

2.15. The Deputy of St. Martin of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding the establishment of the Independent Custody Visitor Scheme:

When asked on 19th July 2010 for an update on the establishment of the Independent Custody Visitor Scheme, the Minister stated that Ministers would shortly be attending a familiarisation visit to police headquarters and be issued with identity cards and stated: "So we are very nearly there." Will the Minister inform Members if the scheme is now operating and if not, why not?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand (The Minister for Home Affairs):

Once again I thank the Deputy of St. Martin for his continuing interest in this matter and acknowledge that this was originally his idea. I thank him for that and for his input. There has been a further slight delay in getting the scheme up and running. This was partly because of the difficulty in arranging the timing for the familiarisation visit to police headquarters. These had to take place in the evening and it was difficult to co-ordinate with the Custody Sergeant, who was going to arrange those. Then for a time he was taken away from his normal role to be an Acting Inspector. There was also a slight glitch with the quality of photos for I.D. (identification) cards, but this has now been resolved. I am glad to say that volunteers are now ready to become fully operational. They have appointed their chairperson and they have held their first informal meeting. They are due to commence unannounced visits to police headquarters in November. They will operate, of course, as an independent group and will, of course, be reporting back in relation to details to the Home Affairs Department.

[11:15]

2.15.1 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

The Independent Custody Visitors Scheme is an important element in ensuring that people in custody have their rights and a provision for their rights. Will this in the future include the right for prisoners to vote in Jersey, as in the U.K.?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

That is a different issue, of course, [**Laughter**] because the issue that has been raised in the U.K. is prisoners in prisons, as opposed to prisoners temporarily in police custody. That, of course, will not be a matter ultimately for this Assembly. In the short term it is a matter for the Chairman of the P.P.C. (Privileges and Procedures Committee), but if we are going to be human rights compliant we are going to need to make some changes. What is not clear at this moment is the exact shape of the changes. Because my understanding is the judgment of the European Court was that a blanket ban was not acceptable, and I do not know exactly what the details are going to be. Off point, but I have answered it anyway.

The Deputy Bailiff:

It is not on point at all, this is correct.