

### **3.14 The Deputy of Grouville of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding the use of guest houses as halfway houses for ex-offenders: [1(232)]**

Will the Minister advise whether a redundant guest house in Gorey village has been set up as a halfway house for ex-offenders and, if so, whether any information was passed to the Parish authorities or whether they were made aware of this use of the property? Will she explain how it is determined to be appropriate that such a facility may be placed in the middle of a residential area?

#### **Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Peter (The Minister for Home Affairs):**

I am not aware that a redundant guest house in Gorey village has been set up as a halfway house for ex-offenders. Members may recall that in March last year I answered a similar question from Deputy Labey of St. Helier regarding arrangements between government agencies and guest houses for accommodation of ex-offenders. I confirmed then that there are no formal arrangements in place and the position has not changed. It might be the case that some ex-offenders have secured temporary accommodation in guest houses in Gorey but there are no formal arrangements.

#### **3.14.1 The Deputy of Grouville:**

While I appreciate it may sometimes be challenging to find and integrate ex-offenders, can it be responsible to place them without support - and I think this is key, without any support - in a village where a young family has already been victim to some of their crimes?

#### **The Deputy of St. Peter:**

I would not have any knowledge of the specific nature of such a case. However, I would like to take the opportunity to remind the Assembly that former offenders are simply that, former offenders who have served time for sentence. In a small island it is difficult for people to find accommodation that is suitable and those who are free. Admittedly, there are special arrangements in place for sex offenders where their supervision will be a priority. But others are at liberty to make their own arrangements and find accommodation that they feel appropriate and suitable.

#### **3.14.2 The Connétable of Grouville:**

Is the Minister saying that she is unaware that this hotel was going to be used for these purposes? Does the Probation Service not tell her what they are likely to be doing? Because, as the Deputy of Grouville said, there has been an incident and it is alleged that it is the cause of this halfway house and certainly my Honorary Police and I had no knowledge that it was going to be used as a halfway house until after the event.

#### **The Deputy of St. Peter:**

As I stated in my first and original answer, there are no formal arrangements between Home Affairs and former offenders finding accommodation.

#### **3.14.3 Deputy M. Tadier:**

The answer may have been partly given already but just to clarify, first of all, can I say that presumably it is a balancing act to balance the competing factors of rehabilitation, data protection and the wider safety of the community, which is hopefully something the Minister for Home Affairs will try to do? But can she clarify whether it is normal practice in such a case to inform the Parish authorities when properties are being used? Presumably, there is an underlying point here which maybe has not been aired yet, especially when it comes to child safety and certain types of offenders that may be being housed, that may pose an ongoing risk, even after their sentence is finished.

**The Deputy of St. Peter:**

As I mentioned earlier, there are arrangements in place for sex offenders to ensure public safety but I reiterate that there are no formal arrangements for other offenders. They are at liberty to find accommodation that they deem to be suitable for them.

**3.14.4 Deputy M. Tadier:**

A follow up: does the Minister think that perhaps there should be formal arrangements, that there should be a set procedure so that when people are released, first of all, for their own benefit they know what they can expect and where they can expect to be housed? But that an appropriate level of information can be given, if and when needed, to perhaps local authorities and relevant stakeholders in that community.

**The Deputy of St. Peter:**

I am little bit surprised by the Deputy's tack here because one would expect that he would understand and champion almost the cause of those people who have served their time, to go out into the community and become members of that community once more and to leave behind the shackles of their time served.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

A point of order, I did ask a question there. The question was not answered and obviously this is part of politics you can argue. But, essentially, the Minister asked me a question and did not give an answer to the question I asked. Notwithstanding the fact that what she said about me not championing those people, of course we all want to see them rehabilitated, that goes without saying but I think there is a legitimate answer that needs to be given to this question that has not been answered yet, which perhaps maybe needs to be followed up in the supplementary.

**The Deputy of St. Peter:**

I think my answer was implied in the comment that I passed. I think it is quite clear what I am trying to say, which is that there are no formal arrangements and it is a matter of public liberty that it remains thus.

**3.14.5 The Deputy of Grouville:**

As I pointed out, I think there is a fine balancing act here and it is challenging. However, if ex-offenders are put into a community that it clearly, as this case proved because they went out and offended again and this time a young family was victim to the crimes, can we have the Minister's assurances that the Parish authorities will be made aware of the situation and so will Probation, so they can support the individuals in these circumstances in the communities?

**The Deputy of St. Peter:**

I understand the Deputy's concerns for her parishioners, absolutely and one always hopes that the public can be safe in their own homes. The work of Home Affairs is solely focused on ensuring public safety as best we can in our small community. We do that generally very successfully but we cannot always rule out risk within our communities. The responsibility for Probation Service does not fall within the responsibilities of the Minister for Home Affairs and so I cannot comment on those issues. I reiterate once again that there are no formal arrangements for my office to inform a Parish authority in relation to the housing of former offenders.