

Here is my comment on Electoral Reform

Comment-

There have been 4 matters that I refer to.

1. The Clothier Review
2. The 2006 Ipsos MORI Poll.
3. The 2013 Referendum
4. The current proposal on electoral reform.

The Clothier Review (2000), the most comprehensive review on the matter to date, concluded that the Constables should no longer hold automatic seats as States Members. Clothier was rejected by the States Assembly and, against advise, a process of cherry picking has perpetuated for 17 years.

The 2006 Mori Poll asked people if they agreed or disagreed that Parish Constables should remain as members of the States. The result (53%) was marginally in favour of Constables remaining.

In 2013 an independent electoral commission was proposed but a pro-Constable advocate twisted events and this 'independence' was lost. Option B (with Constables) won by 1.34% to Option A (no Constables).

Clothier remains the most sensible and thought through proposition. It holds water 17 years after it's publication. Yet today we find ourselves to comment on a proposal that wasn't even lodged! What we're to comment on is a cherry-picked shamble with absolutely no fore-thought as to it's function.

While there is a smidgeon of merit, there are also downsides. Improvement in voter equity is one merit. Also, multi-member districts should in theory, result in providing a better pool of candidates and may even lead to more diversity of members. (e.g. A non-Jersey national standing for Deputy in a safe single seat is unlikely to be elected so won't come forward. This person is more likely to stand for election in a multi-member district).

A key downside of this new system is the toll placed on a 'good' Deputy. A 'good' Deputy would soon be over-stretched to serve all of his or her constituents in a larger district. It is to the 'good' deputy that the constituents will seek support. Another downside of this new system is it evades addressing the fundamental question of the Constables. Until this is reformed, no true change will be made.

For centuries the Constables have been white and male. The institution is, to many, weird and parochial. While new-comers can join in with Parish life, most are likely to feel excluded from it. Constables come from local prominent families. To outsiders, this looks like a club. This display continues today.

On the surface, the Parish system appears to be a fair and a democratic process. However, the reality as measured by the number of uncontested seats, shows the reverse is true. This issue therefore needs to be at the heart of any changes.

End