STATES OF JERSEY

ENGAGING THE PUBLIC WITH JERSEY'S DEMOCRACY: A 3-YEAR STRATEGY

**Presented to the States on 17th January 2017
by the Privileges and Procedures Committee**

STATES GREFFE

FOREWORD

This paper was considered and approved by the Privileges and Procedures Committee at its meeting on 10th January 2017. It has been published in order to inform States Members and the Public and to encourage debate on the subject.

REPORT

The purpose of the States Greffe is to support parliamentary democracy in Jersey.

It does this by –

- Supporting the work of the States Assembly and its Committees and Scrutiny Panels

- Supporting all Members of the Assembly in discharging their parliamentary duties

- Informing and educating the Public about the work of the Assembly and elections to the Assembly.

Public engagement has long been an element of our work. Examples of such work include –

- The Year 5 schools programme of visits to the Assembly

- Supporting the Jersey Youth Assembly

- The vote.je website and other activity to promote elections

- High-profile public meetings of Scrutiny Panels

- Use of Twitter and Facebook to provide information about the Assembly and Panels

- Webcasting Assembly Sittings.

However, public engagement has developed piecemeal in recent years without any underlying strategy or co-ordination. Some areas (such as the Year 5 visits) are very well-organised, but others (such as social media activity) are more sporadic and disjointed. Maintenance of the website is particularly problematic, with no day-to-day editor, no meaningful statistics about usage, and little attention paid to how it can be used as a communication tool (rather than a document archive). The website is in the process of being redesigned so that it is more interactive and engaging: without a public engagement strategy we will not take full advantage of the opportunities that the new website will provide.

Furthermore, new developments in open data and digital-first are not being fully exploited. There is a strong risk that our services will fall increasingly short of both public and Members' expectations unless we keep up. This would undermine the Assembly's reputation at a time when trust in politics in Jersey, as in many democratic jurisdictions, appears to be waning, and turnout in elections remains stubbornly low, adversely affecting the Assembly's effectiveness in representing the best interests of Islanders. If the Assembly is increasingly seen as out of touch from the people it serves, Jersey's democracy will be damaged.

This public engagement strategy for the period from 2017 to 2020 will address these concerns. We will aim to ensure that people in Jersey are better informed about the work of the Assembly and have more opportunities to engage with, and influence, that work. The main strands of the strategy are set out below.

Transparency

The Assembly is a transparent institution. It almost always meets in public. Its proceedings are broadcast on the radio and are now webcast. Archived copies are available. We publish online and in hard copy hundreds of Propositions, Reports, Questions and Answers, transcripts and other documents each year. Panels and Committees have a mix of public and private meetings and also publish minutes and other documents. Our website (both the Assembly and the Scrutiny parts) contain enormous amounts of information about the Island's political life, and we are also responsible for the vote.je website which deals with election arrangements and results.

We will enhance the transparency of our work in the following ways –

- We will launch a new website for the Assembly in 2017, better integrating the Assembly and Scrutiny websites and providing a new focus on communicating news stories, with a more up-to-date look and feel.

- During 2017 we will re-invigorate our Facebook content and embed our Twitter content, so that both are used to communicate news stories and draw people to the website for more information.

- By summer 2018 we will introduce a new online guide which explains how the Assembly works, and which explains parliamentary jargon.

- During 2017–2018 we will consider options for webcasting public Panel meetings.

- We will also review webcasting of the Assembly to find the best ways of linking relevant content (for example, Propositions, Reports) to webcasts, and of using extracts of webcasts in website news stories. By 2019 we will have thought through options for Assembly webcasting after the end of the current contract in 2020.

- In 2017 we will publish voting data from 2005 onwards in an open data format. By 2020 we will aim to publish Hansard, Questions and Answers and Propositions as open data, and develop ways of linking content so that people can find information they are interested in more quickly and easily.

Digital

The States Assembly is a paper-heavy institution. Our documents are written and designed for hard-copy publication, with digital publication (usually as PDF documents) as a second-order process.

