

23.05.02

9 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of the Chief Minister regarding re allegations of bullying by Ministers (OQ.78/2023)

Will the Chief Minister advise whether during her time in office any civil servants have formally asked for investigations to take place regarding allegations of bullying by Ministers?

Deputy K.L. Moore (The Chief Minister):

I have written to the Deputy in his capacity as chair of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel. As I said in that letter, no formal grievances have been raised. Should there be any formal complaint, we will ensure that policy and procedures are adhered to.

4.9.1 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

It is indeed the case that in her original letter to me the Chief Minister said that no formal grievances have been raised or investigations undertaken. In a second letter she sent subsequent to that, she referred to another process on a separate matter is expected to be resolved through mediation, in line with the objectives of seeking a formal resolution. What is a separate matter and does it not arise from a formal grievance being raised or an investigation being requested into accusations of bullying from Ministers?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

The matter that was being referred to is a completely separate one. It is a matter that has also fallen away. It was never a formal matter.

[10:45]

4.9.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I ask the Chief Minister: formal grievances are very difficult decisions to be made by members of staff who have to work within the environment. Is she aware of any allegations or any concerns that have been raised from grievances not being reached simply because the member of staff felt they could not?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

As I said in my first answer, there are formal processes and procedures. I would hope that if anyone did have a genuine matter that they wished to raise as a formal grievance that they would feel able to do so.

4.9.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Does the Minister believe that members of the civil service have enough knowledge of the Commissioner for Standards, so that they could use the Commissioner for Standards for an anonymous complaint, should it be necessary, if they do not feel they could do that in the work place?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

The work of the Commissioner for Standards has been in place now for some years. It has been quite widely communicated. Therefore, I do believe that people know of its existence and, of course, use it from time to time. There are, of course, internal processes and procedures and a whistle-blowing process also.

4.9.4 Deputy L.V. Feltham:

Would the Chief Minister be able to inform the Assembly what steps somebody would need to take if they wished to lodge a formal grievance?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

I am not a manager in my political role, but somebody would in the first instance contact their line manager. If one looks at the whistle-blowing process on the website and if a matter relates to a States Member then the person should do that through the chief executive or their office.

4.9.5 Deputy L.V. Feltham:

Can the Chief Minister confirm that, in accordance with the relevant policy, complaints that are made in relation to States Members should in fact be forwarded by whoever takes them to the Commissioner for Standards?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

The whistle-blowing process is an internal Government of Jersey process that is administered by People and Corporate Services. That would be a matter for them. As I say, I am not a manager, I am a politician.

4.9.6 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

These answers are going to be studied very carefully after this States sitting. Could I ask the Chief Minister, following the letter from Scrutiny asking whether complaints or issues or investigations have been asked for into allegations of inappropriate conduct or bullying of civil servants by Ministers, to whom did the Chief Minister go to obtain the information she needed to provide her answer that apparently no formal grievances or complaints had been made? I will leave it there for now.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

I do find the Deputy's tone a little threatening.

The Bailiff:

I understand the observations, but we will leave it as exchanges through the Chair in the normal way. The question is: from whom did you seek information in answering in the manner that you did?

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Letters are prepared and answers are prepared also through the usual channels with officials and particularly those officials who were involved in whatever the matter that is being answered relates to.