STATES OF JERSEY

STATES MEMBERS' REMUNERATION: PROPOSED INCREASE FOR 2013 (P.127/2012) – COMMENTS

Presented to the States on 21st December 2012
by the Privileges and Procedures Committee

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

For the following reasons, the Privileges and Procedures Committee cannot support this proposition.

1. The States should not be directly engaged in the setting of their own rates of remuneration.

This proposition, which the Committee regrets was not referred to it before lodging, risks prompting an extended, politically motivated and generally inappropriate discussion of an issue that the States had the foresight to refer to an external body some 9 years previously. States Members tend to have a range of financial circumstances and can therefore be expected to approach this proposition from very different personal perspectives.

In 2003 the Assembly agreed that it was totally inappropriate for States Members to be directly responsible for setting their own levels of pay and to keep discussing their remuneration on the floor of the Assembly, as had happened repeatedly up to that time. The independent States Members' Remuneration Review Body was thus established in 2004 and given specific terms of reference. PPC believes that the various members of the Review Body – who serve in an honorary capacity – have carried out their duties very professionally; and that the most recent report of the Review Body (R.132/2012 refers) provides further evidence of their high standard of work.

2. The Review Body has followed the terms of reference set by the States.

Members may recall that, as recently as June of this year, the States reviewed and amended the terms of reference of the Review Body. They instructed the Review Body to make recommendations for 2013 having consulted, having taken into account matters which it considered were relevant, and having had particular regard to (but not being bound by) the following –

(i) the principles that the level of remuneration available to elected members should be sufficient to ensure that no person is precluded from serving as a member of the States by reason of insufficient income and that all elected members should be able to enjoy a reasonable standard of living, so that the broadest spectrum of persons are able to serve as members of the Assembly;

(ii) the economic and fiscal situation prevailing in Jersey, any budgetary restraints on the States of Jersey and the States' inflation target, if any, for the period under review.

Whereas the proposer of this proposition maintains that the Review Body's recommendations are wrong insofar as it would be manifestly inequitable to implement them, PPC is satisfied that the Review Body has simply fulfilled the brief it was given, notwithstanding the latter's acknowledgement that striking a balance between the competing requirements of its terms of reference at (i) and (ii) above was difficult.

3. The PPC is not aware of any exceptional circumstances that would warrant setting aside the recommendations of the Review Body.

Given PPC's contention that the Review Body has followed precisely the terms of reference given to it by the States, the question then arises as to whether there are any exceptional economic, fiscal or other relevant circumstances that have become apparent since the terms of reference were set, and which should have had a material bearing on the Review Body's recommendations. The Committee sees no evidence of any exceptional circumstances that have become apparent since June.

The Committee has no comment to make on the increase in remuneration proposed for 2013. PPC nevertheless wishes to remind Members that they are not obliged to take the full amount of remuneration available to them. Any Member who wishes to receive less than the total needs only to notify the States Treasury of the reduced amount that they wish to receive.