

3.3 Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding alleged anomalies in the construction of the Metropolitan Police Interim report

I should say I received a note a few minutes ago from the Greffe apologising for rewording my question and getting the order wrong. So, hopefully I can read it out correctly. Will the Minister advise whether the alleged author of the Metropolitan Police Interim Report is himself under investigation by the Met. regarding alleged anomalies in the report's construction and whether the author neglected to interview crucial witnesses who could have refuted allegations made by the former Senior Investigating Officer against the former Deputy Chief Officer and suspended Chief Officer of the States of Jersey Police?

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

In my view this question clearly relates to an issue in relation to disciplinary matters concerning another police force for which I do not have responsibility. It is therefore, in my view, clearly outside of my official responsibilities and even if I had tried to find this information it would be a confidential matter to that force.

3.3.1 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

The question has been accepted, so I hope I can continue. Given that the Minister is also a former Magistrate and Chief Officer, I believe, with a great deal of experience, could he advise the Assembly whether it is normal practice or indeed congruent to natural justice to suspend a person for a year and a half on the basis of reports where the author has allegedly refused to interview key witnesses or to include evidence that conflicts with the report's findings and thus paint a very different picture?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I am not going to comment in relation to an issue of suspension of the Chief Officer of Police because that is a matter of an independent report, but I am able to confirm that decisions made by myself were properly made after due process.

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

Would the Minister advise the States when they will receive a timetable for the briefings that he refers to in his answer to one of the written questions in respect of the investigation into the initial suspension so that we can be properly prepared for the debate in 2 weeks' time on the appointment of the Chief of Police?

[10:00]

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I thought the question was going to be about briefings that I was contemplating giving and then it shot off in a different direction in relation to the original suspension decision, which is not a matter within my remit. If it had been, as I initially thought it was going to be, then I will very shortly make decisions on that.

3.3.3 The Deputy of St. Mary:

To go back to the question and the skilful evasion by the Minister, the question does say ... it simply asks whether the alleged author of the Met. interim report, whether there is some issue with that within the Met. and whether there is some inquiry going on into the production of that report. That does not involve us meddling in the affairs of the Met., it is a simple statement of fact. It is a question of fact. Is that report

under questioning? Is it being investigated within the Met.? That is a question of fact and it would be nice to have a simple answer.

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I am amazed that Members cannot understand that I do not have responsibilities in relation to overseas and U.K. (United Kingdom) police forces. This simply is not within my area of responsibility.

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

I am sure the Minister will agree that the police interim report played a specific role in the suspension of the Chief Officer, because it was used in support of the Acting Chief Officer's report. So, is the Minister in a position that he can agree that the person under investigation is not the author of the report, but he took that report without the consent of the author, submitted it to the Acting Chief Police Officer, and it was sent to the Police Chief Officer at 15.27 on Monday, 10th November? So, in other words the author of the report ... that report was sent without the consent of the author and the complaint is now about that person who took that report without the consent of the author.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Deputy, I do not think that relates to the subject matter of the question which the Minister has already dealt with.

3.3.5 Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier:

I just wonder if the Minister is concerned at some of the questions he is being asked that if there are irregularities or supposed irregularities regarding the information that was put forward which led to the suspension of the Chief Officer of Police; is he not concerned? Does it not cast doubt on the whole process that was undertaken and the suspension that has gone on for this period of time and the cost to the taxpayer?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

The matter is purely relevant to the initial suspension proceedings, because as I have made clear to the Members of this Assembly on very many occasions I did not take into account the contents of the Met. report when making my decisions.

3.3.6 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Following on from Deputy Higgins really; I appreciate the U.K. officers or police forces might not be the responsibility of the Minister but surely ensuring that an innocent until proven guilty Jersey employed officer is not suspended for a year and a half on a document that is deeply flawed because evidence that paints a contrary picture is not included, witnesses are deliberately not interviewed. Surely that should be his responsibility and he should have great concern because this is a man's life and a family that we are considering here.

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I remind the Members of this Assembly that the Chief Officer of Police is currently suspended for 2 reasons. These questions relate to the first reason, but I held a second suspension hearing on 31st July and suspended him in relation to another matter. He has therefore not been suspended on this first matter alone for this period of time because he was suspended for a second reason as well.

3.3.7 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Could I just seek clarification of that from the Minister, because it seems to be saying ... I believe what he is saying is: "Well, it does not really matter if this is a complete travesty on the first case because he is going to be suspended on a second case?" Surely that is not acceptable?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I have already said very clearly that the procedure followed by myself in relation to the suspension was correct and proper. It was fully upheld by the Royal Court on a judicial review hearing. I have already said that and my comments are saying, and plus that there was a second ground for suspension.