

STATES OF JERSEY



PUBLIC ELECTIONS: VOTING ON SUNDAY 16TH OCTOBER 2011 (P.40/2011) – COMMENTS

**Presented to the States on 29th March 2011
by the Privileges and Procedures Committee**

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

The Privileges and Procedures Committee wishes to draw members' attention to the comments of the Public Elections Working Party in respect of the possibility of moving to a weekend election (R.94/2010 refers) –

“Voting on a Saturday

The Working Party has given consideration to the possibility of moving polling day to a Saturday instead of the current requirement to hold elections on a Wednesday. Although some people traditionally vote on their way to or from work or school the Working Party believes that many people would find it more convenient to vote at the weekend when most voters will be at home and nearer their local polling station all day. This could be one way to improve turnout and the Working Party therefore sought the views of the Jurats and the Connétables on this suggestion.

The Jurats agreed that moving polling day could bring in more voters but pointed out that new difficulties could be created for parishes and the idea might not be welcomed by the substantial number of volunteers and paid officials who run the elections so willingly on Wednesdays. The Jurats pointed out that moving to a single election day will already require significant changes to existing procedures and suggested that it may be preferable to deal with that issue in 2011 before moving to Saturday elections. The Comité des Connétables also drew attention to the staffing difficulties that could arise by a move to Saturday elections and suggested that consultation with staff would be needed as well as consideration of what additional costs might be incurred. The Comité noted that if some counts were deferred to the following day, as mentioned above, staff and volunteers would need to work on a Sunday as well as the Saturday.

Having considered the views expressed the Working Party does nevertheless believe that it would be worthwhile, if possible, to trial a Saturday election in due course. The Working Party accepts that the move to a single election day in the autumn of 2011 will be a significant change in itself and it would be unwise to make a further change by introducing Saturday voting as well. The Working Party nevertheless believes that at some stage after 2011 it would be useful to trial a Saturday election to assess whether turnout would be improved by a permanent change from Wednesday to Saturday for all elections.”

The States recently approved a series of amendments to the Public Elections (Jersey) Law 2002 which are likely to have an impact on voter turn-out, as well as the number of postal and pre-poll votes received when the elections are held in October 2011. PPC believes that it would be easier to measure the impact of these changes if they are brought about in isolation, with the move to a weekend election being trialled at a later date so that an effective comparison can be drawn.