

2019.12.10

**7 Deputy C.S. Alves of the Chairman of the Comité des Connétables regarding the cost of licences issued by the Parishes: (OQ.304/2019)**

Will the Chair explain the reasons for doubling the price of a dog licence; and will she advise whether the cost of any other licences, issued by the Parishes, for example, gun licences, are also due to increase and, if so, by how much?

**Connétable D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence (Chairman, Comité des Connétables):**

I thank the Deputy for her question. The policy of the Comité is to keep the costs of various permits and licences under review, rather than to make annual increases. They are, therefore, amended only from time to time, allowing parishioners to benefit from them remaining unchanged for several years. In this case, there has been no change for 15 years. Our policy also reduces demands on the Law Draftsmen and the States Greffe, as well as allowing application forms to remain the same from year to year. In 2005, the licence was raised to £5 per dog from £2 in 1980 and, in March 2020, it will increase to £10 per dog, which the Comité believes is a reasonable amount. The only other licence that is due for review is the places of refreshment permit, which is currently £15 and has not changed since 1985. The Deputy referred to gun licences, there was an increase for that in 2017.

**3.7.1 Deputy C.S. Alves:**

Can the Chair advise what the funds raised by dog licences is used for, or towards?

**The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

Yes, of course I can. The costs are applied to the general accounts of the Parish, relating to the administration costs of licensing and they are also put towards the stray dog costs. We pay a retainer to the J.S.P.C.A. (Jersey Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) who collect and hold stray dogs on behalf of the Parishes.

**3.7.2 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Could the Chair of the Comité state how many dog licences were issued in 2019 or, if she does not have that, in 2018?

**The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

I certainly can advise the Deputy. In 2019: 8,754 licences were issued; in 2018: 8,457; in 2017: 8,462. I can even go back as far as 2016, when there were 8,269.

**3.7.3 Deputy M. Tadier:**

So, there seems to be a relatively consistent number there. Is the Chair aware of a Scrutiny Report, which was produced in 2011, which, among other things, made recommendations about the policing of beaches and including dogs and had a recommendation that a dog warden should be employed, following consultation with the Minister for Home Affairs and the Parishes? Would she support that as an idea?

**The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

I remember the Scrutiny Report being prepared. I think it was Deputy Maçon, who sat on the panel at that time. What I do not remember is the response of the Minister for Home Affairs to that recommendation. What I would say, it was recommending a dog warden, or dog wardens, be appointed, so that the public could refer to them when an incident happened. What I do know is the

public refer to the Honorary Police when an incident happens relating to dogs. I believe that probably may be a reason why a dog warden has not been appointed, because every Parish has their Honorary Police who deal with this. A dog warden would need to be paid, I imagine, whereas the Honorary Police are not paid by Parishes.

#### **3.7.4 Deputy R. Labey of St. Helier:**

Instead of having to trot to the Parish Hall every year, to pay £5, or £10, have the Comité given consideration to the option for a one-off payment, when the dog is first registered and licensed, say 10 years' worth? So that would mean - that is the average life of a dog - if your little doggy dies before 10 years, then you do lose out. If it goes on for longer, well, you are quids in.

#### **The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

Always good to be quids in. Yes, we have given consideration to that. I must admit that the question put to us by the Deputy has prompted us to consider it again, although I cannot say the outcome of that deliberation.

#### **3.7.5 Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

I understand that, at one stage, the number of dogs registered with the Parish Halls did not equal the number of dogs registered with vets. Has the situation been regularised?

#### **The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

I have no idea whether it has been, or not. The point is, everyone under the law, who owns a dog over the age of 6 months - if that dog is not registered for a deaf, or blind, person - it must be licensed. So the Parishes, of course, are dependent upon the public being honest and coming forward to license their dogs. In cases where we are aware that someone has not licensed their dog, we deal with it accordingly.

#### **3.7.6 Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

Well, would it not be an idea for the Comité des Connétables to look at the whole position on an Island-wide basis, with the Island-wide veterinary practices and just start reconciling the numbers?

#### **The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

That is certainly a good suggestion from the Senator.

#### **3.7.7 Deputy C.S. Alves:**

Have there been any complaints, by members of public, about owners who do not have dog licences in place, or is there anything done to chase that up, in any way?

#### **The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

I am certainly not aware of any complaints in my Parish from parishioners who know about others who do not have dog licences, but, as I said in my previous answer, when and if such a situation is brought to the attention of the Constable, then we refer it to our Honorary Police to deal with it. We do not let people get away with not having a dog licence, if we become aware of them.