

The Bailiff:

Can I just remind Members, we have a number of questions today. Standing Orders do require both the questions - including supplementary questions - and in particular the answers, to be concise. I must urge Ministers to be concise in their answers, not only to the original question but also to supplementary questions.

2.1 Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville of the Chief Minister regarding written guidelines relating to the taking of notes at suspensions:

Given that during oral question time on 3rd February 2009 the Chief Minister said that he would endeavour to find out whether there were written guidelines or policies relating to the taking of notes at suspensions and the shredding of those notes before the typewritten minutes were agreed, will he inform Members whether such guidelines exist and, if they do not, will he state why no guidelines have been implemented?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur (The Chief Minister):

There were no written guidelines in place at the time of suspension or at the current time regarding the destruction of rough notes taken at a meeting once a properly typed-up version has been produced and agreed. As I have indicated in my comments to Projet 166, general policies exist to ensure that good standards of record-keeping are maintained but that officers are entitled to and expected to use their discretion. I would also point out that if the Deputy is referring to the specific instance of the suspension of the former Chief Officer of Police, those notes were only destroyed after the typewritten version had been checked and agreed with the then Minister for Home Affairs.

2.1.1. The Deputy of Grouville:

The Chief Minister promised that he would circulate what was available to Members - what procedures were available - is he now saying that there are still no procedures available or there are still no procedures in place?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

My answer is clear, there were no written guidelines in place at the time or now.

2.1.2 Deputy F.J. Hill of St. Martin:

I would just like to ask the Chief Minister if maybe he could clarify the answer he gave because this is something which the Deputy of St. John managed to get out of the Chief Minister way back on 3rd February. Will the Chief Minister confirm that the written notes were indeed only signed by the Chief Executive and the Minister for Home Affairs? They were not signed by the former Chief Police Officer. In other words, they were really of no use at all.

[09:45]

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I do confirm that, yes.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Sorry, I did not catch that answer.

The Bailiff:

It was confirmed.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

They were not signed by the Chief Officer, thank you.

The Bailiff:

It was confirmed, Deputy. It is not very difficult.

2.1.3 Deputy P.J. Rondel of St. John:

Given that staff in the Greffier's Department historically were to keep all their notebooks and they could be called upon by the committee of the day prior to going to Ministerial government, will the Minister put in place that all documents for taking of minutes are kept until after the minutes are signed for at least 12 months?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

One has to distinguish between formal meetings and informal meetings, and I believe that to keep notes of every informal meeting for 12 months would be counterproductive to an efficient government system. As I said in my answer, I believe in the discretion and the good sense of people concerned.

2.1.4 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier:

Does the Chief Minister not agree that even if it is an informal meeting, if it is one on which your future and your career depends then it is a matter of natural justice that the minutes of that meeting should be agreed by all parties?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I quite agree but it will depend on the nature of the meeting. I was talking about general informal meetings such as Ministers have with constituents and people every day of the week. The question was in general terms, I answered in general terms.

2.1.5 Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier:

In 10 years as a staff representative within education, notes were always agreed by all parties involved. Does the Minister agree that by not having consistency across the board that places too much onus on the manager being a good and effective manager and opens problems that we have seen recently with the Chief Police Officer?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

No, I do not. Ideally one would have notes agreed by all parties, if some parties refuse to acknowledge and sign those notes there is nothing much I can do about it.

2.1.6 The Deputy of Grouville:

We have no written procedures then or now, so should we not be able to expect better practice? Should we not be able to expect good practice from the fourth highest paid civil servant in the U.K. (United Kingdom)?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I believe we should aim for good practice and I believe we achieve good practice.