

3.16 Deputy T.M. Pitman of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding his responsibility for the suspension investigation for the Chief Officer of the States of Jersey Police:

Thank you, and it most definitely is not personal. Given that the Minister has presided over the suspension investigation for the Chief Officer of the States of Jersey Police, where deadlines were missed, budgets overspent, and ultimately no disciplinary charges were brought, how much has this process now cost the taxpayer to date and does he accept responsibility for the situation and if not, why?

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

I did not preside over a suspension investigation. What happened under the code is that I requested a report in relation to this matter, initially I requested a report on the first matter from the Chief Executive to the Council of Ministers; on the second matter from the Deputy Chief Executive. The process that then followed was a process which we would normally follow in relation to any investigation in relation to a senior police officer. Namely, that an outside force was appointed in order to conduct the investigation. Here it was the Wiltshire Police and they were acting as an outside and independent agency. I could not properly intervene in the investigation process as that would have undermined its independence. From time to time I received estimated dates for completion. In the case of the Haut de la Garenne matter this slipped from March 2009 initially to May 2009 to July 2009 to September 2009. Eventually I received an interim report in October 2009 which was confirmed as final in December 2009, but the underlying evidence was not received until February 2010. I did not receive the Haut de la Garenne financial report until February 2010. In relation to Operation Blast there was similar slippage with the report not being received until May 2010 and the evidence in June 2010. I did my best insofar as it is open to me to avert delay, but was unable to control that delay. I inherited a disciplinary process which was both complex and ambiguous. Once the Chief Officer of Police decided to deny all failures on his part and once it became clear that Operation Blast needed to be investigated, expenditure became unavoidable. However, the reports are of immense value in informing Members of this Assembly and the general public as to what happened. If no disciplinary reports had been available then, in my view, an investigation of some kind would have been required in any event. Furthermore, Operation Blast was required - not only because an investigation would have been required in any event - but also because of the involvement of other senior officers. The total costs in relation to the first Wiltshire reports are £572,532. In relation to Operation Blast the figure has now gone up to £295,708. The cost of cover for the absence of the Chief Officer of Police are £234,854, up until tomorrow the final date. In addition to that there are the costs of the BDO Alto accountant's report of £64,000.

3.16.1 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Given that we have already heard that the actual redacted version is just 10 per cent of the evidence, including that 62,000 word document from the Chief of Police, does the Minister believe we have got value for money with investigators who have run up, by my estimations, £52,000 in entertainment bills and £123,000 in travel, not to mention nearly £11,000 in other costs, whatever they might be?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I have no idea how Deputy Trevor Pitman has deduced costs of £52,000 for entertainment bills.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Through an answer the Minister gave some weeks ago.

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I would need have more notice in order to provide a detailed response to a question of this nature.

3.16.2 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Could I ask a further one then? In the centre that I ran in a previous career, an accountant would not accept a large amount of money filed away under miscellaneous or other costs. Why is it acceptable here?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

If the Deputy wishes to ask me for a greater level of detail in relation to matters then I am sure that my accounts staff can produce those details.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Well I am asking.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Do you have them now, Minister, I think that is the question?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

No, I do not have them now. I could not possibly expect this level of detail in terms of a question.