

1. Cabinet Office (Legislative Amendments) Bill 2014 – Third Reading approved

The Acting Attorney General to move:

That the Cabinet Office (Legislative Amendments) Bill 2014 be read a third time and do pass.

The President: Our first business today is to deal with the Third Reading of the Cabinet Office (Legislative Amendments) Bill 2014.

I call on the learned Acting Attorney General to take the Third Reading.

The Acting Attorney General: Thank you, Madam President.

The Cabinet Office (Legislative Amendments) Bill 2014 is a short technical Bill resulting from the Modernising Ministerial Government proposals approved at the January sitting of Tynwald. The Bill is the result of one of the Report's recommendations relating to the recently created Cabinet Office consisting of the current Chief Secretary's Office, the Economic Affairs Division of Treasury, Information Systems Division of the Department of Economic Development, and the Office of Human Resources.

The Bill is only concerned with references to the Chief Secretary's Office in Manx enactments which require primary legislation to amend. The Bill therefore amends other enactments to substitute references to the Chief Secretary's Office for references to the Cabinet Office.

The Bill also deals with references, where applicable, to the Chief Secretary's Office in other legislation, for example, secondary legislation and UK legislation applied to the Island. Any such references are to be read as a reference to the Cabinet Office.

Should the branches of Tynwald support this Bill it will come into operation on the day that Royal Assent is announced in Tynwald.

Madam President, I beg to move the Third Reading of the Cabinet Office (Legislative Amendments) Bill 2014.

Mr Braidwood: I beg to second, Madam President, and reserve my remarks.

Mr Downie: Yes, Madam President.

The President: The Hon. Member, Mr Downie.

Mr Downie: Thank you, Madam President.

I did ask at the last sitting what the situation was regarding the Representation of the People Act and whether responsibility for that was going to be transferred to the Cabinet Office.

While I support the legislation, I think it would be a useful exercise to lay out somewhere exactly who has now got responsibility for what, because there still appears among the general public to be some confusion and perhaps that could be dealt with later on.

The reason I raise the issue of the Representation of the People Act is that the Business Change Group within Government appear to want to push the responsibility for the elections to the courts. Under the new regime that is going to be introduced for the next General Election in 2016 there are limits to the amounts of money candidates are allowed to expend on their election. There will also be an audit trail and, if there is a dispute, someone has to get involved in all that and deal with it.

I personally believe that it is not the responsibility of the Courts Division to be dealing with that; as we have seen in other elections they may need to arbitrate in other matters.

So there needs to be, in my opinion, some quite clear homes for some of this existing legislation, and we need to be aware where all these things are because there will be confusion,

and when people start to ask I think it is up to us as legislators to make sure that what we do and what we finish up with is clear for everybody to see and understand.

The President: The learned Acting Attorney – it is not quite related to the Bill, but it may be something that you can assist with.

The Acting Attorney General: Yes, Madam President, thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr Downie, for your comments and for your support to the purpose of the Bill.

As I have explained, it is simply a technical Bill, changing references to the Chief Secretary's Office for references to the Cabinet Office. However, I did notice comments at the Second Reading and I did understand the Chief Secretary's Office was to make contact with you. If they have not, I will certainly follow that up, Mr Downie, and I will certainly again bring to the Chief Secretary's attention the concerns which you have voiced today.

Thank you.

Mr Downie: Could I also add, Madam President, I have spoken privately to the Chief Secretary and expressed my concern and I still have not had anything back – that is four weeks ago.

The Acting Attorney General: I can only apologise for that through you, Madam President, and I will certainly bring that to the attention of the Chief Secretary.

The President: The motion is that the Bill be read a third time and do pass. Those in favour please say aye; against, no. The ayes have it. The ayes have it.