

2.12 Deputy J. Gallichan of St. Mary of the Chief Minister regarding the establishment of a Citizens Panel:

Following the States decision on 14th March 2006 to approve P.16 2006 brought by Deputy Baudains, would the Chief Minister advise whether he and the Council of Ministers still intend to establish a Citizens Panel and, if so, advise Members what progress, if any, has been made in defining its terms of reference and operating methods and when these are likely to be brought to the States for approval?

Senator F.H. Walker (The Chief Minister):

The Council of Ministers is still considering the establishment of a Citizens Panel and this has been done as part of a general review of the way in which the States consults with the public. As part of this review, I am pleased to announce that the Council of Ministers and Members of Scrutiny will be jointly organising a workshop for all States Members during the autumn which will address the issue of how the Government should engage with the public. This workshop will be led by Sir Robert Phillis, Chief Executive of the Guardian Media Group and chairman of an independent review of U.K. Government communications. Further details of the workshop, including the date, will be circulated as soon as these have been agreed. The workshop will consider a range of methods for consultation, including the proposal for the establishment of a Citizens Panel. States Members will therefore have a further opportunity to discuss this proposal in a more informal setting and the Council will then be in a position to consider the way forward in the light of the comments received. If the Council decides that it would like to establish a Citizens Panel, it is planned that a proposition setting out the Panel's terms of reference and operating methods will be brought to the States before the end of the year.

2.12.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

That is excellent news and I would like to congratulate the Minister. But would the Minister, Sir, not acknowledge that the issue of engagement is much more than an issue of consultation and much more - perhaps it was a slip of the tongue - than an issue of communication and would he not acknowledge that there is a serious malaise in Jersey political life at the moment which is going to take a long time to wrestle with and will probably require quite radical solutions?

Senator F.H. Walker:

I do acknowledge there has been an issue for many, many years, but I do genuinely believe that the situation is improving if only slightly and we do all need I think to work together and work together hard to improve the engagement with the public. Of that I think there is no doubt at all.

2.12.2 Deputy A. Breckon:

Could I just ask the Chief Minister if there is a budget set aside for this and if so how much?

Senator F.H. Walker:

For the review, I am not aware of the budget, but we are not talking considerable sums of money. It will be funded from within existing communications unit budgets.

The Greffier of the States (in the Chair):

Very well, that concludes the period of questions with notice. We now come to questions without notice. I would remind Members that the Bailiff announced at the last meeting from the chair that any Member asking a question during this period would be permitted to ask one supplementary follow-up question and therefore the first period is to the Minister for Health and Social Services and I invite questions.