

2.10 The Deputy of St. John of the Chief Minister regarding the Emergency Planning Department:

Given that in the past each Parish had Emergency Planning Liaison Officers at no extra cost, would the Chief Minister explain why it was decided to disband this system 3 years ago and employ additional staff at the Emergency Planning Department, and why no full Island emergency exercise has taken place in the last 3 years to help our emergency services gain hands-on experience with all their key counterparts?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur (The Chief Minister):

The decision as to whether any Parish has a Civil Emergency Liaison Officer is one made by each Parish. It is not a decision to be made centrally and I am not aware any decision has been made to disband the system. The Emergency Planning Department consists of the Emergency Planning Officer and a part-time secretary. Before the advent of Ministerial government, Emergency Planning answered to the Bailiff as President of the Emergencies Council. In 2005 this function transferred to the Chief Minister's Department and the staff and budget were also transferred. No additional staff have been employed. In the 2009 Business Plan the States agreed to an additional member of staff in the Emergency Planning Office to ensure that the States became fully prepared to respond to any emergency and that there would be cover throughout the year. That appointment has not yet been finalised. As far as the Parishes are concerned a representative of the Comité des Connétables sits on the Emergencies Council and there is ongoing liaison with the Parishes. We consider emergency planning exercises to be very important and 4 exercises have been carried out over the last 4 years. The role of the Emergencies Council is primarily a strategic one and I believe that the Emergencies Council is overseeing a professional co-ordinated Emergency Planning Service which involves the Parishes and all emergency services having to prepare for a diverse range of possible emergencies. However, if the Deputy would like to meet and discuss possible improvements I would be happy to meet him.

2.10.1 The Deputy of St. John:

I am pleased to hear the final comments of the Minister. That being the case, I think he has been ... whoever prepared the answer for him, is incorrect. Having been a member of the Emergencies Council in the past myself, albeit as a Vice-President of Public Services, at the time of disbanding the Parish Liaison Officers the original decision in fact was made by the Emergency Council who instructed the Constables to disband. That being the case, I would like to know in future would the Minister please make sure that he is properly briefed before he gives an answer and will he please confirm that the exercises that have been held to date have been table-top exercises and no full Island emergency exercise has taken place in the last 3 years other than table-top and a partial exercise where a hands-on exercise was done at the airport, but not a full Island exercise where all emergency services - honorary and States - are involved? Will he please confirm that that is correct and please tell us when we are going to see a full Island exercise?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

If I have not been fully informed I should appreciate a copy of that paper which the Deputy seems to have which gives more information than certainly I have. But I think as far as the Emergencies Council are concerned, it is primarily a strategic

operation and to that extent emergencies come in a variety of shapes and sizes, generally not the ones one expects. One can have as many practical exercises as one likes but one really has to firstly devise a proper strategy for dealing with any emergency in a generic form. So I absolutely defend the need for table-top exercises. They can be supplemented by practical experience and where appropriate that would be done as well. It is a question of trying to do both, not just either or one or the other.

2.10.2 Senator S. Syvret:

Could the Chief Minister confirm that the Civil Emergencies Planning Officer works at that job full-time as per States Employment Regulations and is not, in fact, running a multi-million pound private business in parallel to his public employment as did a previous Emergencies Planning Officer?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I cannot speak for the previous Planning Emergency Officer but the present one works full-time for the Planning Board and works extremely hard and diligently in his activities.

2.10.3 The Deputy of St. John:

Will the Minister admit that the cost of running a full Island emergency exercise runs in the region of £250,000 and that is the real reason that we have not seen a full emergency exercise in recent years?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I do not think cost is the driver in this, certainly it will be a factor, but what is more important? Any exercise of that nature has to be realistic, and to the extent it can be done in cheap and other ways I want to achieve it in the best possible way in order that we are properly prepared for any emergency should one arise.