

23.11.23

11. Deputy S.Y. Mézec of the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs regarding the recommendations from the report by the Violence Against Women and Girls taskforce (OQ.234/2023)

Will the Minister state whether she accepts all of the recommendations from the report by the taskforce on Violence Against Women and Girls and, if she does, will she advise when the Government intends to publish a timetable for the implementation of those recommendations?

Deputy H. Miles (The Minister for Justice and Home Affairs):

I thank the Deputy for his question. I would like to start by commending the work of the Violence Against Women and Girls taskforce who have worked with energy and dedication to deliver the report. I am sure Members would wish to join me in expressing this Assembly's gratitude for that work which will not always have been easy and I urge those Members who may not have done so to read the full report. As the Deputy will be aware, the report is an incredibly detailed piece of work comprising over 300 pages and many references which makes 77 recommendations on action to address violence against women and girls on the Island. I have therefore committed to giving each recommendation very careful consideration before responding. Thirty-nine of the recommendations pertain to Government and will require action across a number of Ministerial portfolios. The remaining recommendations will require action from external stakeholders, including the Attorney General, the courts and other specialist support services. Work is already underway to establish which of the recommendations could be implemented in the short term and to establish who has ownership of each recommendation. I expect to provide a substantive reply early in the new year and this response will make clear which recommendations will be taken forward and a timetable for their implementation.

[11:15]

3.13.1 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I share the Minister's view on the work that was conducted in this extremely important piece of work and I hope the momentum is kept up after its publication. Of the recommendations made in this report, some get at much deep-rooted issues that will take a long time to deal with but there are some in there that may well be able to be dealt with in the short term, things like improving lighting in parts of town or providing training for people who work closely with victims and survivors. Could I ask the Minister if anything has been done thus far to analyse which of those recommendations could be proceeded with in a relatively short-term basis?

Deputy H. Miles:

I thank the Deputy for his question. When it comes to infrastructure issues, those will be timetabled for discussion with the Minister for Infrastructure. Again, a lot of these recommendations require really careful consideration. A lot of them involve multiple partners and it is very important that we take the time to understand the roles and responsibilities of each of these agencies and how they intersect with each other to deliver the best possible outcomes for women in Jersey.

3.13.2 Deputy R.S. Kovacs of St. Saviour:

I will also start by commending the work done under the taskforce for Violence Against Women and Girls. What I want to ask is: the funding allocated for the work of the taskforce, was it intended just for the research, report and recommendations or for working on any actions of the findings as well?

Deputy H. Miles:

I thank the Deputy for her question. The money was allocated initially following Connétable Shenton-Stone's proposition for the actual composition and report of the taskforce. I am very happy to confirm that money has been found and sufficient funding to take forward the recommendations.

3.13.3 Deputy R.S. Kovacs:

As the £200,000 budget allocated that the Minister mentioned was based on the amendment brought by Constable Shenton-Stone, also stating that it is meant to develop and propose changes in policy, strategy and culture in this area, have any of these policies already been implemented within that budget?

Deputy H. Miles:

The focus of the budget was to bring the taskforce together and to fund the development around the taskforce. Pieces of action that have come out of the taskforce have been already fed into policy officers and there is a general understanding of the importance of focusing on V.A.W.G. (Violence Against Women and Girls) in all the work that we do. So, for example, I lodged last week the Public Order Law which has elements in there that will directly affect V.A.W.G. So the money that Connétable Shenton-Stone secured was for the formulation of the taskforce.

3.13.4 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Appreciating that the Minister will be coming back in the new year with a full response to the report and to that timetable for implementation, based on what analysis she has done at this point, is she able to indicate if there are any recommendations in there which she thinks may transpire to be particularly difficult to implement and would she want to take the opportunity now to highlight what those may be to help brief States Members on the work that may be needed to be done to overcome that difficulty?

Deputy H. Miles:

I thank the Deputy for his question. As I said originally, a report of this nature and depth requires proper and thoughtful consideration. It extends across every agency and every institution of our Island and I think when people take the time to read the full report and understand, I do not envisage that there will be too much challenge to implementing some of the recommendations.