

4. Questions to Ministers without notice - The Minister for Home Affairs

The Bailiff:

That brings questions to the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture to an end and we now move to questions to the Minister for Home Affairs, the rota having been changed, as Members have been informed.

The Connétable of St. John:

Given the contract for the stevedores has gone to a Southampton company to operate our docks, can you please tell us how many local company/groups applied to run the docks and in making the decision to have this go off-Island [Interruption] ... My apologies. [Laughter] Economic Development it says, Sir.

The Bailiff:

As I just mentioned, Connétable, in the absence of the Minister for personal reasons the Minister for Home Affairs is in ...

The Connétable of St. John:

Maybe he can try and answer it. [Laughter]

The Bailiff:

I think we will rule that one out of order.

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

Do I get extra time, Sir?

4.1 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Could the Minister clarify why and how a respected U.S. (United States) journalist and best-selling author, I believe, came to be embarrassingly prevented from re-entering Jersey to continue her research into Haut de la Garenne?

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

Yes, I can. She was refused entry into the U.K. The position was that this particular person had been advised locally that if she wished to write a book while in Jersey, because this was a non-E.E.A. (European Economic Area) national, that she would need to apply for a writer's visa. The lady in question did not heed that advice, turned up in the U.K. not having applied for a permit, gave incorrect information to the authorities in the U.K. as to where she was intending to go and they refused her entry. If she had applied in the correct way, as she was advised, I think she would have been granted the necessary permission, but she did not follow the correct process and it was the U.K. authorities who refused her entry.

4.1.1 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

That is obviously the Minister's version, I am sure it is in good faith. But could he advise us; is it normal when a person has gone proactively to local authorities to ask if her visa details are in order but she then finds herself stopped upon entering the U.K., as the Minister said, held for 12 hours - which I think is probably illegal, I might be wrong - denied speaking to her consulate, all on the basis of some notes which had been sent through and attached by the Jersey authorities when she had gone to them to inquire and try and make sure that she was in the right, so to speak?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

Unfortunately, having inquired of the authorities, she did not do what they told her she should do. I cannot comment on the actions of the U.K. immigration authorities, they are not within my responsibility.

4.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Last week the Minister told the Assembly that the police had not lost any evidence with regard to Haut de la Garenne victims' statements and evidence. I have had conversations with one, and others have come forward to say that information has been lost. Will the Minister be prepared to organise a meeting between himself and the Chief of Police and myself and those people to run through these allegations?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I do not think I said it had not been. I think I said that neither the senior police officers or myself were aware. I did make an offer last week to Deputy Higgins of a meeting. I am very happy to meet with him and if he thinks it is helpful for the Chief ... the only difficulty is the Chief Officer of Police would not normally deal with the following-up of details on that, normally it would be something devolved down. I would suggest that Deputy Higgins comes and sees me first and then we will work out the best way of processing the issue.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

If I can add to that, there are some other Deputies who would like to come as well with other concerns.

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

If other Deputies are aware of similar circumstances I am very willing to meet with them.

4.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The last time I discussed Home Affairs and their cuts programme and their contribution to the £65 million worth of cuts I think it was at a Tribal meeting and Health were let off, Education and Home Affairs said that they could not meet the targets at that time. Could the Minister inform Members whether he has met the targets made originally back in 2010 for cuts and if not when will we see what cuts he has managed to perform and by when?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

The position was that I indicated to my colleagues on the Council of Ministers that we would not be able to achieve a full 10 per cent figure and that we would aim to achieve a figure of £1 million less than that. If we could do better without damaging services we would do better. The position is, in fact, that we are not able to achieve more than the figure of £1 million less than the 10 per cent. That is what we are still aiming for.

4.3.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is the Minister for Home Affairs aware, is that £1 million not achieved on the £65 million to add to the Education Department's failure to meet its targets?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

No, my understanding is that that was a known factor and was included within the £65 million figure.

