

STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY DEPUTY J-A. BRIDGE OF THE PRIVILEGES AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE ON 21ST JANUARY 2003

On behalf of the Privileges and Procedures Committee I would like to take this opportunity to update members on some aspects of our work since the publication of our First Report covering the issues of Scrutiny, Members' Facilities, Members' Code of Conduct and Remuneration in October 2002. I would also like to take this opportunity to inform members of our planned programme of work for the coming months.

Scrutiny

Members and Chief Officers will be invited to a seminar on scrutiny at the end of February.

As part of the seminar, the Committee intends to consult on its proposals before finalising an 'in-principle' report and proposition on Scrutiny which we aim to lodge before Easter. This will include detailed proposals on matters such as 'call-in', parliamentary privilege for both witnesses and papers, the relationship with the Public Accounts Committee and the Comptroller and Auditor General and legal advice for Scrutiny panels.

The Committee intends to produce proposals for the introduction of two 'shadow scrutiny panels' in the Autumn. The challenge for the Committee is to produce a meaningful activity that is a practical learning process for both members and officers, given that members will be scrutinising the present system under the present rules on access to information as opposed to the future ministerial system.

The Committee is confident that States members have the basic necessary skills in order to scrutinise but is aware that training will be vital in order to gain new skills to meet the challenge of the new culture in the ministerial system.

The Committee will be considering the requirements for a training programme in consultation with Policy and Resources Committee, given its new responsibility for Human Resources.

Members' facilities

The Environment and Public Services Committee will be presenting a Report and Proposition today on Phase II of the States Building refurbishment programme. This proposition encapsulates the Committee's proposals for the refurbishment of the 'Régistre'. In the coming months the Committee will be investigating the accommodation needs for scrutiny.

Members' Code of Conduct

The Committee intend to lodge a report and proposition on Members' Code of conduct on 25th February 2003.

Remuneration

Following the publication of the First Report, the former Committee responded to the consultation period, by producing a draft report and proposition that it felt reflected comment received at that time and this was lodged on 10th December 2002. However, the Committee appreciates that the period between October and December was an exceedingly busy time for many members who were not only preparing for substantial debates in this Assembly but were also fighting Senatorial and Deputorial campaigns. In addition, approximately 20 per cent of this Assembly are new members. In deference to these reasons, the Committee intends to extend the consultation process for two weeks to allow those members who did not respond prior to lodging to have that opportunity. The Committee as presently constituted remains generally supportive of the proposition but is still receptive to members' views and will consider how and when to take the proposition forward with the aim to debate in early March. The Committee strongly urges members to come forward with their comments, particularly on Deputy Le Main's proposed amendment.

States of Jersey Law

The Committee will be considering the preliminary drafting instructions of the new States of Jersey Law at its meeting on Friday 24th January. Consequent to approval by the Committee, the drafting instructions will be presented to the Law Draftsman by mid-February.

Public Access to Information

A consultation paper on Public Access to Official Information (or Freedom of Information as it is more commonly known) is being finalised and will be circulated to members and interested parties for consultation subsequent to its meeting on Friday, 7th February 2003.

A joint working party between the Legislation Committee and the Privileges and Procedures Committee has been formed in order to consider the relationship between Public Access to Information, Data Protection Issues and Human Rights Issues.

The issue of States members access to information under the Ministerial system is also being considered within this document.

Hansard

Following on from the detailed report on Hansard in the Implementation Plan, the Committee intends to consider the draft report and proposition at its meeting on 14th February with the aim to lodge by the end of February. At present the Committee are waiting for responses from suppliers with regard to the various system options and prices.

Provision of information to the public on the work of the States Assembly

The Committee have considered that provision of information to the public about the work of the States Assembly should include an enhanced web-site. The possibility of a visitor centre is also being explored, scheduled school visits and 'liaise on members' are being investigated and will be reported on in due course.

Simultaneous electronic voting

The Committee will be considering its draft report and proposition on simultaneous electronic voting at its meeting on Friday, 24th January with a view to lodging in early February 2003.

Arrangement of Public Business

At its meeting on 29th November 2002, the Committee, mindful of the heavy programme of debates and the extra sessions in 2002, agreed that a Working Party would be set up to undertake a comprehensive review of current procedures relating to the arrangement of public business in the States Assembly, and will furnish members with further details by letter.

I would like to end by renewing our invitation to members to attend our Committee meetings and remind members and the public that all our minutes can be found on the States Assembly website.

Finally, the Committee would like to place on record its gratitude to those members who have assisted it in its work to date.