However, information is increasingly consumed in digital formats – using PCs, tablets and phones. This affects content and design. Crucially, digital publication enables information to be shared and manipulated much more easily than can be achieved with

hard-copy publication. People expect to be able to share content on social media, click from one piece of information to related pieces, and to bookmark content they are particularly interested in for future reference.

We will aim to publish our information in digital formats first. This transformation will take place in stages, taking account of the complexity of the information produced by the Greffe and the different political processes involved. We will aim to –

- Publish Hansard and Panel transcripts as open data using an XML template from 2017 (a new Hansard contract must be in place by June 2017)

- Introduce a new digital tool for accepting, editing and publishing Questions and Answers in 2018 and for non-legislative Propositions in 2019

- Introduce digital-first Scrutiny Reports in 2018, making more use of infographics and video

- Explore digital-first publication of legislative Propositions, in consultation with the Jersey Legal Information Board, with a view to implementing a new digital tool in 2020.

Appendix 2 to this strategy sets out the Greffe's digital vision in more detail.

Although the aim is to publish information principally in a digital format, printable versions will still be generated, and Members who wish to receive paper copies of Greffe documents will continue to receive them on request.

Moving to digital-first will generate significant benefits for States Members, as well as the Public, in terms of easier and quicker processes for submitting Questions, receiving Answers and lodging Propositions, and in keeping track of their Assembly activity.

In order to make progress with these digital-first initiatives, during 2017 we will create databases for States Members' names (back to 2005), roles in the Assembly, types of proceedings, and topics discussed in the Assembly.

In relation to public elections, we will ensure that people can register to vote using an online form from autumn 2017, and we will continue work on introducing automatic electoral registration with a view to the new system being implemented in 2018–2019. We will also develop proposals for the introduction of online voting for further discussion by the Assembly by 2020.

Informing and educating

The States Assembly invests significant resources in informing and educating the Public about Jersey's politics. Access to Assembly documents and information leaflets is provided via the website and the States Assembly Information Centre in Morier House. The vote.je website is the authoritative source of information about elections. The Assembly's Year 5 school visits programme is well-established and has a high reputation amongst Commonwealth parliamentary bodies. The Assembly also supports the Youth Assembly and the annual Rotary Club 'peace' debate, and has offered assistance to the Jersey Youth Parliament.

We will enhance our work in this area by –

- Launching an exhibition (physical and online) on the 130th anniversary of the opening of the Assembly building in June 2017

- Planning for further exhibitions including, potentially, on the 250th anniversaries of the march on the Royal Court in 2019 and the 1771 legal code in 2021

- Targeting information campaigns about the Assembly and elections to it at the Island's Portuguese and Polish communities in 2017 and 2018

- Ensuring that the vote.je website remains a definitive source of information about all aspects of Jersey's elections, including as a gateway to online voter registration

- Working with the Bailiff's Chambers on facilitating tours of the Assembly building, including exploring options for an "open house" event/week associated with the June 2017 exhibition.

Interactivity

People mostly interact with the States Assembly through their elected representatives, who engage day in, day out with their constituents on matters of concern to them. The Greffe also has its part to play in assisting this process of interaction. For example, Scrutiny Panels will often seek submissions from the Public on issues they are examining, and the Greffier will circulate to all Members e-mails and other correspondence sent to him relating to forthcoming Assembly business. However, these mechanisms are relatively undeveloped when compared to all parliamentary bodies, and little guidance is provided to the Public on how to engage with the Assembly, particularly online. In the 2017–2020 period we will –

- Subject to the agreement of the Assembly to the appropriate Standing Order changes (in 2017), assist the Assembly in undertaking more legislative scrutiny by Panels, with an increased focus on public engagement about legislative proposals

- Subject to the agreement of PPC and the Assembly (in 2017–2018), devise and introduce a new system for submitting online petitions to the Assembly

- Ensure that ways of engaging with the Assembly's proceedings (for example Panel inquiries and legislative scrutiny) are prominent features of the relaunched website

- Routinely use social media as a means of engaging with the Public about the Assembly's work (whilst avoiding any partisan comment).

