

2.3 Connétable P.J. Rondel of St. John of the Chief Minister regarding ...

Would the Minister detail the retirement package which the consultant for Obstetrics and Gynaecology received when he retired in March 2012?

Senator I.J. Gorst (The Chief Minister):

The consultant retired in line with normal hospital practice. Prior to retirement, the States Employment Board resolved an outstanding legal claim from the consultant. A settlement, totalling £448,000 was reached in relation to the net losses suffered by him, including in relation to loss of private income. It also included a contribution to his re-training and legal costs. So it is hoped that we can now place these sad events behind us.

2.3.1 The Connétable of St. John:

I have deep concern as to how the hospital managed to keep out of work one of the most gifted and eminent surgeons for over 5 years at great cost to us all on the basis of fact or process. What is the cost to the taxpayer and the Island, excluding the package that we have just been told about?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Let me be clear, it was not a package, as the Connétable is referring to, it was the settlement or the resolving of an outstanding legal claim from the consultant. However, the Connétable is absolutely right, that is only part of the picture. It is my understanding that the cost of the period of time from 2006 until retirement is in the area of £2.5 million. That does not include the settling of this claim.

2.3.2 The Connétable of St. John:

The Minister has said that the investigation against the consultant was found in his favour, including the huge personal damage to the consultant's reputation and his family as well as huge cost to the Jersey taxpayer. Has the Minister got an explanation? Was the problem caused by envy from fellow members within the department or senior management of the hospital, and has any discipline or dismissal of senior staff within the hospital taken place? Will there be a further report following the previous one?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

There were a number of questions there, I shall endeavour to pick them up and answer them where I can. The Connétable will be aware that this extremely sad and distressing incident happened a number of years ago and the management at the hospital is no longer the same. The Minister in charge of the department is no longer the same. There have been a number of reviews around hospital practice and performance. I think the review that dealt with this particular suspension case was the GoodwinHannah review. The Connétable will know that the hospital has implemented many changes in light of the recommendations of that review. There are still some which are required to be undertaken. I think that Members will acknowledge, as the Council of Ministers acknowledge, that this is one of the reasons why reforming the Health Service and the Social Services is a top priority of this Government and this Assembly over the next 3 years. We propose to invest in the hospital. We propose to improve the delivery of health care to all members of our community.

2.3.3 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Is it correct that the consultant's personnel file now contains a note absolving the consultant of blame in the particular case?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I am sure that Members would not expect me to have sight of individual staff members personnel files and therefore I cannot answer that question.

2.3.4 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

When the Chief Minister mentioned that there is new management, can he outline some of the steps that have been taken to avoid repetition of the situation?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Question time is never a good place to go into detail, but as I tried to indicate, if the Deputy were to look at the conclusions and recommendations of the GoodwinHannah report, he would be able to see that those issues have been done or are being addressed and, of course, one of the critical improvements is the memorandum of understanding which takes places across agencies to ensure that these incidents, we hope, will not occur again.

2.3.5 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

You might rule this as too wide of the mark, but because Verita was quite a long time ago, can the Chief Minister just clarify for me, with all this debate, is it correct that the consultant was not in the hospital at the time when his patient did sadly pass away?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

These, as I have said, extremely sad incidents occurred in 2006. I was not involved at that time and cannot easily bring back to memory exactly the details of all the cases, but if memory serves, I understand that the consultant was not present at the hospital at the time of the incident but that is from my own memory. I cannot be more definite than that.

2.3.6 The Connétable of St. John:

Over many months and years in researching this case, I spoke to the consultant on a number of occasions. Is the Minister now telling the House that the case is now closed?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

As the Connétable knows, the consultant has now retired. The States Employment Board, I believe, absolutely appropriately resolved the outstanding legal claim. The hospital is moving forward, as I have said, there is new management and there is a new Minister. We are coming forward with prioritising improvements and transforming of the healthcare delivery to all members of our community and we will be proposing to put considerable investment into the Health and Social Services over the course of the next number of years. It was an extremely difficult and sad incident and I hope that we can now start to move on.

[10:00]