

2.6 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding the strengthening of dangerous dogs importation legislation:

In order to be helpful I did ask some questions about dogs in the written question number 2, if it helps Members, but I would like to ask the Minister for Home Affairs this question. Following a dog attack in St. Aubin's Bay by a cross-bred Pit Bull which had been imported into Jersey from the United Kingdom, would the Minister undertake to strengthen legislation to ensure that dangerous dogs from other jurisdictions are not able to be imported into Jersey?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand (The Minister for Home Affairs):

I am assuming that the dog attack referred to by Deputy Le Claire is the same one as was mentioned in questions back in December and not a new one. The position, as I have set out in the written answer, is that we already have a situation where under the Customs and Excise (Import and Export Control) (Jersey) Order 2006, a licence is required to import any one of the 4 very dangerous types of dogs and indeed any other type which appears to have been bred for fighting. In addition to that we have a variety of different statutes and regulations - the Dogs (Jersey) Law, among others - Policing of Beaches, and so on. At the moment I am satisfied with the package which is in existence. After the questions I answered in December I met with Deputy Power and indeed somebody from the Jersey Animal Shelter in order to discuss issues and, in fact, was able to assure the gentleman from the animal shelter that our legislation was in a better state than he thought it was in. There were some provisions in existence that he wanted that we already had. In short, my answer is, no, I do not think at this time it is necessary to make any changes because I think the overall package is okay and we do not, in fact, have the problem which they have in the U.K. of dangerous dogs which are attacking people.

2.6.1 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

Notable in the written answer, some element of not being able to do this is attributed to the fact that the Minister has other pressing issues. I am partly to blame for that with the rear seatbelts and the other things that I have asked him to do, which is the wheel clamping, *et cetera*. Given that we have just heard this morning from the Deputy of St. Martin that there is money within the budgets to go out and employ private law firms to carry out disciplinary actions - quite lengthy disciplinary actions - against innocent police officers, surely there must be some money in the pot to ensure that dangerous dogs are prohibited from entering Jersey and are policed from entering Jersey and that adequate legislation or new legislation is introduced to Jersey perhaps at least for Members to debate whether or not certain breeds should be outlawed from Jersey.

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I think that Deputy Le Claire is comparing 2 quite unlike things. It is very much in the public interest and a requirement of public confidence in the police that if there are serious allegations against police officers that these are properly investigated and a proper process takes place. In this particular case, what I am saying is that my view is that the current legislation appears to be adequate for purpose. But even if it was not adequate for purpose and I felt some improvements were made, it would be low in my priority list.

2.6.2 Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier:

This is quite topical because they are looking at the laws in the U.K. Would the Minister not consider with the Constables that when a dog is licensed that it must be automatically chipped in this day and age so that it can be easily identified and also who the owner is. This is where the U.K. is looking at and they are talking something about dog ASBOs (Anti-Social Behaviour Orders), but we probably do not even want to go there at the moment.

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

Thanks to the excellent briefing I received this morning from my staff I have a paper on what they are thinking of doing in the U.K. They are thinking of doing lots of interesting things, such as forcing people to insure their dogs against attacking people. I am loath to blindly follow what they do in the U.K. I think we need to watch, see how things work out there and then follow subsequently. There is a requirement in existing law that a dog must have a collar and must have a name on that collar. If it does not, then it is a stray dog and it can be picked up in any event. So, I think that there are provisions which cover all issues.

2.6.3 The Deputy of St. John:

Possibly the Minister needs to speak to a number of postmen. Given that he mentions he does not believe there are dangerous dogs on the Island, can he, therefore, explain why I knocked on somebody's door 2 years ago and I was attacked by 2 Alsatians who were in the house? They came out through a dog flap and bit my rear, *et cetera*. [Laughter] So, he maintains there are not dangerous dogs. Could he please explain that?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I cannot explain that, although one theory could be that it was mistaken identity. They thought he was a postman. [Laughter]

2.6.4 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

While I do appreciate that we do need to have thorough regulations and processes in place for the police officers that are under suspension, I would like to ask the Minister to reflect on the point I was making in my earlier question, which is if there is a finite pool of resources, certainly they need to be considered. Raising this issue, as other people have done, it hopefully highlights the fact that there are people in Jersey that are concerned about the actual application of law when it comes to dangerous dogs. Will the Minister undertake at the very least to continue to review this while he moves forward with these other engagements?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I am grateful to the Deputy for having raised the issue again, which keeps the Minister on his toes. As I say, I am awaiting correspondence from the gentleman from the animal shelter if he still considers there are issues that I should really be looking at. I am sure that Members of this House will continue to keep me on my toes with further questions in this area from time to time.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Can I just take the opportunity of reminding all Members of Standing Order 63(6)(b) which says: "The Presiding Officer shall rule a supplementary question out of order if the question is not concise." Deputy De Sousa has a question to ask of the Minister for Economic Development.