

3.9 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Would the Minister inform Members how the levels of anti-social, disorderly and violent behaviour recorded in recent months, particularly in St. Helier over the Christmas and New Year period, compared to previous years and what additional steps, if any, the Minister is taking to review standards of community safety in the Island?

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

The overall number of assaults reported to the police in the last 3 months of 2005 increased by 4 per cent compared with 2004. Taking the whole year into account there has been no change in the overall level of violent crime reported to the police in 2005 compared to 2004. The number of calls to the police control room between the hours of 8.00 p.m. and 4.00 a.m. seeking a police response to incidents of violent crime and public order in St. Helier in the last 3 months of 2005 was, in fact, 8 per cent down on the same period in 2004. The number of arrests for disorder offences in the last 3 months of 2005 showed no change over the same period in 2004. Overall the number of arrests for disorder offences over the whole year also remained unchanged from 2004 to 2005. There was a slight increase in the number of arrests over the recent Christmas period but the police expected a busier Christmas period this year because Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve coincided with Saturday nights. There were 14 grave and criminal assaults in the streets, pubs and clubs of St. Helier during December which is the highest level of such offences in one month since March 2002. I am, however, pleased to note that the police have identified and interviewed or charged the suspects in all but 2 of these incidents. So, while I believe that we are not seeing a sudden dramatic change in community safety, I am also acutely aware of the concern surrounding the issue of street violence and disorder and, therefore, Sir, I would just like to bring Members up to date with the initiatives that are already under development. The Jersey Police Policing Plan for 2006 has as its highest priority street violence and disorder, and it sets out a number of policing activities to deal with this. A new shift system was introduced on 1st January 2006 and the new pattern has been designed with the express purpose of putting more officers on to the street at times of peak demand such as Friday and Saturday nights, with up to 2 overlapping shifts available if needed. This could provide up to 70 per cent more officers patrolling the streets during critical periods than has been possible in the past. At the same time, Sir, we should guard against the idea that more police resources are the only answer to the problem of alcohol-fuelled street violence and disorder. The government needs also to address the social and cultural issues underpinning this growing tendency to drink to excess, and about 80 per cent of people arrested by the police after 9.00 p.m. have indeed been drinking. There needs to be a commitment of all stakeholders to address the contributory causes that underpin the problem. There needs to be full political commitment to the alcohol strategy which was approved in 2004. Also improved late night transport services from St. Helier to disperse crowds at closing times; a review of licensing arrangements to avoid the build up of crowds also; a new legislation, Sir, in...

The Deputy Bailiff:

Minister, you are taking a long time to answer this.

Senator W. Kinnard:

Sorry. There is new legislation, Sir, which has been developed to give police more

powers to deal with these issues, and also we have a whole strategy - the Building of a Safer Society Strategy - that is a partnership approach between Health, Housing and the Home Affairs Ministries which indeed deal with a number of projects such as Detached Youth Worker Project, alcohol liaison, nurses and so on. There are an awful lot of things actually under way and under development at this moment to deal with these issues. Thank you, Sir.

3.9.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

While commending the Minister and, through her, the staff involved for the range of initiatives outlined - and particularly the new shift system that has been appreciated by the Honorary Police of St. Helier - does she not agree that the enforcement of existing legislation in relation to the presence of drunk people on licensed premises would go a long way to tackling the problem we have of this 80 per cent of crime which is related to alcohol abuse?

Senator W. Kinnard:

As I outlined, I do not think it is just an issue purely of positive policing. I think there is a wider issue about the culture that we have in the Island and our attitude to alcohol consumption, and I believe that the only way that we can deal with the issue is if we have a concerted multi-agency partnership approach in dealing with it. There are other initiatives that I know that the Constable is aware of and indeed has been involved in discussions under Operation Mistral* and I hope indeed to work with him and others to see these issues through to completion and no doubt also, Sir, a review of the licensing situation and the enforcement of licensing laws will be encompassed within that project. Thank you, Sir.

3.9.2 The Deputy of St. Martin:

I do not know whether the Minister can answer my question, but I will have a go at asking it. In an attempt to reduce accidents over the Christmas period, around 6,000 motorists we are told were stopped and checked about their alcohol consumption. Now, in an attempt to reduce burglaries over the Christmas period, is the Minister able to tell us how many - possibly thousands - of pedestrians and motorists were stopped to check to see whether they had housebreaking implements. In an attempt to reduce the levels of drug abuse, et cetera, over the Christmas period, how many thousands of motorists and pedestrians were stopped over that period to check about their levels or whether indeed they had drugs or alcohol on them. Also in an attempt to reduce assaults over the Christmas period, how many thousands of pedestrians or motorists were stopped in connection maybe with their possession of offensive weapons.

