

Chairmen's Committee

PUBLIC MEETING

Record of Meeting

Date: 22.01.09

Meeting No: 1

Present	Senator B.E. Shenton, President Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier, Vice-President (items 1 - 7 inc) Senator A. Breckon (items 5 to end) Senator S.C. Ferguson Deputy P.J. Rondel Deputy M.R. Higgins
Apologies	
Absent	
In attendance	Greffier of the States (items 5,7 and 8 only) Mrs K. Tremellen-Frost, Scrutiny Manager

Ref Back	Agenda matter	Action
	<p>1. Vice-Presidency</p> <p>It was agreed to appoint Deputy R.G Le Hérissier as Vice-President</p>	
	<p>2. Panel activity reports</p> <p>These were taken as read. The Committee gave consideration to a number of possible review topics, many of which involved a number of Panels. The possibility of forming Sub-Panels to undertake such cross-Panel reviews was noted and it was also noted that, in order to form a Sub-Panel, it was the responsibility of the main Panel under whose remit the subject matter fell. Examples were discussed namely: topics such as migration and financial areas such as the possible recession would fall within the remit of the Chief Minister's Department. Such matters would, therefore, be considered for review by the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel. It was the responsibility of individual Panels to determine working practices per review: as main Panel, with co-opted Members, as Sub-Panel or by a Rapporteur. It was also noted that it was the responsibility of the main Panel to consider the membership of any Sub-Panels, giving due consideration to areas outside its own where representation from other Panels could be beneficial.</p> <p>The Committee noted that there was some overlap between the work of the Corporate Services Panel and the Public Accounts Committee and this was being addressed.</p>	
	<p>3. Health, Social Security and Housing Income Support Sub-Panel</p> <p>The Committee recalled that, in accordance with Standing Order 139(3), "a scrutiny panel may not allocate any of its resources to a sub-panel without the agreement of the chairmen's committee."</p> <p>The Committee noted and agreed the scoping documents in respect of the above review, including estimated budget and terms of reference.</p>	
	<p>4. Forward Work Programmes</p>	



	<p>The Committee, noting that most panels had either already held briefings with respective Ministers or had dates arranged, agreed that forward work programmes should be completed by all Panels by the end of February 2009.</p> <p>It was noted that it was important to leave some "slack" in the work programmes to allow for unforeseen matters. It was also noted that the forward work programme was flexible in nature and highly dependent on external matters such as Executive policies not being available on schedule or the Panel requesting a proposition being debated by the States Assembly to be suspended and referred to scrutiny. Therefore, the work programme needed revisiting on a regular basis in accordance with Code of Practice 7.16.</p>	
	<p>5. Ministerial Decisions: availability and scrutiny consideration</p> <p>The Committee considered the possibility of progressing a system of having 15 days before a Ministerial Decision for scrutiny to consider these.</p> <p>It was noted that the majority of Ministerial Decisions were matters of inconsequence and did not impact on major policy. There was concern, however, that some decisions did relate to policy and could impact on policy initiatives. There was also concern that a large number of Ministerial Decisions were made as Part B and not available to Scrutiny Members. The Committee questioned whether these decisions should be made under confidential cover.</p> <p>It was agreed that the matter should be discussed with the Council of Ministers on 29th January 2009.</p> <p>The Greffier of the States was present for this item.</p>	
	<p>6. Code of Practice amendments</p> <p>The Committee noted that due to the amendments to Standing Orders to permit Scrutiny Panels to co-opt an additional non-Executive States Member onto it for the purpose of a specific review and also not to appoint two independent members to the Chairmen's Committee, amendments were required to the Code of Practice.</p> <p>The Committee approved these and requested the necessary action for the matter to be brought to the States.</p>	KTF
	<p>7. Scrutiny Budget</p> <p>The Committee received a paper, prepared by the Greffier of the States regarding the management of the scrutiny budget during 2009. The purpose of the paper was to propose an alternative system of allocating the budget to ensure greater flexibility and lead to better financial control and clearer political responsibility. This proposal was fully endorsed by the Comptroller and Auditor General.</p> <p>Some concern was expressed that by managing the budget in a centralised manner, more power might be given to the Chairmen's Committee to veto expenditure.</p> <p>The Committee recalled that the scrutiny budget was the overall responsibility of the Privileges and Procedures Committee and that,</p>	

