

2.11 The Deputy of St. John of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding internet access available at H.M.P. La Moye to inmates:

Is internet access available at Her Majesty's Prison at La Moye to inmates? If so, is this available in all or certain cells? How are these facilities monitored by staff for misuse? How many computers can be accessed by inmates at the prison?

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

I produced a detailed written answer in response to a very similar written question, in that I have assumed from the wording of the question that this is related to access to the prisoner network. That is an excellent system which has been set up within the prison, which gives prisoners access to a number of things, including full educational programmes in their cells. Prisoners do not have access to the internet through that, although there are certain programmes on that which have been loaded from the internet and vetted by the prison librarian. The prisoner network is available in all the normal cells. In addition to that there are 40 educational computers located around the premises. The prisoner network is monitored centrally.

2.11.1 The Deputy of St. John:

Will the Minister confirm that the law needs to be changed in relation to computers and the like at the prison and that has not happened? Why has he put in place computers within the prison if laws need to be changed, given we are aware and the public are aware that illegal computers are getting into the prison, i.e. by way of Blackberries and mobile telephones, which are in some cases computers, and the like? Will he tell us what action he is taking to make sure that a law is put in place so that prisoners cannot access the internet in any way whatsoever?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

This is a different point to how I read the initial question. In my view this is a question which is going into the matter of telephones, mobile phones, potentially with access to internet, *et cetera*, being smuggled into the prison. It is a different issue. There is no need for a law change to allow computer access lawfully in the way that I have described in the answer. In relation to the issue of the unlawful smuggling of phones into the prison, this has been a problem for some time. It has slightly improved in recent times, because of the fact that the outworkers, those who are going outside the prison to work during the day, are now outside the security perimeter. Since that has happened the issue had decreased in importance. But we have been looking for some time at a fairly complex piece of legislation which would enable the blocking of signals from mobile phones into the prison. That is quite a complex issue.

2.11.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Will the Minister confirm that he believes that many prisoners at La Moye are there because of an educational deficit, for whatever reason, and that providing there are sufficient safeguards in place to make sure that technology is not abused and used for nefarious purposes it is quite right that access to the internet is provided as an education tool which will hopefully lead to lower rates of re-offending?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

It is not going to be provided directly through the internet for security reasons. But the Deputy is absolutely right. The level of general education of prisoners is normally very low, particularly problems in relation to reading, writing and basic arithmetical

skills. It is for this very reason that we have taken the step of extending the availability of educational stuff into the cells. Frankly, many people who cannot read and write are embarrassed by that fact. To go to educational classes in which that will become known to their colleagues is deeply embarrassing to them. But to be able to work on that within their own cells - within that privacy - is a major advantage. I believe that this is a major success story and I am grateful for the Deputy of St. John for giving me the opportunity to publicise it.

2.11.3 Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

Is the Minister satisfied that stringent safeguards are in place to ensure against misuse of computers within the prison?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

Yes. As I have said in some detail in the written answer, there is no external access. This is purely within the internal system. Indeed people cannot even communicate with each other via it. The communications are to the prison management to and fro. It is an information system as well. But also in relation to the specific programmes for educational purposes which are run through it. In addition to that what they are doing on it is monitored. So there is absolutely no question of security issues here. We would not be running this if there were.

2.11.4 The Deputy of St. John:

Given that this has been funded, could Members be told out of which fund it has come and the cost? Also, is the Minister happy that at a time when the Islanders are being told to tighten our belts we are funding this type of equipment in all the cells within the prison?

[10:45]

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

Details of that are set out in the written answer. What we have done is put together 3 things. We have put together the central teaching system, the information link and also access to television channels. We were going to have to change televisions in cells in any eventuality and there would have been the cost of that. The cost of extending a new system into the cells for 162 units is £125,000. Against that we would have had costs of fitting televisions in any eventuality.

The Bailiff:

You do not need to go into too much detail on the figures in an oral answer, Senator.

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

Yes, okay, Sir. This represents incredibly good value, frankly, because of the additional educational benefits. We are trying to work very hard to reduce the prison population through rehabilitation of offenders, which is a key issue.

The Bailiff:

Very well, we will come to the next question.