

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

(71st Meeting)

28th February 2008PART A

All members were present, with the exception of Senator B.E. Shenton, Minister for Health and Social Services, from whom apologies had been received.

Senator F.H. Walker, Chief Minister (for a time)
 Senator W. Kinnard, Minister for Home Affairs
 Senator T.A. Le Sueur, Minister for Treasury and Resources
 Senator P.F. Routier, Minister for Social Security
 Senator M.E. Vibert, Minister for Education, Sport and Culture
 Senator P.F.C. Ozouf, Minister for Economic Development (for a time)
 Senator T.J. Le Main, Minister for Housing
 Senator F.E. Cohen, Minister for Planning and Environment
 Deputy G.W.J. de Faye, Minister for Transport and Technical Services

In attendance -

Senator J.L. Perchard, Assistant Minister for Health and Social Services
 Deputy A.J.H. Maclean, Assistant Minister for Economic Development
 I. Black, Treasurer of the States
 C. Haws, Head of Financial Planning
 J. Morris, Policy and Research Manager (for a time)
 M.N. de la Haye, Greffier of the States
 I. Clarkson, Clerk to the Council of Ministers

Note: The Minutes of this meeting comprise Part A and Part B.

Child
 protection
 services:
 criminal
 investigation.
 835/3/4(19)
 839/41(9)

A1. The Council, with reference to its Minute No. A2 of 4th October 2007, recalled that on 23rd February 2008 the States of Jersey Police had reported the discovery of possible human remains at the former children's home at Haut de la Garenne, St. Martin. Subsequent media coverage of the developing criminal investigation had been extensive, both at a national and an international level.

The Council expressed profound horror and sadness at the discovery at Haut de la Garenne and declared its total commitment to support both the police and the criminal justice authorities in uncovering any historic abuse and bringing those responsible to justice.

The Chief Minister informed the Council that he and the Chief Executive were concentrating exclusively on addressing key political and administrative matters arising from the police investigation. To that end the Chief Minister had elected to form, and to consult regularly, an advisory group comprised of the following members –

Senator F.H. Walker (Chairman)
 Senator T.A. Le Sueur
 Senator W. Kinnard
 Senator M.E. Vibert

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf
Senator J. Perchard
Deputy J. Gallichan.

Two meetings had been held, the second of which had convened immediately prior to the present meeting.

It was reported that no new revelations had been made since the beginning of the week, although it was anticipated that the police would need to continue searching for evidence at Haut de la Garenne, St. Martin for a number of days.

The Council noted that on 26th February 2008 an early day motion entitled, 'Child Protection in Jersey' had been tabled in the United Kingdom House of Commons by A. Mitchell, MP. In view of previous negative and unfounded statements attributed to Mr. Mitchell regarding Jersey, the Council was less than surprised to note that the motion had been particularly critical of the Island's political and judicial institutions and of its handling of child protection matters purportedly raised by Senator S. Syvret. The Council also observed that only a very limited number of MPs had elected to sign the motion.

The Council noted the position and endorsed the formation of the Chief Minister's Advisory Group.

On a related matter, Ministers expressed considerable regret at the manner in which Senator S. Syvret had elected to engage with media organizations, particularly in respect of the potential for the Senator's actions to affect the efforts of the police and criminal justice authorities to bring persons to justice. In this regard the Council noted that during the course of the meeting of the States Assembly on 26th February 2008, the Law Officers' Department had been requested to circulate guidance to all States members concerning the implications for due process of commenting in detail on such matters in public, or of encouraging alleged victims of abuse to do so.

Further regret was expressed by the Council concerning Senator Syvret's reported claim that he was dismissed as Minister for Health and Social Services because of allegations he had made about the Island's children's services. The Council recalled that the States had dismissed Senator Syvret at the request of the Council because the Senator's behaviour had fallen below the standards expected of a Minister and, in the view of the Council, because his actions had undermined existing child protection arrangements, thereby increasing the risk to vulnerable young people. **The Council recommended that the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister host a press conference at St. Martin's Parish Hall during the afternoon of 28th February 2008 to clarify, on behalf of the Council, the circumstances that led to the dismissal of Senator Syvret.**