57,172 per officer. I am keen to see the community policing role increased. The notes which I have indicate that there are 2 ways in which you could do that but perhaps I should stop there in case a supplementary is asked.

2.11.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

I am very surprised to hear that only 3 community police officers are covering the whole Island. What figure does the Minister think would be more appropriate?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

The number that should be there if the police had a full complement is 9. What is happening is that because police numbers are below full complement and because there are specific pressures of particular investigations like the historical abuse inquiry, and also there is another issue which is that although recently 15 new officers were sworn in, they have only just from July become available for all duties, so we are getting part of the year when the police are 20-odd officers down plus others who may be seconded and at other times of the year when they are not so far down. I am not sure I have answered the question.

2.11.2 The Deputy of St. John:

Given the community policing I have to ask is it nice to have or is it a necessity given we have our 12 Honorary Police forces within the country Parishes? I see frequently community police officers around various Parishes as I am going about and I wonder if some of this work could not be returned to the Honorary Police given the excellent work they do within the community and generally they have their feet on the ground. Would the Minister agree to look at this?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I am very appreciative of the work done by the Honorary Police but this is a different role. Last Tuesday I was in Guernsey talking to my counterparts who very highly value their community policing. I will now give the second half of the answer. There are 2 ways of approaching this. One is to build up the establishment of community police officers up to 9 and the other one is, in fact, to change the philosophy and the culture of the police force so that officers are performing this kind of role, making contact with people locally, listening to what they are saying, et cetera, et cetera, without them being formally attached to individual areas.

2.11.3 The Connétable of St. Helier:

If the suspension of the Chief Officer of the States of Jersey Police is proven to have been politically motivated and if the investigation costs of close to £500,000 therefore wasted, would the Minister agree with me that this money would have been better spent on maintaining a full complement of community police officers?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

That is an entirely hypothetical question.