

4. Questions without notice – The Minister for Home Affairs

4.1 Connétable T.J. de Feu of St. Peter :

Could the Minister inform this House how many police officers have been seconded into the Island force in the past 12 months from the UK and, secondly, how many more outside secondments are planned for the next 6 months?

Senator W. Kinnard (The Minister for Home Affairs):

I do not have that level of detail but I am quite happy to try and find that out.

The Bailiff:

Minister, I am sorry to say that I must put a halt to question time. We are not quorate at the moment and I must ask some Members, at least in the precincts, to return to the Assembly. Yes, Minister, perhaps you could answer that question?

Senator W. Kinnard:

I do not have an exact figure of that. It is a very minute point of detail other than to say that we do have arrangements, of course, where we have a situation where some of our officers are sent to the U.K. and we have exchange officers coming back to the Island, and that is why I would have to clarify the figure later today. But I think also there has been a question raised about an officer being seconded for a short period of time to assist us with the arrangements for the various football scenarios that are going on at the moment, and I think there has been some wild exaggeration of that. In that particular case, we have one officer that is going to be seconded for a very short period of time to assist us with those arrangements. But, as to the depth of the question, I will have to take further advice from that.

4.1 Deputy S.C. Ferguson:

In view of the Minister's express support of the human rights legislation, I wonder if she would explain why suspended officers are apparently not aware of the reasons for commencement of all the covert investigations?

Senator W. Kinnard:

I do not wish to comment upon individual cases and, again, I just reiterate the right process for this is for a complaint to be made to the Police Complaints Authority if any individual has an issue with their alleged treatment by States of Jersey Police.

4.2 Deputy F.J. Hill of St. Martin:

Would the Minister inform the House why no disciplinary actions were taken against the police officers who admitted taking gifts from a local businessman? Is it because there were so many involved there would be no policemen left to patrol the streets, or is it because of major incompetence within the management?

Senator W. Kinnard:

Again, I do not wish to comment upon individual cases but I would say, Sir, that there are a range of sanctions that are used through the disciplinary procedures which can, of course, ultimately end in dismissal. There can, of course, also be criminal proceedings in certain circumstances and I think that it is a matter of the circumstances - it is a matter of the facts of the case as to what sanction is applied by the senior officers of the Force. I am confident, Sir, from what I certainly am aware of in the situation, that an appropriate sanction has been applied in this particular circumstance. But, as I say, Sir, I do not wish to be drawn on the specifics of individual cases.

4.4 Deputy S.C. Ferguson:

In previous questioning in this House the Minister was not clear on the accountability of the Police Force for operational matters. I understood that this was being reviewed. What progress has been made?

Senator W. Kinnard:

It is not a question of not being clear about the accountability. I think that there has been a misunderstanding of the role of the Chief Officer of Police and the Chief Constable in Forces in England and Wales as to the extent of their independence in operational matters. I know that the Deputy has been in protracted email correspondence with both myself, my Chief Officer and the Chief Officer of Police on this matter which clearly points to the fact that when it comes to policy matters, of course, the Chief Officer of Police is answerable to the Minister for Home Affairs but when it comes to operational matters there is quite a degree of independence in terms of operational responsibility. This has been repeatedly addressed as well by the Home Secretary in the United Kingdom and on every occasion that degree of independence has been supported by Home Secretaries going back way before the 1970s. I think, Sir, that it is inappropriate for us to seek to change that kind of custom and practice and indeed it is being looked at in terms of the new Police Law and indeed some of those issues, Sir, we will attempt to enshrine in legislation.

4.5 The Deputy of St. Martin:

It has been reported that Probationary Police Officers will, in future - or would have been in future - doing their training in Jersey whereby they would lead to cost efficiencies et cetera and savings. It has now been reported that officers are going up to Northern Ireland to receive training. Could the Minister give the reasons why and also where will the funding come for this: one would assume there would be extra funding required?

Senator W. Kinnard:

I am very pleased that training now is taking place here in Jersey. It has been very effective in that our Police Officers do not have to come back to Jersey and unlearn English Law. We do, of course, have arrangements with other Forces to assist in training, particularly in professional development and this latest one is with Northern Ireland. Sir, I do not have the actual figures of any costs that will be attendant on that but, of course, it will be within our usual training budget that it would be funded. Indeed there are cross-fertilisation opportunities, if you like, between Forces and certainly I would continue to welcome work with other Forces throughout the country.

4.6 Deputy C.H. Egré of St. Peter:

Would the Minister of Home Affairs give an indication as to whether or not we will be putting together a Police Authority in Jersey? Prior to Ministerial Government we had a Committee which acted as a pseudo Police Authority; that is no longer available to us. To take some of the pressure off her, as Minister, would it be considered that we should be going down the route of producing a Police Authority?

