

STATES OF JERSEY



MEETINGS OF THE STATES IN 2005

**Lodged au Greffe on 26th October 2004
by the Privileges and Procedures Committee**

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

to agree to suspend Standing Orders 4(1) and 5(1C) as necessary, and –

- (a) to agree that in the year 2005 the States should meet on the days listed in Column 1 in the table below, with the meeting to continue on the day shown in Column 2, and if necessary the day in Column 3, if consideration of the public business set down for the meeting cannot be completed on the first day –

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
Tuesday 18th January	Wednesday 19th January	Tuesday 25th January
Tuesday 1st February	Wednesday 2nd February	Tuesday 8th February
Tuesday 15th February	Wednesday 16th February	Tuesday 22nd February
Tuesday 1st March	Wednesday 2nd March	Tuesday 8th March
Tuesday 15th March	Wednesday 16th March	Tuesday 22nd March
Tuesday 5th April	Wednesday 6th April	Tuesday 12th April
Tuesday 19th April	Wednesday 20th April	Tuesday 26th April
Tuesday 10th May	Wednesday 11th May	Tuesday 17th May
Tuesday 24th May	Wednesday 25th May	
Tuesday 7th June	Wednesday 8th June	
Tuesday 21st June	Wednesday 22nd June	Tuesday 28th June
Tuesday 5th July	Wednesday 6th July	Tuesday 12th July
Tuesday 19th July	Wednesday 20th July	Thursday 21st July
Tuesday 13th September	Wednesday 14th September	Tuesday 20th September
Tuesday 27th September	Wednesday 28th September	Tuesday 4th October
Tuesday 25th October	Wednesday 26th October	
Tuesday 1st November	Wednesday 2nd November	Thursday 3rd November
Tuesday 29th November	Wednesday 30th November	Thursday 1st December

- (b) to agree that the Assembly as reconstituted after the elections for Senator and Deputy should meet on Tuesday 6th December 2005 for the purpose of electing a Chief Minister, and on Thursday 8th December 2005 and such other days as may be necessary for the election of Ministers, the President of the Privileges and Procedures Committee and the Chairmen of the Public Accounts Committee and the Scrutiny Panels.

PRIVILEGES AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE

REPORT

In considering the matter of the dates for States meetings in 2005 the Privileges and Procedures Committee has taken account of a number of different factors.

The Committee is conscious that there will be a considerable amount of business for the States to consider in the period leading up to the elections and the subsequent move to the new system of government. There will be a number of important items of business directly related to government reform for the Assembly to consider such as the new Standing Orders and the various Regulations that are necessary to make amendments to legislation as a result of the move to ministerial government. In addition it has been traditional for the last year in a 3-year cycle to be a busy period as Committees conclude work before the end of their term of office.

Taking account of the above factors, the Privileges and Procedures Committee has concluded that it is likely that the Assembly will need, in 2005, to meet on a significant number of extra days on top of the normal schedule of fortnightly meetings set out in Standing Orders. In recent years the Assembly has met on a significant number of additional days as follows –

	Scheduled number of meetings	Actual number of meeting days
2001	24	37
2002	25	45
2003	25	37
2004 (1st session)	13	28

The Committee is sure that what members of the States would appreciate is some certainty on the dates of possible additional meetings. It can be extremely frustrating and disruptive for additional meetings to be agreed at short notice as Committee meetings and other commitments are disrupted.

On 23rd September 2004 the Committee received Deputy Dubras who put forward suggestions on a revised system of meeting dates. The Committee is grateful to Deputy M.F. Dubras for proposing a revised approach to organising States business and has endeavoured to incorporate this in this proposition. In essence, as can be seen, the Committee is proposing that the States should continue to meet on a fortnightly basis (subject to amendments as necessary to accommodate Easter, Bank Holidays etc.), but that additional days should be agreed at this stage as ‘continuation’ days for each meeting. The first of these would be the Wednesday after the scheduled meeting to allow for a continuous 2-day sitting whenever it was required. If the 2-day sitting was insufficient a 3rd day would be available on the following Tuesday. Although it is unlikely that all the dates in Column 2 would be needed, and hopefully likely that only some of the dates in Column 3 would be needed, the Committee believes that it would give a considerable degree of certainty if members agreed to reserve all of the dates shown so that the 2005 schedule of Committee meetings could be planned around these dates to avoid subsequent disruption. It will be noted that there are 51 suggested dates until the end of the present States and, even with a heavy workload, the Committee believes this number (6 more than in the ‘record’ year of 2002) will be adequate. It is quite probable that not all the dates will be required and during the consultation phase it was suggested that less dates should be put in Column 3. On balance the Committee feels that it is preferable to set these dates aside in advance and vacate them as appropriate rather than causing disruption by constantly needing to add extra days at short notice as happens at present.

In planning the First Session the Committee has taken account of the fact that the States have traditionally avoided meeting on the Tuesday after a public holiday and, as a result, the schedule has been designed to avoid a meeting on Tuesday 3rd May and Tuesday 31st May although, to avoid a long gap, it is suggested that the States should meet on the day after Liberation Day. In addition Tuesday 14th June has been omitted from Column 3 as the Island will be hosting the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association British Islands and Mediterranean conference during that week. At the end of the First Session the Committee is proposing that the meeting of 19th July should continue until Thursday 21st if necessary rather than continuing into the following week to give members some certainty about the start date of the summer recess.

When considering the Second Session the Committee noted that the elections for Senator will take place on Wednesday 19th October and for Deputy on Wednesday 23rd November. The Committee supports a suggestion made by Deputy Dubras in his submission to the Committee that the States should, if at all possible, not meet in the weeks immediately before the election and the dates proposed reflect this decision. The Committee is aware that concern was expressed in 2002 about the large number of States meetings during the election campaign. Some argue that sitting members are disadvantaged by not being able to canvas if the States are meeting, others argue that new candidates are prejudiced if the States meet as sitting members can gain media exposure by asking questions, speaking in debates etc. To avoid any possible unfairness the Committee therefore believes it is preferable to avoid any States meetings during the election periods. The recommendation is not without potential problems as there will be very few meetings in the Second Session and the meeting dates at the end of November will need to be reserved for the Budget debate. Nevertheless the Committee believes that with careful advance planning Committees and individual members should be able to bring forward matters within the proposed schedule and is convinced that the creation of a 'level playing field' outweighs any potential disadvantages.

Paragraph (b) of the proposition refers to the proposed first 2 meetings of the new States. Although the exact method of appointment of the Chief Minister and Ministers will not be finalised until the new States of Jersey Law 200- and the new Standing Orders are approved, it is clear that the process must start in early December to ensure that the process of the appointment of the Council of Ministers and the Chairmen of the PPC, the PAC and the Scrutiny Panels can be completed before the end of the Second Session. It is therefore suggested that the States should meet as reconstituted on Tuesday 6th December 2005 to appoint the first Chief Minister with a second meeting on Thursday 8th December to commence (and possibly complete) the other appointments.

There are no additional financial and manpower implications arising from this proposition.