

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CHAIR OF THE PRIVILEGES AND PROCEDURES
COMMITTEE
BY THE CONNÉTABLE OF ST. JOHN
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 26th APRIL 2021
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 4th MAY 2021**

Question

Given the States Chamber was able to accommodate 17 Members at last week's meeting of the Assembly, and there was a maximum of 12 Members present during the 3 and a half days (with an average of 8 Members and a minimum of 4 Members present in the Assembly), will the Chair advise –

- (a) what action the Committee is taking to ensure Members who are able to attend in person are actually in the Chamber and not taking part in States meeting in a virtual manner;
- (b) when the Committee expects the full Assembly to be able to return; and
- (c) what alternative locations, if any, are being considered for an early return for all Members?

Answer

Throughout the pandemic the Assembly has endeavoured to comply with public health guidance, particularly limits on gatherings and rules on physical distancing. Standing Order 55A enables the Bailiff to permit Members to participate in Assembly proceedings by means of electronic communication if he considers that “it might not be possible to convene or maintain a quorate meeting of the States in view of substantial risk to the health of members of the States or any other person”. This Standing Order has been invoked at every States meeting since April 2020 and currently enables the use of the hybrid format, whereby up to 17 Members are able to be physically present at every sitting.

Members are required by the terms of their oath of office to attend the States when required to do so, unless they have a valid reason for absence. However, under Standing Order 55A, no distinction is made between attending in person and attending remotely. Consequently, there is no basis on which PPC may act to require Members invited to attend the Assembly in person to do so in preference to participating remotely.

The Committee is hopeful that, as public health guidance continues to be relaxed, it will be possible for the Assembly to return to full physical sittings in the near future. However, Members should be mindful that seats in the Assembly are too close to provide for 1m physical distancing. If this guidance remains in place then PPC will consider finding an alternative location for sittings where 1m physical distancing can be maintained. However, there will be significant cost implications, particularly in relation to providing an audio-visual system.