

27 April 2008

Dear Deputy Mezbourian

La Moye Board of Visitors

You will recall my concern about the La Moye Board of Visitors. I have just read their 2007 report to the States and wondered whether you would welcome my comments on it.

A number of matters in it attracted my attention. The report states that 'the Board met on 12 occasions, thus enabling prisoners to seek their assistance and advice'. This suggests that prisoners appear before the Board (with the Governor present?). Surely inmates should have their grievances and concerns dealt with on a one-to-one basis and not before some sort of tribunal which must be intimidating.

The report then states that 'individual members of the Board visited by rotation in between the monthly scheduled meetings and 51 applications were recorded'. I would like to know how often these visits take place - weekly, monthly? - and do members of the BoV get given a set of keys and tour all the prison - including kitchens, workshops, sports facilities, medical facilities, etc. - unaccompanied by Governor or prison officers, as should be the case? Accompanied visits are not the practice of Independent Monitoring Boards. Also are inmates informed on noticeboards how they can contact a member of the BoV in order to meet and discuss any matter affecting them?

There is then a long section in the report under the heading of 'Funding'. This whole section reads like an executive report. This type of report should surely be submitted by the Governor. Instead this reads as though the La Moye BoV considers itself a Board of Directors and not an independent monitoring board. To me it reveals that the current BoV is not properly aware of what it should actually be doing - questioning, scrutinising the running of the prison and being there to hear prisoners' grievances and concerns. The BoV should not be reporting to the States on the prison's general developments, etc. That is not their job: they should be voicing their criticisms instead.

Then there is the 'Deaths in Custody' section. They skate over any details of these sad incidents: the possible causes and whether there should be any blame attached to the prison staff in having failed to prevent them. How soon after these suicides were the

Board involved? The report is silent on the matter. Also a member or members should have been brought in immediately when the bodies were discovered. Did that happen? Then the Board quotes Mr Shaw's devastatingly critical remark. And here is the Board not telling us why in England he would have gone straight to the Secretary of State for Justice. Instead we have just read a whole page telling the States the marvellous and timely progress being made (and I am not criticising that investment).

In the Resignation of Governor section praise is lavished on the outgoing governor. Again I question whether this is the task of the Board of Visitors. Again they are assuming that they are a board of directors rather than an independent monitoring board.

Nowhere in this report is there any indication that the La Moye BoV is aware of the workings of IMBs in England and Wales and there is no reference to any members of the BoV attending courses or training which the central organisation of IMBs lay on and which all members of IMBs in every English and Welsh prison have to undergo.

Overall my main objection remains: the inappropriate nature of this BoV, consisting only of Jurats. It is totally wrong that it is they who constitute such a monitoring board. Also, as I have stated earlier, I do not believe that they have any concept of what their proper or prime roles should be. Reform is surely needed.

Yours sincerely

Robin Pittman