

3.4 Deputy S. Power of St. Brelade of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding the investigation into the fire at the former Plémont holiday camp on 4th January 2014:

Following the fire at the former Plémont Holiday Camp on 4th January 2014 when the Jersey Fire and Rescue Service suspected arson, or declared suspected arson, would the Minister state whether the States of Jersey Police has investigated this incident and arson claim in the 5 months since January and, without going into any operational detail, could the Minister give a synopsis of the current status of the investigation?

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

The States of Jersey Police were involved in a joint investigation with the States of Jersey Fire and Rescue Service into the fire at the former Plémont Holiday Camp. Due to extensive structural damage and the presence of highly toxic brown asbestos it was not possible to carry out an internal forensic examination to identify the source of ignition of the fire. Inquiries to date have failed to identify those responsible. While there are no further direct lines of inquiry the investigation remains open pending any further information which would support or negate as to whether this was a deliberate act or not.

3.4.1 Deputy S. Power:

I thank the Minister for that reply. Reading from the Minister's reply: that would then suggest that if there were to be another fire in another empty or abandoned building in private or public ownership that contained asbestos, or any other material, that that would impede any serious arson investigation. Would the Minister not agree? For instance, if there was a fire ...

The Bailiff:

I think you have posed that question, Deputy.

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

Yes. That could be so. My understanding here is that the combination of structural and security and the asbestos, which creates a situation where there are genuine safety issues regarding either fire officers or police officers who might go into those parts. Now the departments have very clear duties to their own staff to protect them from dangers and although, as Members know, firemen will risk their own lives from time to time to go into a live fire situation to rescue a person who is there, they will not normally be called upon to take significant health risks in situations which are not that element of urgency. I would anticipate that when eventually the building is demolished, which may or may not be influenced by a debate to take place fairly shortly, that once it is safe to go in, that there will then be the possibility of some examinations.

3.4.2 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

I wonder if the Minister could assure us, in the light of the answer he has just given, that in fact, he is content that, in fact, the fire was not perhaps started by a homeless person in there who may still be there if his department has not investigated?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I do not think the homeless person, if there was such a person, is still there. I think the difficulty is that, of course, there is no suspect in this particular case and therefore, in a sense, although if the Fire and Rescue Service and/or the police were to take risks by going in to attempt a forensic investigation, that would not take us anywhere other than perhaps some idea of cause without there being a suspect.

3.4.3 Deputy S. Power:

My final question is this. Have either the States of Jersey Police or the Jersey Fire and Rescue linked the planning status and public interest in this site with the outbreak of fire or suspected arson?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I would jolly well hope that my officers in both areas do not make decisions based upon political considerations.