

6. The Chairman of the Privileges and Procedures Committee regarding the arrangement of Public Business in the Assembly

6.1 Connétable D.F. Gray of St. Clement (Chairman of the Privileges and Procedures Committee):

At its meeting last week the P.P.C. (Privileges and Procedures Committee) discussed the way in which arrangements are made to deal with public business in the Assembly when consideration of the items listed for debate is not concluded by 5.30 p.m. on any particular day. P.P.C. recognises that Members are, of course, free to take a view on the appropriate manner in which to proceed on each occasion but the Committee feels strongly that there are 2 important principles that should be borne in mind. First, the schedule of States' meeting for the year issued several months in advance now sets out a very clear programme of 2 possible continuation days for each States' meeting so that Members know which days to keep free of other commitments in their diaries. Secondly, Standing Orders provide that the States should normally adjourn by 5.30 p.m. unless the States decide to do otherwise. P.P.C. notes that there have been a number of occasions in recent months where Members have decided to carry on much later than 5.30 p.m. rather than come back on a scheduled continuation day. P.P.C.'s view is that this is not a satisfactory way in which to deal with outstanding business. Many Members have Parish, family or other commitments in the evening and need to make plans on the basis that the work of the Assembly will conclude by 5.30 p.m. or shortly afterwards. If the Assembly decides to sit late in the evening it is often the case that a number of Members with other unavoidable commitments simply have to leave and they are therefore unable to participate in debates and votes. Although P.P.C. recognises that Members must give due priority to attendance in the Chamber it is, in the Committee's view, unreasonable to expect Members to be available into the evening on any day for which there is a scheduled continuation day. P.P.C. therefore hopes that the Members will bear these considerations in mind when this situation arises in the future. As decisions on these issues are taken by a majority vote it would be easy for the minority who have family and other commitments to be prejudiced if Members vote to sit late rather than come back on a day that should already be set aside for States' business in their diary.