

Minister for Home Affairs Justice and Home Affairs



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Deputy Catherine Curtis
Chair, Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

BY EMAIL

8 August 2022

Dear Chair

Thank you for your letter, and for your kind words about my appointment. I very much look forward to working with you, and your fellow Panel members, on the important work that lies ahead.

I would also like to take this opportunity to share with you my hope and intention to work closely and constructively with the Panel. I will endeavour to ensure that you are well informed about all aspects of work being undertaken in my area of political responsibility, so that the Panel can best fulfil its vitally important role.

I am pleased that you are visiting the Justice and Home Affairs Services and am sure that you will, as I have on my visits, find the Heads of Service and their teams to be engaged, enthusiastic, and delivering the Services effectively and efficiently for the Island. There is always more we can do to improve though, and I am looking forward to overseeing these improvements during my term of office.

You have asked about my priorities for the next six months, including any propositions I intend to lodge in the States Assembly, and I have outlined my plans in this respect below.

Draft Marriage and Civil Partnership (Amendments) (Jersey) Law 202-

I intend to lodge a short amendment Law that rectifies a drafting anomaly that currently exists within the Marriage and Civil Status (Amendment No.5) (Jersey) Law 2022 and the Civil Partnership (Jersey) Law 2022.

The issue arose as a result of the amalgamation and rationalisation of the prohibitions on marriage. Prior to amendment, the prohibitions applied to marriage were different to those applied to civil partnership. This was directly at odds with the government's overarching policy position that marriage and civil partnership are equal. Changes were made to both pieces of legislation to ensure the prohibitions on marriage and civil partnership were aligned and were also presented in such a way that was easily located and understandable. This involved relocating a portion of the prohibitions from the body of the primary laws into the respective schedules of the laws.

During this relocation exercise a prohibition on step-parent marriage was inadvertently added, but as the laws are not yet in force no step-parents have been prevented from marrying or forming civil

partnerships with their step-children. Nevertheless, the issue needs rectification before the laws can receive Royal Assent. The draft Marriage and Civil Partnership (Amendments) (Jersey) Law 202- removes the two offending provisions and also a further provision that references them to ensure the Marriage and Civil Status (Amendment No.5) (Jersey) Law 2022 and the Civil Partnership (Jersey) Law 2022 continue to remain compliant with the European Convention on Human Rights.

I intend to lodge this for debate at the sitting on 4th October, and I understand my officers have arranged a dedicated briefing for the Panel to ensure you are fully informed.

Other legislative projects

In addition to the above Draft Law which it is intended will come before the States within the six month period the Panel have enquired about, my officers are also working on a number of other legislative projects which the Panel will be briefed on during the term.

This includes work on a revised Draft Crime (Prejudice and Public Disorder) (Jersey) Law as well as on Draft Police (Complaints and Conduct) (Jersey) Regulations 202- further to the Assembly adopting the Police (Complaints and Conducts) (Jersey) Law 2022 earlier this year.

Whilst it is not anticipated that these will be ready for lodging within the next six months, I anticipate the Panel will wish to be briefed on them as they develop and my officers will be very happy to provide any further information or explanation the Panel requires.

Ensuring appropriate funding for our frontline services

It is a high priority of mine to ensure that our frontline services are adequately resourced to operate effectively and perform their important functions. To that end, I will be seeking funding in the Government Plan 2023-2026 to address some significant pressures and key risks affecting JHA Services, including the States of Jersey Police.

This will include funding for both the Fire and Rescue and Ambulance Services which both face pressing, but distinct, difficulties in relation to demand and capacity, risk and ensuring compliance with modern professional standards.

I will also be requesting resourcing to ensure that the Jersey Customs and Immigration Service continue to be able to respond to the ongoing impacts of Brexit.

A business case has also been submitted to ensure that the States of Jersey Police are appropriately funded for their establishment of 215 officers.

I look forward to discussing these in further detail with the Panel as part of scrutiny of the Government Plan.

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Taskforce

I have established a short-life Taskforce with the purpose of enhancing our understanding of, and driving progress to reduce, gender-based violence in Jersey.

The Taskforce will undertake public engagement and research commencing in September 2022 in order to examine the current position in Jersey and assist our understanding of these types of crimes locally.

The Taskforce will make recommendations based on their findings to the Government of Jersey on tackling gender-based violence in March or April 2023.

Development of a new Community Safety Strategy

The previous Building a Safer Society Strategy (BaSS) was allowed to lapse after 2019 and there has not been a community safety strategy in place since.

It is a key objective of mine that we ensure a refreshed strategy is put in place to ensure that JHA including SOJP, working closely with our important partners, are focussed on responding to and ultimately preventing issues causing concern in our community.

I have instructed officers to begin work on this, and I look forward to updating the Panel as this progresses.

Reinstatement of a programme for schools to replace Prison! Me! No! Way!

As part of an overarching strategic focus on early intervention, it is essential that we fill the gap left after Prison! Me! No! Way! (PMNW) was discontinued.

Officers are working on a programme to be delivered by JHA Services and partners in schools, to protect and empower children and young people to become safe and responsible citizens. This will build on the previous good work of PMNW as well as drawing on evidence of best practice to deliver up to date preventative content to the island's children.

It is anticipated that pilot sessions of this new programme will begin delivery before the end of this year.

Yours sincerely



Deputy Helen Miles
Minister for Home Affairs