

Questions to Ministers Without Notice - The Chief Minister

4.1 The Connétable of St. John:

Last week, red alerts on Tuesday, after many attempts to try and contact the Civil Emergency Officer only to find he was stuck off-Island and after many more calls to the Chief Minister's Department, all to no avail by my staff and others, I called the Chief Minister at his home and left a message on his answer phone because there was no reply yet again. As yet I have not received a reply from the Chief Minister, although I left a message for him to call me back with some urgency. Could the Minister tell us who the Deputy Emergency Planning Officer is in the absence of the Emergency Officer, and give us a contact number please?

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

I am surprised that the Connétable does not think I should have an answering machine on my personal home line, but there we are. I think he will confirm that within minutes of leaving a message on my personal home machine he was phoned by the Acting Chief Executive of the States to deal with his issue. That is absolutely right. This was an operational matter and the Parish Hall was contacted in that way as I expect he would have expected nothing less from leaving that message. The Connétable does raise an important point about the Deputy Emergency Planning Officer, and there is not one in place at this point. What we need to consider in light of what happened and in light of other emergencies that have taken place throughout the course of the last 15 months, is whether that particular office needs further resource. Having said that, of course, these were conditions that we have only experienced since some 30 years ago, so we must not jump to conclusions with regard to a 30-year event. But if I could, and I know the Connétable of Trinity is going to say this, I should like to thank everyone involved, States and Parish, for a magnificent response to that snow storm. **[Approbation]**

4.1.1 The Connétable of St. John:

Could I ask who the Deputy C.E.O. (Chief Executive Officer) of the States is? When I leave a personal message on his answer phone about a civil emergency I expect the Chief Minister who can pass it on to his staff could have returned the call to the Constable of St. John.

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I said the Acting Chief Executive Officer and that was the Chief Officer of Home Affairs. I do not quite agree with the Connétable of St. John. On operational matters I think that it is far better for the person who is responsible for those operational matters to deal with them, not for a politician to muddy the waters and then me subsequently have to phone someone else, who then has to phone him back. It was a far quicker and preferable response that the Connétable received. Despite his question this morning, I should like to thank him and his Parish for the sterling work that they did in providing support to their Parishioners. I think that the work that they did shows the value of the Parish to our community, and we tamper with it at our peril. **[Approbation]**

4.2 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I hope I will get a quicker answer than that. We have spoken a lot about the tribulations of the Dean this morning, but more importantly will the Chief Minister join with me in expressing regret on behalf of the Island for the appalling travesty of justice inflicted upon the young woman deported from the Island as a direct consequence of nobody in authority responding to her cries for help regarding sexual abuse?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I am sure that the Deputy and other Members are fully aware of the statement that I issued last week with regard to the sadness that I, and I believe this Assembly feels, with regard to what happened to an individual that was living in our community. I would like to correct one element of the ... perhaps I will limit myself to one. One element of the question of the Deputy, and that

is with regard to the use of the work “deportation”. The individual was bound over, yes, to leave Jersey, but that is not deportation and, as I understand it, that binding over was at the request of the lawyer that was representing the individual and they made that application or request to the Magistrate at the time.

The Deputy Bailiff:

If I may just assist Members from the Chair, a binding-over order to leave the Island of that kind can only be made with consent.

4.3 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Given that Guernsey and the Isle of Man have apparently signed up to the U.K. equivalent of F.A.T.C.A. (Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act), will the Chief Minister explain where we are with regard to this?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I intend to make a statement in the Assembly on this matter tomorrow and I ask that the Senator wait until that point.

4.4 Deputy J.H. Young:

Does the Chief Minister agree that the publication of annual performance indicators and performance report is an important requirement of management of the public sector? Could he please tell us what has happened to the policy of the previous Chief Minister in publishing those reports, the last one being 2010? If he accepts that, will he make arrangements to publish the 2 missing years please?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Whilst I accept that the publication of performance reports is important, I am personally of the view that perhaps we have focused on publishing reports around performance, rather than dealing with performance management and performance issues right across the States workforce. Therefore since coming into office I have given direction that that actually is the piece of work that should be concentrated on. We can produce all the reports in the world, but it is activity on the ground and managing performance which is important. But I can certainly see whether any sort of report was collated and whether it is in a publishable format, and if not if it could easily be introduced into that format.

4.4.1 Deputy J.H. Young:

Can I ask the Chief Minister just to advise whether or not he does consider that performance reports at least provide some diagnostic information towards identifying where there are problems and make comparisons with other jurisdictions? Does he not accept that at least in that purpose they have an important role?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Indeed they do. But perhaps if I play the opposing position, it seems to me that most performance reports are a pat on the back saying how jolly well we are doing, and not reflecting the reality on the ground.

4.5 The Deputy of St. Peter:

February was considered to be the month for focusing on housing and I hope the Chief Minister will be able to give us a progress report, please.

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Yes, indeed it was, and March retains that focus on housing as well. Members are aware that the Minister for Housing has lodged his Housing Transformation Programme and that is a forward-looking exciting development when it comes to social housing. Ministers are working with the

Minister for Planning and Environment. We have considered housing at the last 2 Council of Ministers' meetings and we expect a further report to come to our meeting this month and we hope shortly to be able to make more public comment with regard to the H3 policy and where we believe that is or is not in reality and the need for short-term rezoning for the construction of affordable and social housing.

4.6 Deputy S. Pinel of St. Clement:

Would the Chief Minister please advise Members as to the progress of establishing a London office to represent Jersey?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I am aware that I cannot ask my Assistant Minister to act as rapporteur for a question such as that, that he is far better placed to answer than myself. Having said that of course, I can confirm that job descriptions and appropriate job needs are being drafted and will be considered by myself and by the Assistant Minister I hope in early course. That is the most difficult part of establishing the office because in the short term we can use serviced offices while more appropriate longer term provision is provided for. But getting in place the right person is the priority of the work at this moment in time and is the most important part of establishing the office.

[11:45]

4.7 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisser:

Given the imminence of the tourist season and the excellent results with a few blips of the Minister for Social Security's programme of bringing about a cultural change to move people into hitherto shunned occupations, could the Chief Minister say whether he is having any luck? Are there any legal impediments to withdrawing the massive amount of unused licences there which still are the elephant in the immigration room?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I do not think that the Deputy's description of elephants in rooms is accurate. The Migration Advisory Group has been removing non-qualified licences as they could when licences came up for renewal in a very appropriate manner and they rightly have been and are from time to time challenged by those organisations. The new law, as the Deputy knows, will enable that group to consider all licences and that will be a piece of work that they will have to do when that new law is introduced. I can calm the Deputy's concerns in that regard.

4.8 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Is the Chief Minister as concerned as I am when the Island is under intense scrutiny, especially in terms of the finance industry, that the Jersey Financial Services Commission currently only has one supervisory director, the Director of Banking. There is not one for funds, there is not one for trust and administration and I believe there is no one looking after the anti-money laundering. Is he not concerned that the actual staffing of the commission is so under resourced or understaffed at this present time?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

That is not my understanding of the situation. However, once again the Deputy is referring to an operational matter and I do not have the detail with me with regard to actual people on the ground. But I am quite prepared to ask that question of the commission. But it certainly is not my understanding that that is how it is.

The Deputy Bailiff:

If there are no other questions of the Chief Minister, then that brings that question time to an end.