Senator W. Kinnard:

I do detect a certain degree of facetiousness in the question. I make no apology at all for the number of individuals who were stopped during the campaign of drink driving. But indeed it is not just about drink driving. It is about substance misuse, so it does actually encompass misuse of other forms of intoxicants. Indeed, Sir, I think that public safety is an important issue which we should not make light of and clearly there is a difference between stopping people to check whether they have been abusing alcohol or other substances, and stopping many motorists to see whether or not they may be going "equipped" as it were. I do not see that the examples are the same and so I do think that it is very important that we take this matter very, very

seriously. It is not all that long ago, Sir, that it was felt quite acceptable for people to get into motor cars when they had consumed quite a large amount of alcohol. Our attitudes today have changed significantly to that and I think that it is important that we do not lose sight of the kinds of behaviour that were felt to be acceptable before and were a danger to the public. I think that, Sir, some of the criticisms in this area are really rather unfounded.

3.9.3 Deputy S.C. Ferguson of St. Brelade:

Just a short one, Sir. Statistics: in the Minister's police plan for dealing with the problem she talks about a 70 per cent increase in street policing. What is this in terms of numbers?

Senator W. Kinnard:

Where we have talked about a potential 70 per cent increase in terms of officers patrolling the street, that is to do with the number of officers at a peak time. The shift systems previously meant that we had shifts of officers which were out on the streets in equal times during the day as to the night, and quite clearly it has been identified through a number of studies that most of the calls or crimes that are committed are, in fact, taking place after dark. So, what we are trying to do there, Sir, is to ensure that we have more officers out at times when they are most likely to be required. In terms of the numbers, Sir, off the top of my head I do not have the shift patterns in front of me, but it is a matter of ensuring that there are the availability of potentially 2 back-up shifts during the night if necessary. But I am more than happy to get those figures to the Deputy later on today. The detail of that is obviously in the organisation of the shifts and I personally, without notice, cannot give her the figure.

3.9.4 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire of St. Helier:

In other countries, responsibility for people's injuries can be traced back to the individuals within bars that have been serving alcohol to people that have succumbed to injuries and claims. Will this initiative be investigated in the future by the Minister in tandem with the alcohol strategy in educating and enforcing responsible serving of alcohol so that people who are served in pubs and bars by the staff who then go on to commit or become victims of serious injuries, are then able to go back to the staff - as with cigarette sales to minors - and prosecute not only the bars but the staff themselves?

Senator W. Kinnard:

I believe that most of the licensing issues do not come under this Ministry. A lot of them actually come under the area of Economic Development. But clearly, we are keen to work with other Ministries and indeed through Operation Mistral* and also through our "Building a Safer Society Strategy." It is very important that we bring all of the resources together to address this issue. As I have said, Sir, we are responsible particularly in the area of positive policing but we cannot just leave it to the police to deal with this problem. It is much wider and certainly I think that during the review of licensing issues which I know will be taking place as part of Operation Mistral*, that indeed a number of these issues will be certainly discussed and hopefully addressed. But, at the moment, I cannot give him assurance of exactly what those outcomes will be. It is a matter of working in partnership with others to ensure that we have appropriate qualities to deal with the issues that concern the Deputy. Thank you, Sir.

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

I would like to ask the Minister basically 2 questions in one. There is a lot of talk about crime statistics and as the Minister will know the British Crime Survey indicates that there are many crimes - like malicious damage, street crimes, et cetera - that are never reported to the police but cause a great deal of fear of crime to the public. I was seeking assurances - and I am pleased to hear about the latest policing improvements, et cetera. Are we still visiting various organisations - whether they are social gatherings such as W.I.s, et cetera - answering people's concerns and giving them good sound advice? That continues in the marketplace for people that are involved in pubs, in businesses, et cetera, so that it actually helps society to have better knowledge on the way of reducing the crime risk and... **[Interruption]** I am coming to it, Sir... reducing the crime risk. It is an important area, Sir. Reducing the crime risk and also giving greater opportunities for reporting of such offenders to, again, apprehend those that are causing the distress to society. Thank you. Sorry it is a bit long.

