

Access to Public Information Response

December 15th 2017

REQUEST UNDER THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION

Request sent on December 15th 2016:

There was discussion about Guernsey taking refugees, in particular Syrian refugees, both with the UK government and the Jersey government. There was public debate on the subject and a decision was made for Guernsey not to take any Syrian or other refugees.

There were public statements made in respect of the approaches made to the UK government on this subject by both the Guernsey and Jersey governments.

Who made the approaches to the UK government?

Was it a joint approach by both Guernsey and Jersey, and if so which Guernsey and Jersey Civil Servants and/or politicians were involved?

Whether it was a joint approach with Jersey or a separate approach from Guernsey, or a combination, was it at Civil Service level, political level, or both?

What form of communications took place?

Was it in person, by phone, by email, by any other form of communication, or a combination of methods of communication?

Were there any meetings and if so when and what was said at those meetings?

Who was communicated with in the UK government?

Was it a particular government department or departments such as the Home Department?

Or was it via normal official channels, and if so who was dealt with?

Was it with Civil Servant/s, politicians or both?

Were Crown Officers or other public servants involved?

What exactly was said to those communicated with in the UK?

Who gave authority to such approaches being made?

Has there been any form of communication or meeting with the Isle of Man Government on this subject, whether politician to politician, or Civil Service level or any form of official or unofficial level?

What records are there of any of the above mentioned contact/s?

Is there any record of correspondence, minutes or notes of meetings and/or phone calls, emails, or other forms of record keeping?

Could such correspondence, records, etc., please be copied to me?

Has the issue of Guernsey taking any Syrian or other refugees been now closed, or is the Guernsey government still in communication with the UK on this issue?

In view of the fact that extremist fundamentalist “rebels” and their families have been granted safe passage out of eastern Aleppo, can an assurance be given that none of these people will be allowed into Guernsey?

I thank you for your assistance on the above and look forward to hearing from you.

States of Guernsey response sent on January 13th 2017:

Thank you for your request for information under the Code of Practice for Access to Public Information. The answers to your questions are published below.

There was discussion about Guernsey taking refugees, in particular Syrian refugees, both with the UK government and the Jersey government. There was public debate on the subject and a decision was made for Guernsey not to take any Syrian or other refugees. There were public statements made in respect of the approaches made to the UK government on this subject by both the Guernsey and Jersey governments. Who made the approaches to the UK government?

Officers from the States of Guernsey approached the UK Government.

Was it a joint approach by both Guernsey and Jersey, and if so which Guernsey and Jersey Civil Servants and/or politicians were involved?

The initial approach by officers in Guernsey to the Home Office was made separately to the other Crown Dependencies. However, discussions later took place jointly.

Whether it was a joint approach with Jersey or a separate approach from Guernsey, or a combination, was it at Civil Service level, political level, or both?

Engagement was at civil servant level.

What form of communications took place? Was it in person, by phone, by email, by any other form of communication, or a combination of methods of communication?

There was a combination of methods of communication.

Were there any meetings and if so when and what was said at those meetings?

Meetings were held on the phone and in person on a range of occasions. The details of these discussions are not available in accordance with exception 2.1 (security and external relations) as information was received in confidence from another government.

Who was communicated with in the UK government? Was it a particular government department or departments such as the Home Department?

The Home Office and the Ministry of Justice.

Or was it via normal official channels, and if so who was dealt with?

Direct contact took place with the UK Home Office in accordance with how Guernsey's relationship with the UK government currently operates.

Was it with Civil Servant/s, politicians or both?

Discussions took place with civil servants.

Were Crown Officers or other public servants involved?

Not in respect of the discussions with the UK Home Office.

What exactly was said to those communicated with in the UK?

The details of these discussions are not available in accordance with exception 2.1 (security and external relations) as information was received in confidence from another government.

Who gave authority to such approaches being made?

The approaches were made in accordance with the mandate of the then Policy Council.

Has there been any form of communication or meeting with the Isle of Man Government on this subject, whether politician to politician, or Civil Service level or any form of official or unofficial level?

There was a combination of methods of communication at both civil servant and political level with Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man.

What records are there of any of the above mentioned contact/s?

The details of these discussion are not available in accordance with exception 2.1 (security and external relations) as information was received in confidence from another government.

Is there any record of correspondence, minutes or notes of meetings and/or phone calls, emails, or other forms of record keeping? Could such correspondence, records, etc., please be copied to me?

The details of these discussion are not available in accordance with exception 2.1 (security and external relations) as information was received in confidence from another government.

Has the issue of Guernsey taking any Syrian or other refugees been now closed, or is the Guernsey government still in communication with the UK on this issue?

A review of the island's infrastructure and legal framework was undertaken by the Policy Council and it was concluded that Guernsey was not in a position to participate in the UK Government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme, however the future participation in that scheme, or any other scheme, would be dependent on a number of other issues. These issues were outlined in the statement released by the Policy Council on 4 February 2016 (available at: <https://gov.gg/article/151392/Statement-on-Guernseys-response-to-the-Syrian-refugee-crisis>).

In view of the fact that extremist fundamentalist "rebels" and their families have been granted safe passage out of eastern Aleppo, can an assurance be given that none of these people will be allowed into Guernsey?

As a general principle, Guernsey is part of the Common Travel Area and does not operate an independent immigration regime to the United Kingdom. Individuals that have a right to live in the UK have a right to reside in Guernsey, subject to any population management regime in place. There is the possibility that those granted refugee status or temporary leave to remain could legitimately arrive in Guernsey from the UK because we are part of the Common Travel Area.