

STATES OF JERSEY



COVID-19: QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE TO ALL MINISTERS ON THE RESPONSE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF JERSEY (P.51/2020) – RESCINDMENT OF PARAGRAPH (a)

Lodged au Greffe on 24th April 2020
by Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

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

to refer to their Act of 22nd April 2020, in which they made new arrangements for Questions Without Notice to Ministers, and to rescind paragraph (a) of that Act.

DEPUTY R.J. WARD OF ST. HELIER

REPORT

This proposition seeks to rescind paragraph (a) only of the proposition relating to new arrangements for questioning ([P.51/2020 – Covid-19: questions without notice to all Ministers on the response of the Government of Jersey](#)). This would reinstate the periods of questions without notice of 2 Ministers as per [Standing Order 64](#).

I fully understand the idea behind P.51/2020 as an entire proposition: namely, paragraphs (a) and (b). This created a necessary period of Questions Without Notice for any Minister during the duration of the Covid-19 crisis. I agree that this level of accountability and subsequent increase in transparency in decision-making is welcome. However, paragraph (a) of the proposition, in removing the current provision for Questions Without Notice for 2 named Ministers via a published rota, we removed an integral part of the processes of the States Assembly.

The argument was posited that questions will inevitably be limited to the subject of Covid-19. I question this and point to the practical fact that if there are no questions for named Ministers, the 15 minutes will simply go unused. If there are further questions, whether Covid-19-related or not, it only serves to increase involvement of ALL Assembly Members in governance at this time. I see no reason why we cannot agree, as an Assembly, to limit these questions to non-Covid-19 subjects.

The way in which P.51/2020 was finally presented did create disquiet amongst a significant number of Members. It would have been preferable to take paragraphs (a) and (b) each in isolation. Taking them together led several Members to withdraw their support. At this time, the need for collective agreement is clear. This proposition enables the debate to take place, and perhaps a collective position to be reached.

Financial and manpower implications

This proposition has no financial or manpower implications for the States.