Senator W. Kinnard:

This has been a matter that has exercised our previous Home Affairs Committees and continues to exercise myself. In fact I just did it scrutiny quite recently. The issue of Police Authority has been very difficult to get off the ground in Jersey and, indeed, when we did find someone to take on the position his conclusion was we did not need a Police Authority at this same pattern as they have in the United Kingdom here. I am, at the moment, looking at Gibraltar because I believe that they have just brought in a Police Authority there but also I have looked at the possibility of a Liaison Committee which would be an advisory committee to the Minister and Assistant Minister of Home Affairs. In fact a report was sent for Members' interest, I think

sometime last year, on this particular matter. So, Sir, this is actively under consideration, it has been held up to some extent by a lack of decision by this House on the role of the Connétable because, of course, it was supposed to take in also how we would work towards a single policing plan between the States of Jersey Police and the Honorary Police Service. But the lack of decision on whether the Connétables are likely to remain in the States or not - I think it is unlikely they would wish to lose both their automatic rights to sit in this House at the same time as losing their policing powers - has indeed held this up. But, Sir, I am very clear that I do have a potential way forward, I am just at the moment looking at some further research and will be reporting back to this House on this matter in early course.

4.7 Deputy J.J. Huet:

Many years ago our lads and lasses used to be trained in the U.K. I know they had to unlearn English Law. They did not seem to have any problems doing that. They then started to train in Jersey which was agreed, which does not give them a very wide experience of life. But I am curious to why that they would be trained in Northern Ireland. I would have thought the south of England somewhere would be of much more comparison to Jersey. Why on earth are our lads and lasses going to Northern Ireland to be trained? It is not exactly comparable with Jersey, is it, Sir?

Senator W. Kinnard:

Again excellent training. In fact I was recently at an awards ceremony awarding the training department for the good work in this area. So, we take up opportunities wherever they are appropriate. We have had exchanges with Scotland as well as now Northern Ireland and other Forces. We have sent officers to the Met. Again it is wherever the opportunities are available, where they seem to be appropriate. Certainly in Northern Ireland the training department there has an extremely good reputation and indeed one of the reasons why they are happy to assist us is that they have been very impressed by the standard of training and the way in which training is delivered in the Island and they, in fact, wish to learn from us also.

4.8 Deputy J.B. Fox of St. Helier:

One of the benefits obviously for training locally is that it is less cost et cetera, but one of the things that does concern me is that later on in their career - and certainly when I was in the Police Service - to get promoted you have to have a broad knowledge and part of that was to meet the same standards as that of other officers in the United Kingdom. Will such officers in the future be given the appropriate opportunities for training to reach this standard, or will they be at a disadvantage? The suggestion that has been made to me is that it gives a greater opportunity for officers that are imported than that just solely locally trained, Sir.

Senator W. Kinnard:

The main reason for bringing training in-house was that training within England and Wales was not going to be delivered in the same way as it has done previously by the Police College. What was happening was that individual Forces were having to go out to specific training agencies. We, therefore, felt it was much more sensible therefore to bring our training here in-house in Jersey. There are some cost savings for that, but that was not the prime reason. But one of the reasons I was very clear about is that in bringing it into the Island was that we should be able to ensure that our officers could meet the same standard, that they would be properly accredited. Indeed, Sir, I can confirm that that is the case and, indeed, again this is another area that I asked HMI to look into to give us reassurance on that point.

4.9 Deputy S.C. Ferguson:

I wonder if a proper study has been made of not using the Police College in the U.K. How can the Minister be sure that they are getting the same opportunities? It would seem to me that we

need a review of the exams and so on that are being set because having in-house training may seem cheaper but is it really better value for money? Is it not better for our Probationers to be mixing with people from all over the U.K. and getting proper ...

The Bailiff:

Deputy, time is running out, your question must consist ...

Senator W. Kinnard:

In the period of time when our officers were being trained in the United Kingdom repeatedly they got the best prizes for the top marks both academically and in the sporting field and so on. So, I do not think I have any concerns about the lack of ability of officers coming from this Island. We have, again as I said, asked Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary to look at what we have available in terms of professional development of our officers and indeed just this last week the H.M.I. was in the Island to look at the Assessment Centre for the promotion of officers to middle and higher ranks. Again, in the closing out meeting the indication I got was that he was highly impressed with what we had to offer. In terms of wider experience, again we have these exchange opportunities for officers and we promote those very, very hard because we are keen that officers should have as wide an experience as possible. In fact, what we are finding, Sir, is that officers are keen to take these opportunities up because they are able to go for short periods of time and not leave their families here in the Island for long periods of time which used to be one of the reasons why some officers preferred not to take up the opportunities that were offered. That no longer is the case and I think that this Police Force, Sir, is becoming increasingly professional and is getting to higher and higher levels of professionalism in the Service.

4.10 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

A propos the exchange during earlier questions, could the Minister inform us, Sir, whether she has examined the time schedules that surround the disciplinary cases and has she come to the conclusion that they are excessive? If so, what steps is she taking to speed up the whole process?

Senator W. Kinnard:

Again as I have mentioned, I have asked H.M.I. to look at this particular situation. It is regrettable that investigations do take a long time and I am keen that they should be concluded as quickly as possible for all concerned. It is regrettable when these things do take a long time but clearly they are very sensitive investigations and --

The Bailiff:

Thank you, Minister. I am afraid that expires the first question period and we come now to the second question period of the Minister for Treasury and Resources.