

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CHIEF MINISTER
BY DEPUTY M. TADIER OF ST. BRELADE
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 20th APRIL 2010**

Question

“Will the Chief Minister state whether he is supportive of a complete independent inquiry into issues surrounding Haut de la Garenne and the so-called historic child abuse inquiry, including issues such as the confusion surrounding the skull fragment; whether human bones were previously removed from the site by the police and why there is currently confusion about the depth of cellars under the building. If so, would he state when he envisages this taking place and if not would he set out the grounds for his objection? Would the Chief Minister also list any other considerations in favour or otherwise of an inquiry, as promised by the former Chief Minister?”

Answer

R.27/2008 was lodged in March 2008 by the former Council of Ministers at a time when the Island was in shock at the terrible events it had been alleged had taken place at Haut de la Garenne. It was in this context that the Council of Ministers stated its commitment to hold a full inquiry into unanswered questions once the police investigation and subsequent prosecutions had been concluded.

In November 2008, the States of Jersey Police publicly dismissed the notion of murder at Haut de la Garenne as well as removing confusion surrounding the nature of some of the evidence. At about this time the Chief Officer of the States of Jersey Police was suspended pending an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the historic abuse inquiry.

In the early part of 2010, it is clear that the context within which the former Council of Ministers made its public commitment to an inquiry has changed beyond recognition, and this is something I believe must be taken into consideration when making decisions about the way forward. In addition, it is clear that since March 2008 much has happened in response to the investigation which is likely to provide answers to matters that would otherwise have required a public inquiry.

One of the most notable developments has been that of the Wiltshire Report into Operation Rectangle, which has been produced as part of the disciplinary process relating to the Chief Office of the States of Jersey Police. Whilst this report remains confidential throughout the disciplinary process, the Minister for Home Affairs has committed to make available to the States Assembly as much as possible of this report once the disciplinary process has been completed.

I remain supportive of the notion of an open and transparent public inquiry where there are outstanding issues to be investigated which represent definite matters of public interest. In this case it will be important to take stock of all that has happened since March 2008 in order to reach a conclusion as to whether such an inquiry is the most appropriate way forward and if so what its scope should be. I can assure the Deputy that this is being actively considered by the Council of Ministers and I fully intend that this will be considered by the States Assembly at an appropriate time.

As any public inquiry would not be able to begin until the conclusion of the current police investigation and subsequent prosecutions, this provides the best guide in terms of timing. With some cases still within the judicial process and the possibility of subsequent appeals, should a public inquiry take place, I believe the soonest it could begin would be the early part of 2011.

Whilst it is clear that a public inquiry could be an extensive and costly exercise, the overriding consideration must be whether the public interest would be served through such a process, in particular if unanswered questions remain that should be addressed in this way. If, having reviewed what has happened since March 2008, there

remain outstanding issues of public interest I would certainly consider an open and transparent inquiry to address these areas.