

STATEMENTS ON A MATTER OF OFFICIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Bailiff:

Very well, that brings Questions to the Chief Minister to an end. There are no matters under J, so we come then to K, Statements on a Matter of Official Responsibility and, firstly, we have a statement by the Chairman of the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel.

5. The Chairman of the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel will make a statement regarding the scrutiny of the proposition entitled ‘Police Station Relocation: review of decision’ (as amended) (P.92/2012)

5.1 Deputy J.M. Maçon (Chairman, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel):

Yes, that is me, Sir, thank you. Where am I? Yes, good morning, Members. Following the referral of P.92/2012 to the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel at the last States meeting, my panel considered whether it would be appropriate to broaden the terms of reference for our review to include the issues relating to the planning, traffic and environment matters, which are covered in Deputy Martin’s proposition. We noted a suggestion from Deputy Young that consideration should be given to allow the Minister for Planning and Environment time to produce a development plan for the St. Helier eastern gateway area in consultation with stakeholders and residents, as required by the Island Plan 2011. We agreed, however, that this was not an issue for us and we would confine ourselves to clarifying the operational issues identified by the Police Association. To this end my panel has now held public hearings with representatives of the Police Association and with the Minister for Homes Affairs, Assistant Minister for Treasury and Resources and the Deputy Chief of Police. The panel was informed that the Police Association had convened a meeting with the Deputy Chief Officer and the Facilities and Project Manager to go over all the concerns, which covered 21 individual items. At the end of this meeting there were only 3 items left which remain unresolved. The Police Association was assured that they could be overcome in due course. The outstanding issues were the concern regarding parking for officers, recall to work at short notice, emergencies, for example. While there is public parking available in the area at numerous locations, the concern is that spaces may not be available at the relevant times and officers’ response may be delayed as a result. Issues identified by the inquiry desk officers; that there is no direct access from the inquiry desk to the custody suite to facilitate movement of persons arrested at the desk without having to go back outside and around to the custody suite. The Deputy Chief Officer has agreed that this needs to be addressed. There is a lot of concern over the lack of dedicated parking for officers. The concern relates to officer safety in that having to return to private vehicles, especially cars, at the end of tour of duty, on occasion being in the middle of the night, where they may encounter persons with whom they may have had professional dealings with previously. The Police Association has provided a written response to all their members and awaits any further response. The Deputy Chief Officer informed us that the project was still at a relatively early stage in the design process and there was still ample opportunity to refine the very detailed planning about layouts and the internal provision of services within a building. In relation to staff parking, a detailed travel plan, taking into account officers’ safety issues, would be devised once the planning application had been determined. The Assistant Minister informed us that options for parking, including the offer of 40 private parking spaces nearby, would be considered at a later stage in the planning process. We have also decided that we should inquire about the views of the civil servants, who work at the Police H.Q. (Headquarters), in order to determine whether there are any remaining reservations from staff about the new working conditions. This process will take a little time but we will endeavour to report back to the States Assembly before Christmas.

The Bailiff:

There is up to 10 minutes for any Members to ask a question of the Chairman. Does any Member wish to ask a question? Yes, Senator.

5.1.1 Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

If nobody else is going to ask any questions, the Chairman says that he will report before Christmas. Does that mean that he is confident that the debate that this Assembly can have can now proceed in January? Does he accept that while his panel need to continue to work the Department of the Environment need to carry on their own questioning and process the application that is before the Department of the Environment?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Several questions there: I do not believe that there is anything stopping the Department of the Environment carrying on their work; they can carry on processing the application that is before them. As for when the debate will take place; as I have said in my statement we endeavour to report back to the States on the issues that we are looking at before Christmas and that would indicate, therefore, to the Assembly that we should be able to resume the debate in January, notwithstanding the rights, of course, of Deputy Martin's proposition, she has control over that particular mechanism.