

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PRIVILEGES AND PROCEDURES
COMMITTEE BY DEPUTY P.V.F. LE CLAIRE OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 13th JULY 2009**

Question

“Given that Blackberries and some mobile telephones are capable of sending and receiving e-mails, and are commonly used by some members in the Chamber, does the Committee have any plans to allow laptops to be used in the Chamber to give all members an equal opportunity to communicate with each other in debates and to research issues over the internet as can be done with these devices?”

Answer

The Privileges and Procedures Committee as previously constituted considered the possible use of laptops in the States Chamber at its meeting on 4th May 2007, following a request from Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire.

The Committee considered Standing Order 99(1) which states -

99 *Behaviour of members during meeting*

- (1) Before entering the Chamber, a member of the States must switch off any mobile telephone and every other electronic device he or she has with him or her that would be likely to disturb the proceedings of the States.*

The Committee felt that given the size of members’ desks in the Chamber there was not enough space to accommodate laptops without causing disruption and that the use of laptops by large numbers of members would almost certainly disturb debates. The Committee also felt that members would be tempted to answer e-mails and undertake other work on their computers rather than concentrate on the proceedings.

The matter was considered again at the Committee’s meeting of 23rd July 2008, following a request from Senator F.E. Cohen. Once again, the Committee noted that Standing Orders neither prevented nor permitted the use of electronic equipment, but that Standing Order 99(1) would prevent the use of any electronic device likely to disturb proceedings of the States. Investigations were undertaken to find out what work would be required to enable the use of laptops in the Chamber.

Property Holdings have since confirmed that, in order to enable the use of laptop computers in the States Chamber, Members’ desks might need to be adapted for computer use. Health and safety standards would need to be considered as well as the constraints arising from the fact that the Chamber is part of a listed building.

The Privileges and Procedures Committee will consider this matter at its next meeting, with regard to the discussions of the Committee as previously constituted. The Committee will examine the situation in other jurisdictions, such as the United Kingdom House of Commons, where members are permitted to use small hand-held communications devices, and those with recently constructed assemblies, such as the Welsh Assembly, where electronic facilities are in-built. The Committee will then determine whether the use of laptops should be permitted within the Chamber, before considering whether further work should be carried out in conjunction with Property Holdings in relation to the suitability of the workspace available.