

## **2.7 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of the Chairman of the Comité des Connétables regarding the savings limit (£12,114) allowable to a spouse whose partner is in care:**

Would the Chairman advise Members whether it is the intention of the Connétables to retain the savings limit currently fixed at £12,114 allowable to a spouse whose partner is in care?

### **Connétable K.P. Vibert of St. Ouen (the Chairman of the Comité des Connétables):**

Welfare scale rates have been increased in line with the retail price index for many years. The current rates are those agreed by the Comité des Connétables and the Minister for Social Security. These rates have continued to be reviewed and increased each year in line with the retail price index. The last increase was made in October 2006 at which time the figure was increased by 2.9 per cent in line with the R.P.I. (Retail Price Index) at that time. The welfare scale rates would next be reviewed for October 2007. However, it is expected that the low income support scheme will have been introduced by that date and will have replaced welfare. Comité des Connétables will therefore no longer be responsible for any such decisions.

### **2.7.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

Could the Chairman inform the House how this figure was arrived at in the round, what considerations were taken-in and what advice will the Comité be giving to the Minister of Social Security in the light of their administration of this particular figure?

### **The Connétable of St. Ouen:**

The figure was arrived following the Working Party on Need in the 1980s and 1990s at which time a figure was identified. The rates on that figure have continually been increased year on year by the R.P.I. As far as what advice the Comité des Connétables will be giving the Social Security Minister, I have the impression that there are a number of Members in the House who do not want the Parishes involved at all in the low income support scheme but certainly if the Minister wishes advice we are there to give it.

### **2.7.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

Very nicely ducked, but I have to ask the Chairman again, in the light of his experience and of his colleagues - and it is valuable experience - what advice will he be giving? Secondly, would he not admit that a figure devised in the 1980s, when the whole issue of ageing and longevity and so forth had not really impacted as it is now impacting on us, was not fully understood and that people who have made conscientious efforts for retirement are really struggling and feel, as may his colleagues, that this figure is utterly unreasonable and cannot deal with the kind of pressures placed upon elderly couples? Would he not agree with that and, secondly, what advice is he giving?

### **The Connétable of St. Ouen:**

While not disagreeing with the Deputy, I do not believe that the Connétables on their own can reach any conclusions on that matter. Certainly, I am sure that the Minister for Social Security will take all matters into consideration when the low income support figure is added into, or factored into, the total provided. The Connétables are quite happy to be involved in any consultation on that figure.

### **2.7.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

I must press this. Could I pursue the Chairman? Could he please tell me whether, in the collective opinion of his colleagues, this figure today in the light of current circumstances is a good figure? Secondly, could he say, having talked to a lot of people who come through the office doors of the various Parish Halls, what are they saying and does he agree with the generality of what they are saying about this figure, that it is totally unrealistic in the light of current conditions? It puts elderly couples under enormous pressure and it forces them down to a level...

### **The Deputy Bailiff:**

I think you have made that point.

**Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

Thank you, Sir, but I still have not got the answers.

**The Connétable of St. Ouen:**

I do not promise the Deputy is going to get the answers. I cannot, of course, talk for the Connétables collectively until I have asked them the question. Certainly, my own personal feeling is that, yes, this figure needs to be looked at but I do not believe that the scenario is as bad as the Deputy is trying to point out.