	<p>even if allocation were to individual Panels, the Panels had no greater control over that expenditure than over that of the centralised system.</p> <p>It was noted that as Panels prepared an annual work programme in accordance with the Code of Practice, some knowledge of estimated expenditure for the year would be available.</p> <p>Given the remit of the Chairmen's Committee in Standing Order 143(b) "to oversee the prioritisation and allocation of resources to the PAC and scrutiny panels", the recommendation of the Greffier of the States as Accounting Officer and the endorsement of the proposal of centralisation by the Comptroller and Auditor General, the Committee agreed to trial this for a twelve-month period.</p> <p>The Committee agreed that this method did not give it any additional powers or power of veto over individual Panels and that this should be made clear to all Panels by the Chairmen.</p> <p>The Greffier of the States was present for this item.</p>	Chairmen
	<p>8. Conferences and subscription to annual journals</p> <p>In conjunction with the above matter, the Committee considered what constituted reasonable expenditure on matters such as attendance at conferences and subscription to journals.</p> <p>It was agreed that as both incurred expenditure of public money, they needed to be fully justified by the relevant Panel. In respect of conferences, they should be of specific interest to a Panel's current or planned reviews. Furthermore attendance should be restricted to a Panel representative with or without an officer. It was agreed that in the event of a Member attending without an officer, it was incumbent on that Member to present a full report to the Panel on return. A pro-forma would be prepared by the Scrutiny Office.</p> <p>With regard to journals, there needed to be equal justification of expenditure with a record kept of when the journal had proved relevant and in what context with an evaluation of the benefit over expenditure at the end of the subscription.</p> <p>The Greffier of the States was present for this item.</p>	KTF
	<p>9. Chairmen's Committee Legacy Report</p> <p>The Committee considered the previous Chairmen's Committee Legacy report. As there were a number of matters from the report already included as agenda items for the meeting it considered the following other matters:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Annual Business Plan - this would be an agenda item for a subsequent meeting; b) Corporate Services Finance Sub-Panel: previous Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel's report to be circulated to all Panels for comment; c) Legal advice - the matter as set out in the Code of Practice was accepted. It was also accepted that separate legal advice might be required by Panels from time to time. 	
	<p>10. Newsletter</p>	



	<p>The Committee noted the previous Chairmen's Committee strong recommendation to continue with the production of the ScrutinyMatters newsletter. However, consideration was given to the overall cost including distribution to all Island households, the content and effectiveness.</p> <p>Alternative options were considered, but the Committee agreed that the matter would be given further consideration at its February meeting.</p>	
	<p>11. Citizenship Programme</p> <p>The Committee noted the success of this scheme which involved scrutiny members and a Minister plus senior officials working with Y10 pupils. Discussions were already underway between the Scrutiny Manager and relevant Education officials and it was agreed to support this again this year.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Manager would co-ordinate and update the Committee accordingly.</p>	KTF
	<p>12. Naming "Scrutiny Panel"</p> <p>The Committee explored the possibility and appropriateness of the title "Scrutiny Panel" or whether renaming them as "Select Committees" would have an improved perception in the eyes of the public.</p> <p>It was agreed that this matter would be put forward to the Privileges and Procedures Committee for that Committee to take the necessary action.</p> <p>Senator Ferguson requested that her dissent from this decision be recorded.</p>	KTF
	<p>13. Training - evaluation of initial Member training</p> <p>The Committee agreed that the training had been effective and appropriate as it had permitted good opportunities to interact. It was agreed that training of this nature could be lead by the in-house scrutiny office in future years.</p>	
	<p>14. Training - questioning skills</p> <p>The Committee recalled that John Sturrock QC had run two previous questioning training events for Members in the past and was outstanding. The Committee agreed that he should be contacted to explore availability and costs for similar training and that, given his previous sessions, there was no requirement to explore other training providers.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Manager would take the necessary action</p>	KTF
	<p>15. Training - visits to Westminster</p> <p>Although a day visit was being arranged for newly-elected Members with the CPA on 18th March, it would not be beneficial for every Panel to extend its visit for one day to visit Select Committees and Westminster.</p> <p>The Committee noted that tailor-made visits per Panel could be arranged for Panel Members to visit Westminster through the Scrutiny Office in liaison with the Overseas Office of Westminster, with which the office has extremely good links. Individual Panels should consider this opportunity.</p>	Panels
	<p>16. Council of Ministers - joint meeting</p>	

	<p>The Committee noted that it would be meeting the Council of Ministers on 29th January 2009 and agreed that it would wish to discuss Green Papers [consistency across Departments and timeliness] and Ministerial Decisions [access].</p> <p>The Scrutiny Manager would take the necessary action to place these items on the agenda.</p>	KTF
	<p>17. Strategic Plan - schedule</p> <p>The Committee noted the schedule for the Strategic Plan and work on this would be considered by individual Panels in the first instance.</p>	
	<p>18. Panel activity reports: template</p> <p>The Committee noted a new standardised template for Panel activity reports which would be completed for the monthly Chairmen's Committee meetings.</p>	
	<p>19. Swipe Card access to Morier House for Members</p> <p>The Committee noted that the door entry system was due to be replaced in the near future. In the interim only Chairmen could be issued with swipe cards. After the new entry system had been installed it was anticipated that all scrutiny members could have swipe card access if they so wished.</p> <p>The following conditions were noted:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Swipe cards only permitted access to the scrutiny section on the first floor ie: for access to any other parts of the building the usual requirement of signing in at the front desk was required; b) Swipe cards only permitted access during normal working hours, not in evenings or weekends; c) In the event of a fire bell, the building must be evacuated via the stairs and the assembly area is in the Royal Square. 	
	<p>20. Meeting dates: Chairmen's Committee.</p> <p>The Committee agreed the following meeting dates:-</p> <p>14th/15th Jan = training day 29th Jan [meeting CoM] 19th Feb 19th March 23rd April [meeting CoM] 21st May 25th June 23rd July [meeting CoM] 17th Sept 15th Oct [meeting CoM] 12th Nov 17th Dec.</p>	
	<p>21. Future meetings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) 29th January 2009 12.30pm - 2.00pm Joint meeting with Council of Ministers, 9th floor Cyril Le Marquand House; b) 29th January 2009 2.15pm - 3.15pm Following above meeting - debrief session, Le Capelain Room; 	

	c) 19th February 2009 12.30pm - 2.30pm - next scheduled meeting, Le Capelain Room	
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Signed

Date:

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Senator B. Shenton
President



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