

2024.12.10

**3.12 Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity of the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs regarding implications of the unanimous support for a vote of no confidence in senior management by ambulance staff who were members of Unite (OQ.247/2024):**

Will the Minister explain the implications, if any, of the unanimous support for a vote of no confidence in senior management by ambulance staff who are members of Unite?

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat of St. Helier North (The Minister for Justice and Home Affairs):**

Unite, the union representatives, notified the chief people officer of the outcome of the vote of no confidence process in mid-July. It concerned 4 members of the ambulance senior leadership team. A series of meetings have been held since then to discuss the concerns and consequences of the process. The ambulance senior leadership team have acted to directly resolve some of the specific concerns raised and associated programmes of work remain underway. In agreement with union representatives, a restorative practice approach has been agreed to allow all individuals in the service to participate in a facilitated programme of discussions to discuss and agree the way forward. This work has started and all staff are being encouraged to participate in face-to-face meetings with the facilitator next week and then further group sessions in the new year. The staff of the ambulance service work hard every day to support us in times of need and I continue to give them my full support.

**3.12.1 Deputy H.L. Jeune:**

I thank the Minister for her answer. What measures have been put in place to ensure that there is actual implementation of a zero-tolerance approach to attacks on ambulance staff?

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

I am not quite sure that this fits in with the question that is being asked by the Deputy.

**The Bailiff:**

Well, I think, Deputy, I must ask you to explain why that is relevant to the parameters of the original question, because it is not obviously so to me.

**Deputy H.L. Jeune:**

Yes, sorry. I believe that the vote of no confidence was also related to the concerns by the ambulance staff around an increase in violence and attacks that they have experienced. Asking my question originally about the implications and the changes, the restorative practice approach, the Minister has talked about, I am asking, along with the restorative practice approach, what measures have been taken specifically to put in place for implementing the zero-tolerance approach, which would be part of that restorative practice approach.

**The Bailiff:**

That is a relevant question, if that is what the vote of no confidence was about.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Of course. Basically, the Deputy will be aware that in recent weeks we have done a lot of media in relation to attacks on ambulance staff and I would continue to encourage them to report any attacks on them that occur and that they fully support the process. There is obviously ongoing work with the States of Jersey Police on how to appropriately deal with incidents of violence and aggression towards ambulance staff also.

### **3.12.2 Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South:**

Does the Minister agree that this process was simplified, more inclusive and broad, because the ambulance staff were members of a union and therefore their voices were able to be heard in one single point rather than multiple complaints over a period of time?

#### **Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

I think that obviously there was a benefit that they had a union representative and that they could do it as a generic group but for those people who do not belong to a union, there is always a facility for people to be able to make a complaint and for that matter to be dealt with.

### **3.12.3 Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade:**

Just in response to the Minister's reply to Deputy Jeune, could she outline what she thinks the issues are behind the dispute and, in particular, the relative weights? What are the most important issues that she feels have to be resolved?

#### **Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

There are a number of issues and I am concerned that we are straying into matters which are dealt with by the People's team and S.E.B. (States Employment Board) as opposed to myself as a Minister. I am concerned that these are personnel matters, not a matter for myself, and I do not really want to stray into that.

### **3.12.4 Deputy J. Renouf:**

I would have expected, I think, the Minister with responsibility for the ambulance staff to have some knowledge of what the issues are that staff have raised in a no confidence vote. I wonder if she could reflect on that and perhaps give us some sense of what she thinks the issues are that the staff under her responsibility have raised.

[11:00]

#### **Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

There are a number of issues. One is the issue of radios, the matter of assaults on themselves, their support in relation to the police. There is obviously the additional response in relation to mental health matters. The list is endless.

### **3.12.5 Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement:**

Could the Minister explain what kind of support arrangements are in place for staff at this time, given that there are particular industrial relations issues? Does the Minister think that it would be helpful to bring some conciliation into the process to restore public confidence?

#### **Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

There is support for staff under the well-being system and staff are being supported through this process. Obviously, as I have explained, the union representatives are involved in this process and there are face-to-face meetings. Those are being facilitated this week and will be ongoing into the new year. Once that has been complete, there will be a clear steer as to which way we go forward.

### **3.12.6 Deputy K.M. Wilson:**

We are just about to enter a period of festivities where perhaps the rates of incidents in terms of violence and aggression could potentially increase. Can the Minister give some assurance that the concerns of staff and the resources needed to support staff over this period is in place?

#### **Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

I would like to reassure staff that there will be the support that is necessary during the Christmas period and fully accept that they will be a lot busier. I would also like to ask for the public's support on this because obviously they are a front-line service, and I think that the public as a whole should all support them. Anywhere where people can actually assist them, I would ask them to do so.

**3.12.7 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:**

Is there a wider issue that the Minister has considered here about which laws are being used to prosecute staff when something goes wrong and somebody dies, effectively a third party member of the public, and whether that formed part of the grievance process that the staff ultimately had.

**The Bailiff:**

I do not think that can fall within this, Deputy, and the reason for saying that is the question was the implications of the vote of no confidence in the senior management. I think straying into the area of how things are brought to book in a different area is simply too far outside the parameters.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

I will probably ask that in questions without notice.

**The Bailiff:**

That is an entirely different question.

**3.12.8 Deputy H.L. Jeune:**

There was an independent review on Jersey's Ambulance Service that was published in 2022. Could the Minister advise if the findings of that review would still stand today given that, as she mentioned in her answer to Deputy Renouf, the list is endless on the concerns of why ambulance members brought the vote of no confidence? What priority areas for improvement have advanced since 2022?

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Maybe the word I used as endless was probably not the best one. What I meant was that there were a number of issues and maybe that makes it sound like it is too numerous, and I apologise to the ambulance if that was the way that it was reflected. But what I wanted to highlight was that there were a number of different things. I think the ambulance have had a review and they have looked at all of their various opportunities. I have forgotten the name of the actual review but they have reviewed the ambulance as a whole and extra facilities and resourcing has been given to them. Obviously, that needs to be an ongoing thing, as the ambulance continue to have a high workload, they are getting more and more calls, and so I think that is an ongoing process.