

# Comité des Connétables



Our ref: DWM/srdeg/

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Deputy I Gardiner, Chair, Public Accounts Committee  
Scrutiny Office  
States Greffe  
Morier House  
St Helier JE1 1DD

BY EMAIL

Dear Deputy Gardiner

## Response to COVID-19 - Scrutiny review - Public Accounts Committee

Thank you for the invitation to express opinions on any aspect of the Government's response to the Covid pandemic and the impact it has had on our business, and/or those we represent.

You have invited all Connétables to comment and that will be in relation to their own Parish. This submission relates to the work of this office which covers the Comité des Connétables, the Comité des Chefs de Police and associated groups.

You ask specifically –

1. Please tell us of the impact of COVID-19 response measures on 'business as usual' activities, including:	
a. Do you have a 'back-to-normal' recovery plan?	<p>The work of the Comité des Connétables and Comité des Chefs de Police continued throughout the pandemic as the Connétables and Chefs de Police met to ensure services continued to be delivered to parishioners. The Comité des Connétables meetings were held virtually but increased in frequency to be able to address issues in the fast-changing situations.</p> <p>The Comité des Chefs de Police established an emergency group which also met frequently to address policing issues as they arose. Specific changes had to be made to allow for the charging of offenders by telephone rather than in person (this power is reserved to the Centeniers) and for Court presentations; Parish Hall Enquiries (PHE) were also suspended for a period.</p> <p>'Back-to-normal' has therefore meant returning to the usual frequency of meetings which can now be held in-person. Other temporary changes are being 'reversed' as circumstances enable PHE to resume and for offenders to be charged in-person and presented in Court.</p>
b. What help did you get from the Government?	Advice and guidance was frequently required as the business of the office (and parishes) had to be conducted under the restrictions of social distancing with limited numbers attending, etc.

	<p>We worked closely with Government Departments e.g. to support the vulnerable. However, the pandemic was ‘new territory’ for everyone and highlighted the interdependencies between GoJ and the Parishes e.g. sharing data on potentially vulnerable required data sharing agreements; provisional drivers were unable to take driving tests as these were suspended and renewal is usually subject to having attempted a test etc.</p> <p>Initially there was no provision for Parish meetings – required to be held by law – in the early Covid legislation; this was subsequently rectified when specific provision was made e.g. for Parish Assemblies (in response to the Comité’s comments on P.157/2020 and P.158/2020 see <a href="#">p.157-2020 com.pdf (gov.je)</a>).</p>
c. What could they have done better?	The Parishes are unique and differ from the many other organisations and bodies operating in Jersey. Whilst it will be difficult to ensure the needs of all are adequately addressed the lack of consultation about legislation did cause uncertainty around how Parish business could continue to be conducted as required by law (the Parish was deemed to be a ‘workplace’).
d. What key lessons could they learn for pandemic or emergency planning?	Whilst the Government sought to address the needs and arrangements for its Departments it does need to give broader consideration to the Parishes, as local government, to ensure services can continue to be delivered. This includes recognition of the many volunteers serving their Parish and the need to ensure Parishes can fulfil their legal obligations (see c above).
e. What would you (or those you represent) do differently next time?	Overall, the administration and processes were able to adapt e.g. for online meetings, once the necessary systems/infrastructure had been put in place. In a repeat scenario it would be easier to adopt remote working/online meetings etc. now this has been established.
2. How have you benefited from any support schemes by the Government to ease the negative impact of Covid?	No support has been sought by the office.  Within Parishes, many of those offering assistance were volunteers and some were adversely affected financially having to isolate as a result of contracting covid whilst volunteering but they received no additional support other than the standard allowance for STIA.
3. What would you advise to help improve communication of Government measures next time?	A central hub was created by GoJ and weekly updates issued to all Parishes which was very useful.  What is essential is to ensure all communications are timely, unambiguous and can be clearly understood e.g. requirements placed on the public and how these are to be policed/action taken in the event of non-compliance such as hospitality, activities (water sports, fishing) etc.

Yours sincerely



Deidre Mezbourian  
**Chairman, Comité des Connétables**