

4. Oral Questions

4.1 Deputy J.H. Young of St. Brelade of the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding complaints received from members of the public alleging maladministration:

Since the Minister's appointment, have any complaints been received from a member of the public alleging maladministration of his department and, if so, would he advise what proportion of these complaints have been independently investigated and written responses made and detail a number of complaints which are still without reply?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel of St. Saviour (The Minister for Planning and Environment):

My department welcomes feedback and has a customer feedback policy that sets out how customer comments, complaints and compliments are dealt with. This policy is available from the department and on the States website. Formal complaints and those of a more serious nature need to be made in writing to the department by email or letter and these are fully investigated by the department senior manager and a response provided. The complainant can ask that their complaint be reviewed by the department director or the chief executive officer if they are not satisfied with the response they have received to their complaint. If the complainant is still not satisfied with the outcome, they have the right to raise their complaint with the States of Jersey Complaints Board and their complaint may be heard at a public hearing by an independent board. I would also expect that any complaints relating to illegal or corrupt activity are to be reported to the police. In relation to formal complaints, the department received 7 complaints in 2011, 13 in 2012 and 3 to date in 2013. As might be expected, a large proportion of these complaints relate to planning decisions with a small number relating to customer service issues. All of those complaints received have been investigated and a response given to the complainant and are now closed. I believe the department receives a very small number of complaints in comparison to the many thousands of varied and difficult decisions it makes per year.

4.1.1 Deputy J.H. Young:

Can I ask the Minister to confirm that he does keep a complaints register or make sure that one is kept and could he confirm that 23 complaints in the period is the whole total of the number of criticisms that his department is receiving? Would he agree that seems an extraordinarily low number, given the contentiousness of their decisions?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

I can confirm that 23 over the period of 2011 to 2013 are the figures that I have received. The department does keep a complaints register and, as I said, I do think that this does represent a very low number of complaints perhaps compared to other States departments.

4.1.2 Deputy J.H. Young:

Could he say if this complaints register is publicly available?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

I will check that. I think it is but if the Deputy would wish to inspect the list that I have in my folder, I would be happy to pass those details on to him.

4.1.3 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Could I ask is it possible for that list to be shared with other States Members as well who have had complaints made about the department?

Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

Yes, it may need to be docked a little bit in order to take out any data protection elements but I will sort that with the officers.