

STATES OF JERSEY



INDEPENDENT JERSEY POLICE AUTHORITY: ESTABLISHMENT (P.23/2010) – COMMENTS

Presented to the States on 19th March 2010
by the Minister for Home Affairs

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

I welcome and support this Proposition.

When Senator Breckon commenced work on this Proposition he was obviously unaware of the fact that I had already commissioned a report from the Chief Officer of Home Affairs, who had been in consultation thereon with the Acting Chief Officer of the States of Jersey Police. Furthermore, I had already spoken to 6 members of the Assembly, namely –

- (1) my Assistant Minister, Deputy J.A. Hilton of St. Helier;
- (2) the Connétable of St. Ouen;
- (3) the Deputy of St. Martin;
- (4) Deputy J.B. Fox of St. Helier;
- (5) the Deputy of St. Peter; and
- (6) Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier,

in order to ask them as to whether they would be prepared to assist me on an Advisory Group. All 6 of these members had agreed so to do.

I have recently received the draft report and will shortly be seeking to set up the first meeting of the Advisory Group. The task which is faced by myself, with the assistance of this Advisory Group, in finding the right balance in relation to a Police Authority will not be an easy task. The general feeling of those who had looked at the previous draft Law, which was based upon the Gibraltar model of a Police Authority, was that the Police Authority proposed would be insufficiently strong. There will be a need to set a fine balance. If the Police Authority is too strong then there will be risk that it will –

- (a) seek to set up its own criminal justice policy independent to that of the Minister for Home Affairs; and/or
- (b) seek to start to interfere with the operational freedom of the States of Jersey Police.

If, on the other hand, the new Police Authority is too weak, then it will be insufficiently challenging to the way in which the States of Jersey Police seek to carry out policy.

The issue also arises as to who will be responsible for police policy. My current view is that this must remain the responsibility of the Minister, with the Police Authority taking responsibility for ensuring that policy is appropriately implemented.

I shall also be asking the Advisory Group to look at other related difficult issues such as the statutory arrangements for the appointment, suspension, discipline and possible dismissal of the Chief and Deputy Chief Officers of Police.

Resource implications

The report to the Proposition suggests that a Police Authority could be operated at a cost of £50,000 per year and that this could be funded from within the Home Affairs Department's cash limit. A Police Authority set up along U.K. lines would cost in excess of £1 million per year. However, it may be possible to create a similar body at a much lower cost of between £50,000 and £100,000 per year, but this could not be funded from within the Department's existing cash limit.

Because of the various policy decisions which will need to be made in relation to this area, it is my intention to bring a general Proposition to the States in order that the general principles involved may first be discussed. I am confident that the timescale set in the Proposition of no later than December 2010 for such detailed proposals can be met.