

3.14 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Chairman of the Privileges and Procedures Committee regarding consideration of the Venice Commission's guidelines for referendum best practice:

Did the Chairman or the committee give any consideration to the Venice Commission's guidelines for referendum best practice as outlined in their Code of Good Practice on referendums, in particular those relating to equality of opportunity and media impartiality prior to lodging P.5/2013 and if not, why not?

The Connétable of St. Helier (Chairman, Privileges and Procedures Committee):

Privileges and Procedures did not consider the Venice Commission guidelines before lodging P.5/2013. Neither, I am advised, did the Electoral Commission. P.P.C. did what the States asked it to do when they agreed the Commission's terms of reference on 7th March 2012. It received the Commission's final report and recommendations on 10th January this year and it lodged P.5/2013 as soon as possible thereafter as per term of reference 4.

3.14.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

In that case, what part will P.P.C. play in the organisation of this referendum and, in particular, how will he and his committee ensure that balanced coverage must be guaranteed to proposals supported by opponents in public mass media broadcasts?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Clearly, established media organisations are already bound by existing codes of conduct. P.P.C. will be addressing some of the practical matters relating to the organisation of the referendum, including the question about whether any public funds should be made available to the different campaigns at its next meeting.

3.14.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Does the Venice Commission or indeed P.P.C. itself have anything to say about the threshold turnout and indeed the threshold vote that will, in the eyes of people, make this a legitimate vote because there is a real danger that low turnout will be seen as low interest and that this Assembly will not take it seriously?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I do not know whether the Venice Commission deals with percentage turnout or not. This matter was raised, I think, in the last sitting and it was pointed out then that the States have not made any provision for a minimum turnout. Clearly, the percentage turnout is one factor which the States will take into account when it debates whatever recommendations arise out of the referendum.

3.14.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Just to clarify, but will P.P.C. be providing guidance, information, background from other jurisdictions, *et cetera*?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I think once the referendum result is known clearly P.P.C. will have a job of work to do to respond to the public's wishes and will bring forward draft proposals to the States. It is at that point I would expect that the Committee would take account of turnout and would give its opinion to the States accordingly but, at the end of the day, it will be up to the States to decide what to do with the outcome of the referendum.

3.14.4 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

In the answer to written question 9, the Chairman made reference to drawing attention to the Electoral Commission's final report in this way. Given that it is almost a majority view that the

final report is very misleading and it does not highlight the inequality that will occur with option B, does he think that something more needs to be done in that regard because there are no proper graphs at all? In fact, it is a pretty shoddy piece of work to be honest.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I do not agree with the questioner that the report is misleading. It makes it very clear that there is a choice between maintaining the current Parish representation in the States and getting voter equity and that we cannot have both and it is up to members of the public to decide which they think is more important.

3.14.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

What thought has the Chairman or his Committee given to such factors as access to the voter registers by campaigners and how he will ensure that spending by each of the 3 parties involved, because it is 3-way remember, is properly monitored and that spending limits are observed?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I thank the Deputy for his questions. As far as I know, access to voter registers will be as currently exists under the law. Now, if I am wrong, I will clearly take advice on that. Spending, I believe there is currently no limit on the spending of whichever of the options wants to spend money on their campaigns. Luckily, of course, as I found with blogging, it is relatively cheap if not a free thing to do.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I am glad the Constable thinks that running a campaign is a cheap thing to do.