



19 August 2024

Request

Please may I ask for a copy of the agenda item and committee papers plus minute of the Comité des Connétables meeting followed on from the Home affairs committee meeting mentioned below.

(64th Meeting)
24.10.02

467

Police -
firearms:
administration
and possession.
1211/2(131)

Dir.
C.of P.
C.des C.

A16. The Committee received a report dated 17th October 2002 prepared by the Chief Officer, States of Jersey Police, regarding the administration of the possession of firearms in Jersey.

The Committee noted that the authority to issue firearms certificates in the Island was vested in the Connétable of the parish in which an applicant lived and that the States of Jersey Police assisted the Connétable by undertaking background checks on applicants and giving advice as to the person's suitability. However, the Connétable was not bound to follow the advice of the Police and, thereafter, all matters relating to the application fell within the remit of the respective parishes.

The Committee's attention was drawn to two recent cases in respect of persons who were once licensed to hold weapons but whose certificates had expired and enquiries had not revealed any evidence that the expiry of the certificates had been followed up by local enquiries or by an attempt to recover the weapons. Grave concern was expressed that Police investigations indicated that 664 firearms certificates appeared to have expired in recent years and not been renewed. The Connétable of St. Ouen informed the Committee that the situation was monitored by his officers quarterly and visits made to individuals who had not renewed but it was accepted that procedures differed between the parishes and that it was not always possible to trace a person who had moved to a different parish.

The Connétable of St. Ouen agreed to bring the matter to the attention of the Comité des Connétables at the earliest opportunity with a view to procedures being established and standardised across the parishes in conjunction with the States of Jersey Police as a matter of extreme urgency. The Committee congratulated the Chief Officer, States of Jersey Police, for the research which he had undertaken in bringing the issue to its attention. In the meantime, it was suggested that a period of time should be given to enable persons whose firearms certificates appeared to have lapsed to be followed up and, where appropriate, for new applications for certificates to be made.

Response

The meeting was held at short notice and no agenda is held. The minute of the meeting held on 29 October 2002 is as follows:

Comité des Connétables/Supervisory Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on

Tuesday 29th October 2002

in the Town Hall, St Helier.

Firearms -
administration

1. The Chairman welcomed Messrs G Power, Chief Officer, and L Harper, Chief Superintendent, States Police, to the meeting which had been called at short notice at the request of the Connétable of St Ouën to discuss the report of the Chief Officer, States Police, to the Home Affairs Committee on the administration of firearms. The Chairman said he was disappointed that the Chief Officer's concerns had been made public prior to the Connétables having the opportunity to consider the matter as the subject was one which might cause public concern and panic. The Chief Officer's report had been prepared following two incidents in which firearms were retrieved from persons who did not hold a current firearm certificate. A check of the police records had then been carried out and indicated 664 persons who had not renewed their firearm certificates in recent years. The Chairman said that in the short time since the matter had been brought to his attention he had reviewed all persons to whom he had granted a firearms certificate in recent years and, with the exception of those holding a shotgun for which a firearms certificate would not be required until 1st November 2002, only 19 had expired and these had been followed up. The Connétable of St Saviour said he had also undertaken a review and only 6 persons had outstanding certificates but the Parish had been waiting since June 2002 for the report on the criminal record check of some applicants prior to issuing a certificate.

Mr Power apologised that he had not spoken with the Connétables initially but said that following an informal discussion with the President of the Home Affairs Committee it had been agreed the matter should be placed on that Committee's agenda and, as it was included on 'part A' which was available for public inspection, the matter had been picked up by the media. However, he had written to the Connétables of the two Parishes in which the persons involved in the recent incidents were living prior to the media publishing the story. As a result of the two incidents the States Police had undertaken an audit of its own database and this had highlighted over 600 possible persons who had held licences but no longer had a valid firearms certificate. Whilst this did not automatically mean that such persons were illegally holding firearms, the Home Affairs Committee agreed that it should seek to work with the Connétables to tackle the problem and he proposed that the States Police list of persons should be checked against the Parishes records and that H M Attorney General should be approached regarding an amnesty period so that any person holding a firearm for which they did not hold a valid certificate might hand the firearm in without penalty. The aim was to bring down the 664 possible lines of enquiry to a manageable number. Mr Power confirmed that the Connétables were the licensing authority and that the role of the States Police was to provide professional support. The principle concern was those persons who were once deemed suitable to hold a firearm certificate but whose circumstances might have changed and were no longer able to own a firearm without endangering themselves or others. Mr Power said he was not aware of the number of applications awaiting the criminal record check but was surprised to hear that some dated back to June 2002. He explained that information from the Jersey records was available immediately, and those relating to serious offences in the United Kingdom within 24 hours, but there could be a delay in receiving information on less serious offences. However, he said he would take up any cases of concern.

The Connétables agreed that they would wish to investigate the list of persons whose firearm certificates had not been renewed and would write to all such persons reminding them of the requirement to hold a valid firearm certificate if they had a firearm in their possession. The possibility of an amnesty was considered but it was

agreed that it would be important to obtain the names and addresses of any person surrendering a firearm so as to eliminate them from the list of persons to be checked. Any person wishing to dispose of a firearm they no longer required would be able to hand in the weapon and Mr Power offered to arrange for weapons handed in at the Parish Halls to be collected. Alternatively, unwanted weapons could be delivered to a firearm dealer. Mr Power suggested that once the immediate problem had been addressed a memorandum of understanding should be drawn up regarding the support to be provided from the central database, what the States Police would provide and what the Connétables would do with it. The Connétables pointed out that there was no requirement in the law to say what happened if a person refused to renew a certificate. Mr Power said the States Police were integrating their various databases and by next year would have a link to domestic incidents. The Connétable of St John referred to a discussion between representatives of the States Police and the parish secretaries in December 2001 when it was advised that reminders of certificate expiry dates would be generated by the States Police computer and he asked what progress had been made on this issue. Mr Power thought that this would be possible once all certificates under the new law had been entered on the computer.

In conclusion it was agreed that the Connétables would receive from the States Police a list of persons to be followed up and would write to those persons reminding them of the need to renew their firearms certificate if they still held any firearms or, if they had disposed of the firearms, ask them to advise the Parish of the details. It was further agreed that the position would be reviewed in early December 2002 to establish what progress had been made and to decide on any further action to be taken. Mr Power and Mr Harper were thanked for attending the meeting and then withdrew. The Comité agreed that a draft letter should be circulated to all Connétables and used to follow up those persons whose certificates had expired and not been renewed since 1990.

