

# STATES OF JERSEY



## STATES MEETINGS: CONTINUATION OF REMOTE PARTICIPATION

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**Lodged au Greffe on 14th September 2021.  
by Deputy J.H. Young of St. Brelade  
Earliest date for debate: 5th October 2021.**

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**STATES GREFFE**

## **PROPOSITION**

**THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –**

that, notwithstanding Standing Order 55A(1), Members who do not wish to attend in the States Chamber may continue to take part in States meetings using Microsoft Teams until the States has considered and voted upon a proposition to re-apply Standing Order 55A(1) or to repeal or vary the terms of the Standing Order.

DEPUTY J.H. YOUNG OF ST. BRELADE

## **REPORT**

Standing Order 55A provides for the States to meet using remote technology if a state of emergency has been declared or when the Bailiff considers that it might not be possible to convene or maintain a quorate meeting of the States in view of substantial risk to the health of members of the States or any other person. The Bailiff has indicated that, in view of current public health guidance, there is not a substantial risk to health which means it might not be possible for the States to hold a quorate meeting. However, there are many Members who are concerned that their health may be compromised by being required to attend the States. There may also be Members who cannot attend because they have tested positive for Covid-19, but are otherwise well, or who should not attend because they are a direct contact and are awaiting a test result. Without using Teams, Members and their constituents stand to be disenfranchised by the return to 'normal' sittings.

The States Chamber does not comply with public health guidance. Members cannot maintain physical distancing in their seats; ventilation is not adequate; and Members must spend several hours in the room or alternatively congregate in the small rooms outside of the Chamber. While some Members may feel relaxed about the potential risks to their health, others do not. If case numbers rise, as is happening elsewhere, there will inevitably be more Members testing positive or becoming direct contacts. It makes no sense, in this context, to require physical meetings to resume.

This proposition simply disapplies Standing Order 55A(1) so that remote or hybrid meetings can take place at any time. It can be left to the Bailiff to decide whether hybrid meetings are safe, as no-one is required to attend a hybrid meeting in the Chamber. The current arrangements for hybrid or virtual meetings can then continue until the States has the chance to debate and vote on the rules. My preference would be for PPC to review the current Standing Order and relax the wording about when remote sittings can take place. I hope PPC can do this work quickly and we can establish clear rules which provide for hybrid or remote sittings until the pandemic is over without asking any Member to compromise their health.

I will be proposing before Question Time for the Assembly to reorder its business to debate this proposition first, reducing the lodging period to do so. I am sorry for the very short notice but this is a straightforward issue which we need to resolve straightaway.

### **Financial and manpower implications**

There are no financial or manpower implications of this proposition.