

3.5 Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré of St. Lawrence of the Chief Minister regarding the publication of the Dame Heather Steel report:

Further to his response of 4th March 2014, does the Chief Minister have any further information as to when the Dame Heather Steel report is likely to be released into the public domain, in relation, obviously, to the Dean.

Senator B.I. Le Marquand (Deputy Chief Minister - rapporteur):

The Bishop of Winchester has very recently received the finalised form of Dame Heather Steel's report and should now, in accordance with paragraph 10 of the terms of reference, supply a copy of the report to anyone against whom disciplinary action is recommended and to the Bailiff, the Dean, and the Ministry of Justice. He should also provide a report fairly shortly to Bishop John Gladwin, who is conducting an inquiry in relation to the adequacy of safeguarding arrangements in the Church of England in Jersey. I have to say, it is understood that the Bishop is not intending to bring any disciplinary action against any clergy in Jersey. Under paragraph 13 of the terms of reference: "After the conclusion of any recommended disciplinary proceedings, the Bishop of Winchester is obliged to publish the report or a summary of its findings and conclusions although, where necessary the report may be summarised and/or redacted for legal reasons or to protect the identity of any person who features in the report who has provided relevant information to the investigation." That is a quote from paragraph 13 of the terms of reference. I am unable to say how soon the Bishop of Winchester will fulfil that obligation or in what precise form the information will be provided.

3.5.1 Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré:

Thank you to the Minister for his response, and I think my question is in the event that things do not progress swiftly. Very recently, the Archbishop of Canterbury publicly stated that: "Any time the Church does not serve people in the way it should have done, it has to be very open about that." He also stated: "In order to understand the details surrounding the position of the Dean, one would have to look at the legal reports that have been made." I think, on that basis, one might express some concern that one might only ever see a summary of the findings. Given those statements, and this commitment of the Archbishop of Canterbury to open this, on behalf of the Chief Minister, will the Minister commit that he will write to the Archbishop of Canterbury if we do not see a summary or the report soon that, as the worldwide head of the Anglican Church, he will seek an undertaking from the Archbishop of Canterbury that he will adhere to those commitments and therefore will ensure that the Dame Heather Steel report is placed into the public domain soon?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

Again, I am always loath to commit the Chief Minister in his absence; I am sure Members will understand that. I know that the Chief Minister is of the opinion that it is important that the details of the report are made public; that is my own view also. I have in detail quoted paragraph 13 of the terms of reference, which do enable a certain amount of redaction and the production of a résumé. If, of course, that, when produced, was unsatisfactory, then I have no doubt that the Chief Minister will be urging the appropriate authorities to ensure that the essential information is made public.

3.5.2 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier:

Connected to some of the same issues as the Dame Heather Steel report is the Glenys Johnston report. Does the Minister know if that will be released into the public domain at any point soon?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

No, I am afraid I do not. Obviously, I have been briefed specially in relation to such matters and my briefing did not go into the date as to when that is anticipated.

[10:15]

3.5.3 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Will the Minister acknowledge that the woman known as H.G. was not interviewed for either the Dame Heather Steel report or the Glenys Johnston report and, given that fact and how central she is to the story behind these reports, would he agree with me that the reports cannot be worth the paper they are written on if she was not interviewed?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

Frankly, I do not know whether or not she was interviewed; I have not been intimately involved in relation to the preparation of either of these. It is, I think, a matter for those who are producing the reports to determine whether it is necessary to interview a particular person or whether they have sufficient information from other sources.

3.5.4 Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier:

In addition to the request of Deputy Le Fondré that the Chief Minister try and get the reports published, will the Chief Minister also be asked to press for Dame Heather Steel to honour her commitment that she would provide a transcript to former Deputy Bob Hill, who met with her regarding her investigations and also which she has reneged on, and therefore the suspicion is that her report cannot be independent if she will not give the information that she promised to give. So in other words, the transcript of her meeting with former Deputy Bob Hill; would he press for that to be released as well?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

Well, I can give no such assurance because that is entirely a matter for the Chief Minister, but I think we are going into difficult areas here because the Dame Heather Steel report was not a report that was commissioned by the Chief Minister, it was commissioned by the Disciplinary Board on behalf of the Bishop of Winchester. So it is a little bit difficult to see how the Chief Minister has control of such matters.

3.5.5 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Would the Minister also agree that the conduct of all parties so far, with regard to reports and information and transparency, reflects very badly on the Church of England and the whole process of the investigation?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I am personally highly critical of the approach which has been taken by the Bishop of Winchester in relation to this matter, I think he is very seriously at fault in relation to the way he initially dealt with the matter, but I do not think I am prepared to criticise the Church of England as a whole in relation to the matter.

3.5.6 Deputy M. Tadier:

There is an issue in that Deputy Higgins asked the Deputy Chief Minister simply if he would seek to contact Dame Heather Steel to see if she could give the information that she said she would give. Simply because the Chief Minister is not here does not mean that the Deputy Chief Minister is not acting for him. So will he acquiesce to that very simple request to send an email, either himself or via one of the officers or the Chief Minister, to ask what is going

on and whether there is any truth in this suggestion that the information has not been released?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

The Chief Minister is, of course, back tomorrow. I do not think it is appropriate for me to start blundering around in the midst of this, but I will ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

The Minister is doing very well already blundering around during this question time.

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I am doing my best to achieve some information and some light, but I will happily ensure that the requests of Deputy Higgins and others are passed on to the Chief Minister for his consideration.

3.5.7 The Connétable of Grouville:

There seems to be a lot of secrecy over this issue, for example, the agreement that transfers the ecclesiastical oversight of the Deanery of Jersey from the Bishop of Winchester to the Bishop of Dover clearly has constitutional implications for the people of Jersey. Would the Assistant Minister ask the Chief Minister if he could publish this agreement, or perhaps find some other way of presenting it to the House?

The Bailiff:

I think that is straying a little bit outside the question.

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I am very happy to answer that one, Sir; I did anticipate that one and I think it would be helpful. I can inform Members of the Assembly that on 28th April the Chief Minister wrote to the Bishop of Dover urging him indeed to take a more transparent approach in relation to the terms of that agreement. I have a copy of it before me. The Chief Minister is of the opinion there really is nothing very secret in it and that there is no reason it should not be made public, so he is certainly urging the appropriate authorities to also take the same view.

The Very Reverend R.F. Key, B.A., The Dean of Jersey:

Sir, may I give a point of information, which may help the Assembly?

The Bailiff:

Well, it is question time ...

The Dean of Jersey:

Well, fine, okay. That is fine. I have the report of the ... not the report, I would love to have the report. I have the agreement, it is not secret. Should any Member wish to come and see me, I will gladly let them read it.

3.5.8 Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré:

That is interesting, given the transparency issue. Given the very rapid release of the Korris Review in full, and on particular online, just to put it in context, versus the perceived delay relating to the Dame Heather Steel report, does the Deputy Chief Minister agree that there may be a perception, if there is further delay or lack of full disclosure of the report, that pressure might have been applied in order to water down the contents of the Dame Heather Steel report?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

Under the terms of reference, it is quite clear under Article 13 that the Bishop now has a period of time in which to consider the manner in which the information contained in the report should be put out in the public domain. I do not think it is unreasonable that he be given that time. If there were excessive delay, I think it is fair to say that there would be strong suspicion that he had something to hide.