

**STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE PRIVILEGES AND PROCEDURES
COMMITTEE ON 30th MARCH 2004**

I am making this statement to update members on the progress being made by the Working Party on the Arrangement of Public Business.

The Working Party was originally established by the Privileges and Procedures Committee as previously constituted but was only able to meet once before the change of Committee in February. The Working Party was reconstituted under the chairmanship of Deputy Peter Troy at the first meeting of the new Privileges and Procedures Committee and I am pleased to inform members that the group held its first meeting yesterday. The other members of Working Party are –

the Bailiff;
the Connétable of St. Clement representing the PPC;
Deputy Maurice Dubras representing the Policy and Resources Committee;
Senator Len Norman representing the Economic Development Committee;
Senator Edward Vibert;
The Connétable of St. Peter;
Deputy Gerard Baudains;
Deputy Jerry Dorey.

The terms of reference of the Working Party are –

to review the management of public business in the States Assembly and to bring forward recommendations for change with a view to ensuring that public business is dispatched in a timely and efficient manner and that improved liaison exists between the Greffier of the States and Committees as to the future legislation programme;

to examine the advantages and disadvantages of setting up a Business Committee, or Parliamentary 'Bureau', to be responsible for the regular forward planning of public business, and if considered appropriate, to bring forward recommendations for the establishment of a Parliamentary Bureau for Jersey; and

to review current procedures relating to question time and to bring forward recommendations to improve the current system whilst safeguarding the proper place of questions in the Assembly.

The Privileges and Procedures Committee is conscious that many members have expressed the view that changes are needed in the manner in which we currently organise questions and public business in this Assembly but the Committee is also aware that members hold widely differing views on the nature of the changes that could be made. I would like to stress that the Committee recognises that the rights of private members to table questions and bring forward propositions must be preserved but this right may need to be balanced by the requirement to ensure that business is conducted in an orderly and timely manner. In addition the establishment of the two Shadow Scrutiny Panels has created a new structure for members to hold Committees to account and this may enable changes to be made in other procedures.

At the meeting held yesterday the Working Party decided that it would aim to conclude its work and report to the Privileges and Procedures Committee by 20th April 2004. The meeting discussed present procedures for fixing dates for debate and agreed that efforts should be made to improve the present uncertainty caused by the fact that some items remain on the 'no dates fixed' list for considerable periods. The Working Party agreed to request the Greffier of the States to ensure that all members comply with the provisions of Standing Order 18(3) which requires members to indicate the requested date for debate when giving notice of a proposition. The Working Party also intends to recommend steps to reduce the time being taken by some Committees to present comments on propositions lodged by private members.

The Working Party discussed present procedures relating to question time. The Working Party believes it is

essential to preserve the right of all members to table questions and hold Presidents to account but is also conscious of the views expressed by many members that the present procedures on questions are in need of reform. At yesterday's meeting the Working Party agreed that a system of separate oral and written questions should be developed and intends to recommend that this system be trialled for a period of three to four months.

The final decision taken yesterday was that members should agree to reduce the length of the lunch adjournment after the Easter recess by adjourning at 1 p.m. instead of the present system of adjourning at approximately 12.45 p.m. Although a very minor change this would provide some additional time during each States' meeting.

At its next meeting the Working Party intends to finalise its recommendations on question time and on the fixing of dates for debate. In addition it intends to consider whether to make recommendations on the present rules governing debates and the management of public business.

I would like to reiterate that the proposals of the Working Party on matters such as question time will, of course, be brought to the States for consideration and no changes can be made before they are approved by the Assembly. It is also intended that the conclusions of the Working Party will assist the Privileges and Procedures Committee in drafting the new Standing Orders which are being prepared as part of the machinery of government reforms.

The Working Party has already received a number of suggestions but I would like to invite all members who have comments on the issues being considered to submit those to the Chairman or to the Greffier of the States who is assisting the group in its work.