

**QUESTION TO BE ASKED OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE POLICY AND RESOURCES
COMMITTEE ON TUESDAY 11th MAY 2004, BY THE DEPUTY OF ST. JOHN**

Question

Since Jersey joined the British-Irish Council, members have heard little of the Island's involvement. Would the President advise members –

- (a) of the extent of the Island's involvement in recent years and the reasons for the apparent lack of information being made available to the public in this regard?
- (b) what contribution Jersey has made and is still making to the British-Irish Council? and,
- (c) of the total funding by the States, if any, since the inception of the British-Irish Council.

Answer

- (a) Since 1999, the British-Irish Council, (BIC), has held over 95 meetings. Politicians from Jersey have attended all five Summit meetings and seven Ministerial meetings. Jersey has also participated in most of the meetings of officials, and at BIC conferences and seminars. In each case, the collaboration with other BIC jurisdictions has been informative and valuable for the departments concerned.

Members may recall that the Policy and Resources Committee reported on the Summits in 2000 and 2001, and responded twice to questions on the subject in this Assembly. The third Summit hosted in 2002 by Jersey was reported by the media.

The BIC Secretariat published communiqués following the fourth and fifth Summits in 2002 and 2003, and these are also available to the public on the BIC website (www.britishirishcouncil.org). In addition, a comprehensive report is due to be circulated to all States members in July 2004.

- (b) Jersey has actively participated in each area of the BIC work, including: drugs; the environment; minority languages; social inclusion; tele-medicine; tourism and transport. Jersey has led in the area of knowledge economy, which focuses on the information and skills-based economy. In 2003, we co-hosted an international conference on e-government, which was the first ever gathering across the British Isles to share experience on how new technology is improving public services.

Current work is addressing the 'digital divide' faced by those who lack skills, abilities or opportunities to benefit from the knowledge economy.

The British-Irish Council is the only international forum in which Jersey is a member in its own right, on a level with the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. The Council provides an invaluable opportunity to meet regularly with Ministers, and particularly the British Prime Minister and the Taoiseach, and to represent Jersey's interests at the highest political level.

- (c) The total funding provided by the States in 2002 included £150,000 for the BIC Summit meeting in Jersey, and approximately £78,000 for the knowledge economy work and BIC website.

In 2003, the States provided approximately £27,000 for conferences, meetings and a project on the use of information technology by people with disabilities.

£10,000 has been budgeted this year for the BIC, and to date there has been no expenditure on the knowledge economy work. The website is now funded by the BIC Secretariat.

In 2005, as a result of the fundamental spending review, no revenue budget has been allocated for the British

Irish Council.