Measuring success

During 2017 we will develop ways of measuring our success in improving our engagement with the Public. This is likely to involve a mix of straightforward analytics (for example, website usage, social media engagement, public interactions with Scrutiny) and qualitative analysis about people's views of the Assembly, based on survey data. We will seek to benchmark our success in this area against comparable jurisdictions.

Resourcing

We will endeavour to implement this strategy within our existing budget, working closely with colleagues in the States Information Services Department and Digital Jersey in relation to digital transformation. All Greffe staff will be involved in implementing the strategy and in working through how these changes will affect their roles.

However, we are likely to need a new post of Public Engagement Co-ordinator to manage implementation of this strategy, and we may also need support to develop new digital processes. Further work will be undertaken in early 2017 on these requirements.

Dr. Mark Egan, Greffier of the States, December 2016

TIMELINE

2017	Launch new States Assembly website
	Re-invigorate social media
	Publish voting data from 2005 in open data format
	Begin work on data strategies (to be completed by 2019)
	Improve links from webcasting to key documents and website news stories
	New Hansard contract from June 2017 includes publication of transcripts in open data format
	Consider options for webcasting Panels (concludes 2018)
	Implement Assembly decisions on improved legislative scrutiny
	Plan for possible introduction of e-petitioning
	Exhibition on 130th anniversary of the Assembly building
	Ongoing engagement with the Bailiff's Chambers about tours of the building (for example, an Open House day linked to the exhibition)
	Enable voter registration by online form; pursue automatic registration (implemented once the People Directory is in place)
	Information campaigns about elections targeted at Polish and Portuguese communities (continues in 2018)
	Work on vote.je in readiness for 2018 election
	Develop performance measures and benchmarks
	Consider and implement organisational changes
2018	Introduce new online guide on how the Assembly works
	Introduce new application for accepting, editing and publishing Questions and Answers
	Introduce digital-first Scrutiny Reports
	Extensive programme of public engagement to encourage higher voter turnout in the 2018 election (including possible 'Democracy Week' in the run-up to the election)
2019	Develop options for webcasting post-2020
	Explore digital-first publication of legislative *Projets* (aim to implement during 2020)
	Develop proposals for online voting (to be put to the Assembly in 2020)
	Exhibition on 250th anniversary of "Reform Day"
2020	Plan for 2021 exhibition on 250th anniversary of the 1771 Code

STATES ASSEMBLY 2020

Jean Le Marquand has spent her morning reading a report from the Environment Department on hedgehog numbers in Jersey. She is very worried that the hedgehog population has halved since 1980 and she doesn't think Ministers are doing enough to support hedgehogs. She goes to the States Assembly website and sets up a 'save the hedgehog' e-petition and e-mails her friends to sign it. E-petitions are submitted quickly and easily and anyone with a Jersey address (verified by comparison with a central database) can sign. By the end of the day the petition has 450 signatories. Any petition with over 1,000 signatories is automatically debated by the Assembly.

Three days later and the petition is close to triggering a debate. The JEP has run a story on hedgehog numbers, mentioning the petition, and Jean has been interviewed on Radio Jersey. Now Deputy Le Feuvre has been in touch to support the campaign. She is a longstanding campaigner on environmental matters and has searched Hansard online to show that hedgehogs have never been debated in the Assembly.

Deputy Le Feuvre logs onto the Au Greffe app at Gatwick, on her way back to Jersey following a meeting with the RSPCA in London. She drafts a couple of Written Questions on hedgehogs that she has been thinking about following her meeting and then ticks a box to convert a third, which she drafted previously and which is stored in her 'basket', from Written to Oral.

