Tynwald Written Answer

The Hon. Member for Douglas South (Mrs Christian) to ask the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs –

What consideration has been given to internal investigations being administered by the Independent Office for Police Conduct or another external investigating body?

The Minister for Justice and Home Affairs (Mrs Poole-Wilson):

The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) is the body established to investigate the most serious and sensitive incidents and allegations involving the police in England and Wales. The Constabulary uses guidance issued by the IOPC to inform the processes undertaken in respect of police complaints.

Police Complaints was the subject of a Parliamentary Select Committee and following this the Department of Home Affairs undertook significant work to improve the Police Complaints process.

A proposed Police (Amendment) Bill was produced for consultation during 2010. The content of a draft Bill was issued as part of a consultation package which would have seen the appointment of a Police Ombudsman replacing the Police Complaints Commissioner, amongst other proposed changes. However, following that consultation, and the lack of demand from the public for change to a system which was working well, the successful use of the existing updated complaints process over the last few years (before the consultation), and the lack of complaints about the then current operation of the system, as well as concerns raised in the consultation about financial and resource implications, the Department concluded that a watching brief on the need for the legislation would continue.

Subsequently, in 2015 the Police (Amendment) Bill was brought which included small but notable changes to complaints handling but did not make the wider ranging changes which were previously proposed.

More recently, as the Honourable Member may be aware the Department has commissioned an independent review of the Constabulary by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services. The Department included in the terms of reference a review of governance and specifically the current complaints process to seek independent evaluation and recommendations for change. The Department is awaiting the outcome of that review to determine any resulting actions.