4.4 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Can the Minister inform us when the prisoner repatriation programme will start and can he further inform us which countries have signed-up at present and which are about to sign-up?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

What has happened here is instead of entering into bilateral agreements with individual countries we found a better way of implementing this by becoming parties to the overall... I will call it treaty, I think that is not the right word, but it is the equivalent of a treaty. We have completed all the documentation in relation to that and sent it off some time ago and are now awaiting a response. Effectively what this means is that if we become a party to the overall arrangements we can then start to deal with individual cases with individual countries. So we are not entering into bilateral agreements, we are entering into becoming a party over the whole system, which operates in the European area.

4.5 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Can the Minister therefore confirm that all relevant countries, i.e. those with what you might all a reasonable proportion of residents at La Moye, all relevant countries it appears will be taking part in the arrangements?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

My understanding is that Poland had indicated that there would be a 5-year moratorium period during which they would not take part. I am afraid I am not sure as to when those 5 years began. But apart from that, I am not anticipating other countries not participating.

4.6 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Following the Scrutiny Report on Tasers, will the Minister tell us whether he and the police are still intending to bring forward a proposal to introduce them to the Island?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

We are, yes.

4.7 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Following his mention of it some time ago, has the Minister made any further progress in his investigation into outsourcing the transport of prisoners and, in particular, does he have G4S in mind, given the latest debacle in the U.K.?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I am not sure it was outsourcing of prisoners' transport we were looking at. It was the outsourcing of security arrangements around the courts. That may of course have also extended to that. We have had some difficulties in relation to that and work on that is still ongoing. But there are certain difficulties in the way of it, which are slowing down progress.

4.7.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does he have a blacklist of ones that include G4S?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

If we were going to enter into any arrangement with any company we would want to have very firm contractual arrangements and be clear that they would be able to fulfil their responsibilities.

4.8 Deputy S.G. Luce of St. Martin:

Could the Minister outline the procedure as regards off duty members of the Emergency Services when a Code Red is declared?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

No, I do not think I can. Not with any sensible detail. These are operational matters. The phrase "Code Red" I am not sure is the right phrase either in this context. If the question relates to what happened in relation to the gas company, which I suspect it does, what happened was that senior officers decided to form a Gold Command group at a fairly early stage to take

command of the overall arrangements. But, as I say, I am not directly involved in the operational issues on these things so I cannot give a detailed answer.

4.9 Deputy J.P.G. Baker of St. Helier:

Will the Minister consider re-establishing the position of the Island's Military Liaison Officer? Over the years the previous I.M.L.O.s have brought many hundreds, if not thousands, of British servicemen and women to the Island who have enjoyed the Island and it appears this position has lapsed or certainly disappeared. Will the Minister consider re-establishing it?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

We are continuing to exercise the core functions in relation to this but doing it in a different way. One of the problems was that in fact the previous post suffered what the Americans call "mission creep". The officer, rather than just simply doing the things required, all activities got drawn into all sorts of other areas, and I am satisfied that we can fulfil the same functionalities but without having a full-time officer in order to do that. There has, in any eventuality, been some reduction in the numbers of inquiries because financial cuts and so on in the U.K. have led to organisations being less willing to travel such distances and so on. But I am quite satisfied that we are able to fulfil the same functionality, as I say, without needing a dedicated officer for that purpose.

4.10 Deputy R.G. Bryans of St. Helier:

Is the Minister aware of an investment vehicle called the "social bond" as introduced by Iain Duncan-Smith in the U.K. based on Peterborough Prison, and if so does he think it is a good idea?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I am not aware of it.

4.11 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

I would like to come back on the question of the Island Military Liaison Officer. The post actually contributed probably £1 million to the Jersey economy in terms of military personnel coming to the Island, and as I have stated in this House before, it was a cynical ploy taken on the books of the T.A. (Territorial Army) and then disposed of the post as part of the C.S.R. review. Will the Minister undertake to provide figures showing the number of personnel who have come to the Island over the last 3 years and explain how proactive the T.A. or whoever it is who is doing it, have been over this period because I do not believe they are, and I think they are letting the Island down badly.

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

As I indicated, there has been a reduction in eventuality to the reduction in inquiries in relation to the matter. If Deputy Higgins would care to ask me a specific question by way of written question I will gladly provide the information.