

STATEMENTS ON A MATTER OF OFFICIAL RESPONSIBILITY

5. Connétable D.F. Gray of St. Clement, Chairman, Privileges and Procedures Committee:

The Privileges and Procedures Committee has now concluded its first 2 investigations since the Code of Conduct for elected Members was given a formal effect in the new Standing Orders. The 2 investigations were related and rose out of an exchange of emails that took place in February 2006 between Deputy Le Claire and Senator Syvret concerning the proposition on the private hospital scheme. Although the Committee concluded its initial investigation in early March, it was only able to finalise its deliberations shortly before Easter, as it was necessary to seek further information in relation to one of the complaints. The first matter investigated by PPC was a complaint by Senator Syvret about the language used by Deputy Le Claire, both in the email exchange and in his report and proposition on this matter. The Committee found that Deputy Le Claire was wrong to have implied in an email message that the Social Affairs Scrutiny Panel would not be able to review this matter in an impartial way. The Committee was pleased to note that Deputy Le Claire said that he had been wrong to make this statement, and had sent an apology to the Chairman of that Panel. The Committee did not uphold the other complaints made by Senator Syvret, as despite asking Senator Syvret to clarify his concerns, it could find no evidence in the emails written by Deputy Le Claire, or in the report accompanying his proposition that substantiated the complaint. The second investigation related to the tone and content of the email sent to Deputy Le Claire by Senator Syvret. I should point out that under Standing Order 157, the PPC is able to investigate a potential breach of the Code of Conduct even without a complaint from the third party, and the Committee exercised this power in this case, as it was concerned about the language used. The Committee found that some of the language used in the email sent by Senator Syvret did not meet the standards of courtesy and respect for a colleague that should be expected between Members. The Committee does not propose to take any further action in this matter. The Committee's impression was that the emails in question escalated from an initial brief message from Deputy Le Claire into a more heated exchange. The Committee must urge all Members to be aware of the tone and language used in messages to colleagues, and reminds the Assembly that paragraph 5 of the Code of Conduct requires all Members to, and I quote: "Treat other Members of the States, Officers and members of the public with respect and courtesy and without malice, notwithstanding the disagreements on issues and policies which are a normal part of the political process." The Committee considers that it does nothing for the integrity of the States if email messages circulated to all Members contain discourteous language, as happened in this case. Thank you, Sir.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Very well, no questions arising there. Can we move on? Deputy of St. Martin.

5.1 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Could I ask the President to confirm that this matter involving the exchange of emails by Deputy Le Claire and the Social Affairs Panel was dealt with between the Social Affairs Panel and Deputy Le Claire in a most amicable way immediately after, within a matter of days, and therefore, while it was of concern to the Committee, the matter was dealt with by Social Affairs and Deputy Le Claire themselves. Will you confirm that, please?

The Connétable of St. Clement:

Yes, I would confirm that.