Next she looks at a draft Proposition and report on hedgehog conservation which she is working on and makes some tweaks before pressing the "lodge" button. The app automatically populates some of the data relating to the Proposition and provides a template for both the Proposition and the report.

The Assistant Greffier logs on to the app to see that she has received 3 new Questions from Deputy Le Feuvre. She edits them in the application and submits them to the Greffier, who can pass them to the Bailiff for approval.

The approved Written Questions are transmitted directly to nominated staff in the relevant departments, who provide their Answers in due course via the app. The Answers are transmitted directly to Deputy Le Feuvre and published online simultaneously. Jean has set up an alert so that she receives an e-mail whenever anything is published on the Assembly website about hedgehogs. The Oral Question is also transmitted to the department in this way but, of course, the Answer is given in the Assembly. The text of the Answer is appropriately tagged in Hansard so that it can be pulled out for publication with the Oral Question online. People searching for material in Assembly Questions will be able to pull up data from Oral or Written Questions without having to know which procedure was followed.

The Greffier looks at Deputy Le Feuvre's draft Proposition, makes some tweaks to the wording, and e-mails it (from the app) to the Bailiff for approval. Once this has been secured, and the Proposition has been proofed, it is e-mailed automatically to Members and published online.

The Deputy of St. Mary reads the Proposition on his phone while having a cup of coffee in town. He thinks that the level 2 fine for running over a hedgehog should be increased to level 3. He logs into the app, selects the Proposition for amendment, and deletes "2" and inserts "3" at the appropriate point. This automatically generates an amendment proposition which he saves so that he can prepare his report later. The Deputy of Trinity is sat at home also thinking about hedgehogs. She wants to extend the provisions in the Proposition to moles, but isn't sure if she is allowed to, or whether she has to go through the whole document adding "and moles" wherever "hedgehog" is mentioned. She e-mails the Deputy Greffier, who promises to take a look. The Law Draftsman agrees it can be done and does the work necessary in the app for the Deputy, thus generating the amendment proposition.

Senator Filleul is not a confident user of technology and has chosen not to use the Au Greffe app. He e-mails his Questions to the Assistant Greffier in the traditional way. A member of the Greffe team processes them by entering them into the app on the Senator's behalf – triggering the editorial and approval process described above. He also submits Propositions and amendments on paper, sometimes by scribbling amendments on a hard-copy print-out of a presentation. Again, a member of the team deals with these by logging into the system as the Senator to submit his material for lodging.

The Environment Panel's Scrutiny Officer drafts the Panel's comments on the hedgehog Proposition in WORD format, for circulation to Panel Members in the usual way. Once approved, she submits the comments into the app for publication, which ensures that they are correctly formatted and contain the relevant descriptive data. Next she resumes work on a draft report on mammal conservation in Jersey, which will include a short video from a leading environmentalist and an infographic showing population trends.

Everything published by the Greffe is catalogued by topic, so that the Public and Members can find material by theme (for example "hedgehog", "minimum wage", "income support") without needing to know whether that theme was the subject of a Proposition, a Report, a Question, or another form of proceeding.

Legislative *Projets* have just started to be drafted using the app, which is a major time-saver compared to the past. In legislative *Projets*, hyperlinks are provided to the relevant parts of the Revised Edition on the Jersey Legal Information Board website, showing what has been amended, and it will be possible to see how the Revised Edition would look as amended were the Proposition to be adopted (including as amended, where appropriate).

Most Members use electronic devices to look at the Order Paper and associated documents as it is easier to navigate online than on paper. Paper copies of the Order Paper and documents for debate are provided in the Assembly building, and some Members, such as Senator Filleul, continue to rely on them.

Jean attends the debate on Deputy Le Feuvre's hedgehog Proposition in the Public Gallery, using her tablet to look at the information which States Members are using. Most of her colleagues in the action group are watching the webcast or will watch the relevant section later on. The next day, Jean takes some clips from the webcast and combines them with the key documents to create a new section of the action group's website, showing the story so far in the battle to protect Jersey's hedgehogs.