

5.10 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of the Chief Minister regarding the appointments process for the Assistant Minister responsible for External Relations:

Will the Chief Minister outline the appointments process that was undertaken in appointing an Assistant Minister responsible for external relations and would he outline how the incumbent will manage 2 very large workloads?

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

Yes, the appointment of Assistant Ministers is clearly set out in Article 25 of the States of Jersey Law. This gives total discretion to any Minister, subject to the approval of the Chief Minister, to appoint whomever he or she thinks is best suited for the post of Assistant Minister in their department. The nature of that post may well change over time and hence there is an ability to remove and replace Assistant Ministers in order to best satisfy current needs. In the case of the Chief Minister's Department, the Ministry of Justice response to a Select Committee report on the future relationship between the Ministry of Justice and the Crown Dependencies highlighted a need for Jersey to have a much greater focus on external relations. I considered how this could best be achieved quickly and suitably and concluded that, in the short term, the best option was to utilise one of the posts of Assistant Minister in my department to focus on this role. I did consider asking one of the 2 existing Assistant Ministers to carry out that role, but felt that, in view of the potential importance, it was vital to have the most suitable person for that position. I have no doubt that Senator Cohen is the best person for the job. I have discussed with Senator Cohen his ability to cope with 2 very different work roles and I am satisfied that he can indeed do so. With the appointment of a further Assistant Minister for Planning, who I am sure will also be fully committed in his role, I am satisfied that the workload is being fully addressed.

5.10.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Would the Chief Minister not acknowledge, notwithstanding his prerogative of appointing such a person, that it would have been advisable to have discussed all the consequential and parallel issues with the Council of Ministers and would he not further acknowledge for a person to hold 2 vast portfolios (albeit with some delegation) that are so disparate will send a very strange message to people?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

Yes, I did indeed discuss the issue with the Council of Ministers and we agreed in the short term this was a pragmatic solution. As to the impression or otherwise that people might gain, I believe, as I said, the person concerned was the best person for the job. On that basis, I believe that he deserves the confidence not only of this House but of the public generally.

5.10.2 The Deputy of St. John:

Can the Minister confirm then that given that the best person in his view has been chosen, that continuity in office is very important and, in doing so, when he interviewed the appointee, did he confirm that the appointee would be still around next year after the general election and is he standing for office?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I cannot predict the outcomes of elections, but I did, as I say, appoint Senator Cohen on effectively a short-term basis pending further consideration, which I have already

indicated to Members, about the creation of a separate Ministerial portfolio for this task. So, irrespective of whether the Senator remains in office next year or not, this was a pragmatic, short-term solution, which I believe is in the interests of the Island.

5.10.3 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I am just not quite clear what special qualities Senator Cohen has, and that is no disrespect to Senator Cohen. Could the Chief Minister outline that a bit further? Does he speak several languages? Has he got connections in North Korea or in Bosnia? How does it work and where is the Minister for Foreign Affairs now? Does the Chief Minister know?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I do not believe that North Korea or Bosnia features high on our list of immediate priorities. We are more concerned with the relationship with the U.K. and the E.U. where the Assistant Minister, I believe, has very good contacts. He is at the moment somewhere, I think, between London and the airport, on his way back to the Island, having had a meeting yesterday with influential U.K. M.P.s (Members of Parliament).

5.10.4 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

First of all, can the Chief Minister again confirm that the matter of the appointment was discussed at a fully minuted meeting of the Council of Ministers and secondly, could he say whether the criteria of knowing a sufficient number of M.P.s was a satisfactory criteria for appointment to this position?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

Awareness of the number of M.P.s. is not the sole criteria, but that is an important criteria and certainly very much relevant. It was discussed with the Council of Ministers and every meeting of the Council of Ministers is fully minuted and the States Greffe takes pride in the quality of their minutes, and so do I.