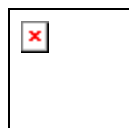


ESTABLISHMENT OF A HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE (P.174/99): AMENDMENT

**Lodged au Greffe on 9th November 1999
by the Prison Board**



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ESTABLISHMENT OF A HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE (P.174/99): AMENDMENT

In sub-paragraph (c) of the proposition delete clause (ii).

PRISON BOARD

REPORT

Introduction

At its meeting on 29th October 1999, the Prison Board noted that the Policy and Resources Committee had lodged a proposition for the creation of a Home Affairs Committee, which Committee would incorporate within its remit responsibility for the Prison.

The Prison Board also noted that the report accompanying the proposition to the States accepted the complexity of the issues involved in seeking to bring together several Departments of the States which had little in common. It accordingly raised its concern that the report did not appear to have given adequate consideration and explanation with regard to the operational implications of such a transfer. It considered that the other departments within the remit of the newly formed Home Affairs Committee were, in the main, currently reporting to the Defence Committee, and as a result would experience minimal operational change. However, inadequate consideration had been given to the more significant implications affecting the Prison as a consequence of this change.

The Board's concerns were further compounded by the fact that the report recognised that the review of the current machinery of Government could affect the future Committee structure, and yet the Policy and Resources Committee was still prepared to proceed with a recommendation in relation to the Prison which could in the meantime have significant resource implications, if only to be overturned at a later date.

Given that the Finance and Economics Committee has stated that considerable consultation should take place in relation to the financial implications as well as other related issues before the new Committee is established, the Prison Board has accordingly tasked the Prison Governor to consider the implications and report back to the Committee.

Background

In the reports that have so far been produced in relation to the proposed Home Affairs Committee, there are a number of key areas which require more detailed explanation to convince that the formation of such a Committee will bring about a more effective and efficient organisation - the objective of the exercise. These are as follows -

- The potential for reduced agenda volumes. It is unlikely that agenda volumes will reduce given that nine departments (Police, Fire, Immigration and Nationality, Driver and Vehicle Standards, Customs and Excise, H.M. Prison, Crime and Drugs Strategy Unit, Territorial Army and Probation) will each be feeding in agenda items to one Committee. It is more likely that fewer politicians will have an increased workload, which will necessitate additional Committee meetings.
- That the rôle of the Chief Executive in co-ordinating strategy for the departments responsible to Home Affairs will overlap with the rôle of the Policy and Resources Department, which is to co-ordinate strategy for all departments.
- Although there is an expectation that the Home Affairs Committee will provide additional awareness and support to the departments for which it is responsible, the Prison currently has a dedicated Board, therefore it is unlikely that a Committee which has responsibility for nine departments will be able to provide the same level of awareness and support that has previously been accorded to the Prison by the Prison Board.
- The rôle of the Chief Executive for Home Affairs remains unclear. There is a stated requirement to seek to leave undiminished the operational responsibilities and accountabilities of the separate departmental Chief Officers, and yet a Chief Executive, with appropriate executive support, is to be central to the operation of this organisation, with responsibility for co-ordinating the strategy of nine diverse, and in the case of Driver and Vehicle Standards, totally unrelated, professional units.
- Agreement has been reached that the Probation Committee will continue to be responsible to the Royal Court, and yet at the same time it has been recognised that the Probation Service is an important element in the development of the overall strategy. It has been left undecided at this point in time as to how this matter will be resolved.
- Whilst there is recommendation for a central finance unit, there is no explanation as to how this will operate. However, Finance and Economics clearly state that where there is a transfer of function there must be a corresponding transfer of funds which must be contained within the total cash limits of the departments concerned.
- There does not appear to have been a detailed cost analysis carried out in relation to the implications of the creation of this new Committee, which will involve additional staff, significant resources to effect the transfer of

responsibilities and dedicated accommodation.

Implications for the Prison

The Prison Governor reports that the implications arising from the transfer of responsibilities are as follows.

Staffing

The Prison staffing is predominantly made up of uniformed operational officers. Administrative support is minimal and comprises one Finance and Administration Officer (Grade 11), whose rôle extends beyond that of finance, one Court Liaison, Purchasing and Payroll Officer (Grade 8), a complex post with multiple responsibilities, and one part-time secretary.

If the Prison were to lose the two full-time posts to the central unit, then the Governor would be reliant on one part-time secretary to provide administrative support for the whole of the Prison. This would be totally inadequate.

There is also the issue of the introduction of the Human Rights (Jersey) Law, which can be expected to bring about a major increase in administrative casework, requiring additional staff time, not less. In addition there will be a marked increase in court work and escorts. It would be inefficient to attempt to provide this administrative support from a central bureaucracy; one recent case involving such issues occupied 60 per cent of a manager's working week over several weeks.

Financial management

The Prison will have gross expenditure in the year 2000 in excess of £4,700,000 and income of £190,000. Firm control of all expenditure is imperative and cannot be undertaken effectively from a remote location. The Prison also has a number of commercial operations which have to be strictly monitored, accounts prepared and payments received. In 2002 the Prison Board's budget will have been reduced by three years' efficiency savings of one per cent, resulting in a loss of £136,000. Representations have been made to the Finance and Economics Committee on the impact on the prison regime of the loss of funds at a time of record inmate numbers.

The Section has responsibility for holding all the prisoners' cash and valuable property, monitoring their expenditure and accounting for cash received and arranging the payment of wages for work carried out within the Prison.

Court responsibilities

The Administration Section maintains the Central Register of prisoners held in custody and ensures that the appropriate legal documentation is received to hold or release the prisoners. The Section ensures that the Court diary is maintained so that prisoners appear in Court on the appointed day and time. Fines are calculated and collected together with bail monies, and sentences calculated.

Other responsibilities

The Administration Section operates the payroll/personnel function of the Prison, providing guidance and support to all staff.

The Section participates in Project Groups involving capital expenditure, IT and central purchasing and Committee briefs are prepared on numerous topics.

To provide the effective administrative support required at La Moye, there must be, as now, a small but dedicated knowledgeable team operating within the Prison.

The organisation proposed by the Policy and Resources Committee will have the effect of creating a further level of administration, with a subsequent cost to the prison department in both financial and manpower terms, with no apparent compensatory gain - the prison already has adequate support from Treasury, Personnel and Computer Services.

Recommendations

The Prison Board strongly recommends, in the light of the above, that the Prison should be excluded from those departments reporting to the Home Affairs Committee until such time as -

- The review of the machinery of Government has been completed and the recommendations emanating from that review endorse the need for a Home Affairs Committee.
- The Service Review for the Prison has been completed.
- The funds required to transfer the responsibility of the Prison to Home Affairs have been fully identified and quantified in conformity with the Finance and Economics Committee's request.
- Adequate consideration and clarification has been given to the operational details which have been highlighted in the background section of this report.