Senator W. Kinnard:

Thank you, Sir, I will try to answer that. Yes, indeed, there are a number of crimes that never get reported, of course, and certainly our recent victimisation survey undertaken by the previous Home Affairs Committee identified a similar trend in Jersey as there is certainly in the United Kingdom. There are opportunities, of course, for sound advice to be given and indeed if anyone is asking for advice we are obviously very keen to give it. Our Community Safety Officers engage in such activity. It obviously depends on the range of crimes that we are trying to deal with, and certainly I would be more than happy to talk to any groups and take any officers as necessary if there is a desire to have more knowledge. Prevention of crime is always far better than having to deal with it afterwards. We can always do more of this work. It is a matter of having to resource it, but certainly it is a very positive way, I think, of dealing with allaying fears, addressing people's concerns and actually finding out what people really think on the street. It can be done through a range of activities. One is like the "Victimisation Survey"; another is the "Police Satisfaction Survey" that we do. But equally too, I am more than happy to go out to speak to groups at any invitation whatsoever. Thank you, Sir.

3.9.6 The Connétable of St. Helier:

I would like to press the Minister for a more adequate answer to my earlier question. Much as I applaud the range of holistic initiatives and strategies and partnerships that she is talking about, they do not hold up much hope to the tourism proprietor who is trying to run a business in the evening economy in St. Helier, or the resident who is frightened of going out at night. Is the Minister aware that under existing legislation - and ancient legislation at that - her officers are able to go into a pub and if there is somebody blind drunk in it, that pub - through the good officers of the Crown Officers - can be closed? That would send out a short, sharp shock message to the industry that they must police themselves better.

Senator W. Kinnard:

I realise that this is a very important issue and it is certainly one that will be taken-up, and indeed the Connétable is a member of the group of Operation Mistral* and he will have every opportunity to raise this issue and for us to discuss it and to find a way of dealing with this point. I certainly welcome that opportunity. As I say, at the moment

I cannot give a definitive answer as to what the outcome of that will be, but the Constable, himself, will be part of that move, addressing this issue. Thank you, sir.

3.9.7 The Deputy Bailiff:

Very well, Deputy de Faye.

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye of St. Helier:

Is the minister in a position to instruct the police force to carry out the sort of request made by the Connétable of St. Helier, or do these matters fall under operational issues over which she appears to have little control?

Senator W. Kinnard:

Obviously, whenever there is an issue to be dealt with it is a matter of resources being applied most effectively and efficiently. That, of course, is a decision on the day and on the hour of the operational head of the force, the Chief Officer of Police. Indeed, it is not for me to say: "Tonight you will go off and go to this particular pub and arrest anyone inside that pub who is under the influence of alcohol." It is a matter of setting a policy and setting the guidelines. Indeed, that is the way in which we will develop the policy under things like 'Operation Mistral*' and then that sets the policy within which the operational decisions are taken out on a day-to-day basis. The Deputy is entirely right, that we have to be very careful not to encroach into operational issues, because, indeed, in the operational areas it is those with the appropriate training, and skills, who have the ability to make those important snap decisions when they need to be made. It is not, I think, the place for the Minister of Home Affairs to interfere in that professional decision-making. Thank you, Sir.

3.9.8 The Deputy Bailiff:

I see one final question. [Aside]

Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour:

I am very concerned about the apparent ease that youngsters seem to have access to alcohol. Could the Minister assure us that anyone - individual or business - caught selling alcohol to juveniles, would be vigorously prosecuted?

Senator W. Kinnard:

Well, obviously, Sir, the matter of prosecution is not within my hands. The Police can, hopefully, catch people; people can be arrested, charged, and so on; but then how they are dealt with is a matter for the Court. But, clearly, this is a concern to us all. Indeed, that is why I have said that it is not just a matter of policing, it needs the commitment of the whole of the Government - all of the stakeholders - to things like the alcohol strategy which seeks to deal with these issues. I think, Sir, that sometimes we pass these marvellous strategies, which are very, very good, and we sometimes forget that they need constant review, constant vigilance. We must ensure that they continue to work, certainly, through the "Building of Safer Society Strategy", which I mentioned earlier on in my answer. That is one of the things we do. We keep all of those policies - like the detached youth worker project and so on - under review, to ensure that they are hitting the targets; to ensure that they are delivering what we expect them to deliver. I think that - certainly, where the alcohol strategy is concerned - it would be as well for my other stakeholders in this, to review exactly where they are in their commitment to it. Thank you, Sir.