

4.1 Deputy F.J. Hill of St. Martin of the Chief Minister regarding the appointment of a body to investigate the matters raised in P.131/2009 (the suspension of a Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist):

Will the Chief Minister inform Members of the action taken to appoint a body to investigate the matters raised in P.131/2009 relating to the suspension of a consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist and what personal steps, if any, is the Chief Minister, as chairman of the States Employment Board, taking to address the lengthy and costly suspensions of States employees?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur (The Chief Minister):

I am anxious that these matters are resolved as swiftly and effectively as possible, and immediately after the debate in the last States sitting 10 days ago I instructed officers to identify a short list of bodies that might be prepared to undertake this review. I indicated that Verita should be included in that shortlist. Those bodies have now been identified and inquiries are currently underway to ascertain costs, timescales, expertise, duties, experience and so on. I hope to be in a position to make an appointment in early October. As the main factor in necessary suspension cases frequently relates to delaying internal procedures due to ongoing criminal investigations or prosecutions, I am taking advice from the Attorney General to see if anything can be done to reduce timescales in resolving issues of legal proceedings relating to these cases.

4.1.1 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Can I ask the Chief Minister a question? Will Professor Upex - who, I think the States will agree, did a very good job on a previous inquiry - be one of those people being considered?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

If he has the required level of skill in this particular area, I think he certainly should be.

4.1.2 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Is the Chief Minister taking advice from J.A.C.S. (Jersey Advisory and Conciliation Services) while commissioning the investigation?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

At this stage my priority is to find someone to do the investigation. Once I have identified potential people to do that, if necessary I shall take advice from J.A.C.S. or any other interested parties. But maybe the Senator would like to elaborate on why she thinks that J.A.C.S. would be appropriate in this particular situation.

4.1.3 Senator S. Syvret:

As the Chief Minister has responsibility for personnel matters across the States of Jersey, will he, both in respect of this particular case and generally consider issuing a reminder to all staff, particularly senior management, that it is highly undesirable and unacceptable for them to tell falsehoods to such investigations or to seek to mislead such inquiries and investigations through acts of omission?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I do not think any such reminder is appropriate and I believe that officers, and, indeed, I hope all States employees, act honourably and responsibly.

4.1.4 The Deputy of St. Martin:

I did ask the Chief Minister about the personal steps he was taking. Could I ask the Chief Minister: was he really embarrassed the other day to be sitting in front of the Complaints Board, having someone paid at the public expense to try possibly the impossible of defending the indefensible with the Complaints Board hearing the other day? Would the Chief Minister be minded maybe to assist matters by agreeing when the chairman of the panel says: "Would you like to settle out of court?" rather than go through the ... or 2 hours, really, of watching a lawyer, on behalf of the States, defending, really, what was indefensible?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

No, I was not embarrassed. The Board was discussing a point of legal principle which was quite complex and I await the outcome of their findings. Whatever their findings are, I shall implement them.