

5.9 Deputy J.A. Martin of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding prison management:

Would the Minister inform the Assembly what difficulties, if any, have been caused by the decision of England and Wales that prisoners cannot at the present time be relocated to a prison in the vicinity of their family and friends and state how the prison plans to manage high-profile prisoners who are required to complete a long prison sentence under these circumstances?

Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Peter (The Minister for Home Affairs):

The number of prisoners seeking transfer to England and Wales is currently very low, 9 at present, so there are no significant difficulties caused by the current embargo on transfers. The prison service routinely has to manage high profile prisoners and in the vast majority of cases does not require any change to normal prison regime. Following risk assessment the prison governor will make appropriate adjustments to the regime for identified individuals if deemed necessary. While the embargo is in place England and Wales will still consider exceptional cases referred by management for operational reasons.

5.9.1 Deputy J.A. Martin:

What discussions were taken by the Home Affairs in the U.K. and the Minister for Home Affairs before this embargo was again reintroduced? It was lifted in the summer of last year and then reintroduced in December of last year. What discussions took place with our authorities before they just put this embargo and said we will not take any prisoners back?

The Deputy of St. Peter:

I have had no direct consultation with the Home Office in the U.K. The prison governor is made aware of the embargo as it is introduced. It is something that has come and gone with recent times, given the position in the U.K.

5.9.2 Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour:

While I do not have any problem whatsoever in the repatriation of prisoners, am I correct in assuming that the States of Jersey pay all fees for prisoners transferred to the U.K. and abroad?

The Deputy of St. Peter:

I do not know the exact answer to that question. I can endeavour to find out. I would assume it would be yes, but I shall check.

5.9.3 Deputy J.A. Martin:

I would be glad if the Minister for Home Affairs could check that because if we were paying I am surprised they would be turning down prisoners. Could she find out the exact reason then why we are not being allowed? The Minister says 9 is not a problem. They must plan for 9. If it is not paid for in the U.K. when will the prison population become a problem?

The Deputy of St. Peter:

If I could just be clear, when I understood the previous speaker's question I thought he was referring to the physical cost of the transfer, i.e. transport costs. That was how I was referring to his question. The residential costs depend on the residency of the individual who is being transferred to the U.K. prison. To move on to Deputy Martin's question, it has now escaped me. I apologise.

5.9.4 Deputy J.A. Martin:

I will stick to one question. There are 9 at the moment. When does it become a problem? If this embargo continues what would we be likely to see the population at? The Minister must know in 2013 how many prisoners did transfer to England and Wales and on the average when this starts to become a problem for our prison and overcrowding, because it is a one-prison-fits-all scenario here.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

The current position at the prison is we have 153 prisoners, which is a little higher than it was on average last year. But the current position is not a problem. The situation does not vary among exactly the number of prisoners because we have a full-time staff and that staff is worked out on an average figure, so one or 2 prisoners or even 9 does not make a great deal of difference. The number of transfers is not a large number each year and therefore it is at the moment a manageable thing. As I said in my initial answer, the U.K. is happy to accept and negotiate with us at times when there are specific needs to be met by Jersey prisoners and if the governor makes a particular request to them they generally do help as best they can.