

STATES OF JERSEY



GOVERNMENT PLAN 2020–2023 (P.71/2019): FIFTEENTH AMENDMENT (P.71/2019 Amd.(15)) – COMMENTS

**Presented to the States on 22nd November 2019
by the Council of Ministers**

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

The Connétable of St. Helier proposes the following in [P.71/2019 Amd.\(15\)](#) –

PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (c) –

After the words “of the Report” insert the words “, except that in Summary Table 3(i), the proposed 2020 Revenue Head of Expenditure for the Office of the Chief Executive should be increased by £15,000 in order to fund the establishment of a Policy Development Board to consider and identify the activities, responsibilities and services that could be delivered by a Conseil Municipal of St. Helier; the Council of Ministers are requested to engage with the shadow Conseil for St. Helier, established by the St. Helier Parish Assembly on 6th November 2019, and the Policy Development Board, to explore opportunities to improve services to parishioners through devolution and delegation; and by the end of September 2020 the Policy Development Board is requested to make any recommendations deemed advisable to the States concerning the delivery of public amenities and the devolving of appropriate responsibilities from the States to the Parish of St. Helier”.

The Council of Ministers opposes this proposal and urges States Members to reject the amendment.

This amendment requests the establishment of a Policy Development Board to examine the potential role and implications of a Conseil Municipal for St. Helier.

The proposal for a Conseil Municipal is not yet a settled political decision: a high-level proposal was recently passed by the Parish of St. Helier, but a similar proposal was rejected by the States Assembly in 2015. The Council of Ministers therefore considers that there is not, as yet, a clear mandate to commission policy development to support the creation of a Conseil Municipal.

The current proposal has not, as yet, been considered by the States Assembly; as such, no detailed policy advice has been commissioned by Ministers, and the full implications of the potential resulting devolution have not been researched, debated, or agreed in the legislature. Furthermore, the proposal for a Conseil is not a Government priority (as unanimously approved by the States Assembly in the Common Strategic Policy).

The proposal has constitutional implications, as well as aiming to tackle matters of service delivery – indicated, for example, by the mention of possible devolution of by-law-making powers from the States to the Parish.

The primary purpose cited in the Connétable of St. Helier’s report is to achieve efficiencies. There is no evidence offered as to how a Conseil Municipal would achieve greater efficiency in service provision than current arrangements. Indeed, concerns have been expressed that the process could run counter-productive to the current direction of work on co-location and clustering of services, and may create inefficiency, by adding duplication and complexity, and slowing the pace of change.

A Conseil Municipal represents an innovation to the parish system, and so implications for other Parishes should appropriately be within scope, but are not addressed in the report. The proposal would inevitably have implications for other parishes, and so

should this or similar proposals be explored in future, the scope of the review would necessarily need to consider the wider parish system, as well as the context of current efforts to provide more support closer to home for people in need.

Policy Development Boards have been established to provide policy advice and recommendations to the Chief Minister, with policy and legislative proposals then lodged for Assembly debate. The Chief Minister would suggest that it is important to allow those Boards to do their work and reach a conclusion before any other Boards can be commissioned.

Finally, the amendment as drafted significantly underestimates the cost and time required; the broad scope of possible matters that could be devolved to a Conseil, potential law changes, and constitutional implications for St. Helier and the wider parish system that, in combination, form a complex policy development task that would require a core budget closer to £100,000. The revenue head of expenditure of the Office of the Chief Executive is also not the correct budget line to which to attribute this spend.