

2.1 Deputy F.J. Hill of St. Martin of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding the number, cost and arrangements for States Police and Customs Department dogs when handlers are sick or on leave:

How many dogs are used by the States Police and the Customs Department, what is the cost of caring for the dogs and what arrangements are in place to look after the dogs when their handlers are sick or on leave?

Senator W. Kinnard (The Minister for Home Affairs):

The States of Jersey Police currently have 3 general-purpose dogs and 2 sniffer dogs that are used to locate drugs and firearms. They are seeking to recruit a third sniffer dog following a retirement and the Customs Service has 2 drugs dogs. The States of Jersey Police and Customs dog handlers are responsible for ensuring the health and welfare of their animals and the dogs live at home with their handlers. In 2005, the Customs budget for running the dog unit totalled £4,150. This figure included the cost of vet bills, food, kennelling and servicing the vehicles used to transport the dogs. The States of Jersey Police Force pay the dog handlers an allowance of approximately £110 per month per dog which covers grooming bills, exercising the dog during rest days and off-duty time. Allowing for the 6 dogs, this equates to an annual total £7,920.00. Dog food is also provided at a cost of £1 per day per dog, giving an annual total for food of approximately £2,190. When dog handlers are unable to look after the dogs due to sickness or annual leave, the dogs are placed in appropriate kennelling facilities locally and if a handler is sick, in the short term, it may often be that the dog will remain at the handler's home and another handler will assist with exercising the dog.

2.1.2 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Will the Minister inform us where the dogs are housed or kennelled if they are not with the owner and possibly give us the reason why they are shipped off-Island?

Senator W. Kinnard:

The only reason that dogs are taken out of the Island is when they go on specialist training. In fact, Customs dogs undertake a one-week secondment to Gatwick Airport to discuss methods and experience and in fact improve the training and also exchanges do take place with Guernsey Customs but, certainly the information that I have, is that when they are kennelled, they are kennelled here within the Island. I am advised not to say where in fact they are kennelled because there are some security issues that may arise from that.

2.1.3 The Deputy of St. Martin:

I just do not accept the fact that where dogs are kennelled when they are away, or the handler is away on holidays, is confidential. Will the Minister confirm, in actual fact, that the dogs are not kept in Jersey, not even at the Jersey Animal Shelter, but they are shipped across to the Guernsey Animal Shelter where there must be additional costs; and I also mention the Customs dogs are also there.

Senator W. Kinnard:

That is not the information that I have before me and I query why the individual is asking this question. I believe he stood for a poster called the Jersey Animal Shelter and, if we are talking about costs, the last time that Home Affairs investigated this matter - when the Connétables decided to move their custom, if you like, to the Jersey Animal Shelter - the costs were less in Guernsey than in Jersey. But, as I say, that is irrelevant, I think, from the point of view of the information I have before me. If the Deputy does not believe me then I am more than happy that he should come and speak to the officers concerned and I am sure that we can assure him.

2.1.4 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Could I just ask the Minister if she would make it known to all Members of this House where the dogs are actually housed during the course or when a handler is away, and also the added costs. I have asked her in my questions what arrangements are made; the answer has not been adequately given, and I would ask that it be given at some later time.

Senator W. Kinnard:

May I just say there is a security risk attached to giving details of where dogs may be housed and I am more than happy to provide that to the Deputy on a confidential basis, but I do not really think that kind of information is the sort of information that should be given out to this House.

Members: Oh!

2.1.3 Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

Could the Minister just elaborate exactly what she was pointing out in respect of this relationship with the Animal Shelter? I think it is important that Members understand that what she is saying there. The Deputy, we are aware, is a member of the Animal Shelter.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Does this arise directly out of the question, which is where are the dogs kept? We do not want to get into a debate about the Animal Shelter.

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I would like to understand what the Minister is saying in respect of her comments about the Animal Shelter.

The Deputy Bailiff:

We do not. You can ask her at a meeting of the Council of Ministers. Are there any other questions? We come then to the second question which Deputy Le Hérissier will ask of the Minister of Social Security.