

4.4 Deputy M. Tadier of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding the receipt of advice on police procedures:

Some groans there again, from across the Chamber. Can the Minister inform the Assembly from whom he receives advice on police procedures in relation to the suspension of the Chief Officer of the States of Jersey Police?

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

This question is ambiguous. There are 2 possible meanings to it and there has been much debate in my Department as to which is the real meaning. I am going to answer the meaning which does not take me immediately back into political groundhog day, although of course, it may be that subsequent questions will. The answer is, on the assumption that what is referred to here is advice on police procedures, in other words, ways in which police should conduct investigations. The answer is, from the Chief Constable of the Wiltshire Police Force, via the 3 reports which he has written.

4.4.1 The Deputy of St. Martin:

I was rather surprised to hear that answer. Can I ask the Minister, how frequently he discusses the suspension process and the way in which the investigation is going, with the Chief Constable of Wiltshire?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I never discuss it with the Chief Constable of Wiltshire.

4.4.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Is it correct in that case, that the Minister does not liaise with the current Acting Chief Officer for operational advice on this particular case? Can the Minister confirm that?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

The Acting Chief Officer has not been one of my advisers in relation to matters in relation to the suspension of the Chief Officer, for the very simple reason that he is a witness in relation to matters which may ultimately occur. Of course, if the question was designed to be the other question, the other meaning to the one which I received, of course, I would have then have reminded Members that initial issues of concern were raised in the letter of the Acting Chief Officer of Police to the Chief Executive of the Council of Ministers dated 10th November 2008. But I simply do not receive advice from the Acting Chief Officer. It would not be proper for me so to do, because he is a witness.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I thank the Minister for his answer. I know he does like a bit of ambiguity, but that is essentially the question that you answered was the right question, and I am reassured that you are not taking advice from an officer who would clearly be conflicted. To that extent, you have put my mind at rest. Thank you.

4.4.3 The Connétable of St. Helier:

The Minister betrays some impatience with questions on this subject, and talks about groundhog day. Does the Minister not understand the impatience felt by many members of the public, taxpayers, including the suspended officer himself, with the unwarranted delay that this matter has taken, and the considerable costs that have now built up in relation to it? When is he going to see this matter put finally to rest?

When are the public going to have an end to their impatience with the amount of time and money this whole matter is taking?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

Yes, I absolutely share the frustration of members of the public, and indeed, Members of this House, in relation to the costs that have been involved. I inherited a disciplinary process which, in my view, is simply not fit for purpose, it needs to be rewritten. An enormous amount of time has been taken by the investigating officers in relation to this matter. I share all those frustrations. The fact is, this is very rapidly coming to an endgame, and the endgame will be in July this year.

4.4.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

I would simply add that it is probably quite fitting that the Minister uses a chess analogy, because would he agree that the endgame will necessarily result in a stalemate for all parties in the game?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

The endgame is definitely going to end in a stalemate in the sense of the disciplinary process being completed.

[10:15]

I have been saying for some time that I could not do that in relation to the first investigation, Haven 1. It has now become clear that Haven 2 has now dragged on. So far, a document has only been handed over by the Wiltshire Police very, very recently; but that is not going to achieve a completion. But there will be, undoubtedly, an endgame, because the reports of Wiltshire will be coming to the public domain, and then the public will be able to see for themselves exactly what happened, exactly who was at fault and in what ways.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Sir, may I be allowed a final supplementary?

The Deputy Bailiff:

A final one on this occasion, as you have managed to go reasonably swiftly, and you were deprived of your question on the last one.

4.4.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

I will be more sparing with my use of the word “final” in future. The question is, simply, does the Minister not accept that we knew that we had a particular deadline to deal with? We knew that the Chief Officer was going to be retiring, would it not have been wise to try and get all the reports done within a certain time, by that deadline, so we could have had closure? I would suggest that this is not coincidence, that it could have been done and it should have been done.

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

Insofar as it has been proper for me, I have always tried to urge the Wiltshire Police to get on with the job as soon as possible. But there are extreme limits to what I could do in relation to that, because if I had been too forceful in that, then I would have been accused of interfering in the investigatory process, and that it was not a full and fair

and proper investigation. That it is, and I can assure all Members, when they see the documents, that they will see it is full and proper.