

2.17 Deputy T.M. Pitman of the Chief Minister regarding the terms of reference drawn up by Verita for the proposed Historic Abuse Committee of Inquiry:

Will the Minister advise why, if there was considered to be a problem with the terms of reference drawn up by Verita for the proposed historic abuse inquiry, this was not resolved with Verita and outline why Mr. Andrew Williamson was engaged?

Senator I.J. Gorst (The Chief Minister):

As I explained in an answer to a similar question asked on 12th June, the Verita terms of reference were open-ended as drafted. Mr. Williamson, an experienced social services director from the U.K. who has experience of working in Jersey, was engaged to provide a review of the Verita terms of reference to see whether they could be set in such a way as to ensure that any unanswered questions were investigated and answers provided without the requirement to reopen individual cases.

2.17.1 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Given that feedback from the care leavers suggest that all Mr. Williamson has stressed to them he is interested in is going forward and not looking back as we need to do. Does the Chief Minister think of that as a helpful way forward?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Normally I am in favour of looking forward but of course in this instance one needs to look back so that one hopes that questions can be answered and, as I have said in the past, some closure can be given to some of the victims.

2.17.2 Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:

Is the Minister able to inform Members, given the press release that went out not so long ago advising third parties if they wanted to contribute to Mr. Williamson's review, is the Chief Minister able to give an indication of how many people have come forward in order to contribute to that process?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I do not believe that there are very many. I do not have a number because obviously Mr. Williamson has already met with a number of parties, however, he is in the Island today and tomorrow conducting further interviews as a result of that media engagement.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Can I just announce to Members that I am adding 5 minutes to this part of question time to deal with the Deputy Tadier proposition to go *in camera* and also the Solicitor General has been answering some questions.

2.17.3 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Can the Chief Minister tell us when we are finally going to see the terms of reference for this Committee of Inquiry because it seems to be there is an awful lot of stalling going on? Many of us do question why Williamson was brought in in the first place, following the Verita terms of reference. I am very suspicious about when are we going to get the details so that we can move on with this?

[11:45]

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I, like the Deputy, do want to be able to lodge the terms of reference for this Assembly to agree them so that we can then in a way stop our involvement and allow independent appointment of people to sit on the Committee of Inquiry and take it forward without the need for any political

involvement at all. As I said, Mr. Williamson is in the Island today and tomorrow and I hope that shortly thereafter I will be in a position to receive his report and therefore lodge terms of reference.

2.17.4 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Can I just follow up on that? It is just a question of we have one more session before the summer break; I take it from what he is saying that it is going to be late autumn before we get this far. Can he be more specific about when he expects to be bringing the papers to the States?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I cannot be more specific than I was but if I am in a position, and I look to the Deputy Greffier to advise me here, to lodge the terms of reference by the end of this month, I am not sure if that means we can then have a debate in September. Yes, so it would not be late autumn, it would be earlier than that by the time we are able to debate.

2.17.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

It has been suggested in some quarters that Mr. Williamson is too close to this to be able to deal with the Committee of Inquiry terms of reference, given his previous engagement with the Health and Social Services Department. So will the Minister comment on this suggestion, because it is not coming from myself or any other politicians but from the care leavers and abuse survivors themselves.

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I do not believe that that is the case. As I said in my opening answer, Mr. Williamson is an experienced social services director, well-respected in the United Kingdom, and therefore I do not believe that that is the case.

2.17.6 Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Will the Chief Minister give an undertaking that when the proposition is finally lodged within the accompanying report, there will be the Verita terms of reference, the highlighted changes to those terms of reference and a rationale for the change as well?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Yes, I can give that undertaking. I hope also to be able to detail, although it probably will not be published with the terms of reference, all the other reports, which are in the public domain which might interact with those terms of reference.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

No, I think Deputy Maçon asked something which I was going to go along those lines so I will move on.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Very well, that brings the questions with notice to an end.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

At which point may I just ask the Chief Minister to confirm that he will circulate the answers he prepared for questions 19 and 20 to Members.

The Deputy Bailiff:

That is a matter for the Chief Minister.

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I was imagining that Members might wish to ask them to me in Questions without notice.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I have received notice from the Minister for Treasury and Resources that he wishes to make a statement. I wonder whether it would be convenient to Members if that statement were to be made at this stage before we come on to Questions without notice.

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I think that Members who are particularly interested in this issue are busy working out what questions they want to ask of me, because I do not see them in the Assembly. I am happy to be given the opportunity at any point to answer questions on it so that this issue can be dealt with but if somebody objects, I do not mind. I would not answer Questions without notice perhaps on this issue because we will have the opportunity of answering the statement.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can I just seek clarification of whether it is a personal statement or whether it is a statement which relates to his office?

The Deputy Bailiff:

It is relating to his office so there would be questions for 10 minutes following it, yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

In that case it is probably not as pertinent or as urgent that we have it before. Maybe that is the Minister for Treasury and Resources call.

Senator L.J. Farnham:

I would like to propose that we take the statement now, if that is in order.

Senator A. Breckon:

May I ask a question of the Chair procedurally? The statement which I have looked through refers to a proposition. At paragraph 17 it refers to part (a), at paragraph 22 it refers to paragraph (b), and at paragraph 31 it refers to paragraph (c). We do not have a proposition so procedurally what is the authority, if you like, where a statement can be made about a proposition that has been withdrawn?

The Deputy Bailiff:

The Minister for Treasury and Resources can make a statement about a proposition that was brought and has been withdrawn. I see nothing out of order in that respect.

Senator A. Breckon:

Now it has been withdrawn so there is no point of reference. If somebody wants to look at what it says there is no point of reference.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I daresay Members will remember what was in the proposition.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Can I just follow on that for a point of clarification because I am very confused. I thought the vote of censure was ... no, not my age, it is probably game plan, I do not know what is going on. I am told that the Chairman of the P.A.C. (Public Accounts Committee) and the Chief Minister will investigate the allegations and that we are asked to leave them to do this in peace and to get on with it. Then we have this statement and I am really confused. So are we going to have an investigation or is this statement the end of it?

The Deputy Bailiff:

There was a proposition that we take the statement of the Minister first and is that seconded? **[Seconded]** Do Members agree to take the statement first? All those in favour kindly show? The appel is called for. The vote is on whether to take the statement of the Minister for Treasury and Resources.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

I am sorry, I cannot vote for this because I need to know - I suppose he is going to say it but I need to know - if there is going to be another investigation. Can the Chief Minister not clarify that?

The Deputy Bailiff:

The Chief Minister was asked questions on that point earlier and he was not clear at that point what investigation was being talked about and this, frankly, Deputy, is a distraction in relation to this question which is now before Members. The question is whether or not the statement is to be taken.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can I just make a material consideration? It seems to me that it would be unfair ... there may be Members here who have come prepared with questions for the Minister for Treasury and Resources which do not at all relate to this statement which we were only given today and that is fair enough. But it would seem that if the statement is given before Questions without notice I can envisage that the whole 25 minutes will be taken up with questions relating to the statement. So I think for fairness, seeing as there is a 10-minute allocation for questions purely relating to the statement it would make sense to have the statement after. That is the only consideration.

The Deputy Bailiff:

That is a perfectly legitimate, fair comment to make and those Members who agree with you will vote against the proposition procedurally to take it at this stage. The vote has been called for as to whether or not to take the statement of the Minister for Treasury.

Senator L.J. Farnham:

If it helps I will withdraw my proposition.

The Deputy Bailiff:

The proposition is made. Do the Members agree it should be withdrawn? Very well, then we come to the first question period, Questions to Ministers without notice. The first is for the Minister for Treasury and Resources.