

PRIVILEGES AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE

(25th Meeting)

18th October 2004PART A

Business conducted by telephone

All members were present, with the exception of Deputy C.J. Scott-Warren, Deputy J-A. Bridge, Deputy J.A. Bernstein, from whom apologies had been received.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisssier
 Senator P.V.F. Le Claire
 Connétable D.F. Gray
 Deputy P.N. Troy

In attendance -

M.N. de la Haye, Greffier of the States
 Mrs S. Stoten, Committee Clerk

Note: The Minutes of this meeting comprise Part A only.

Draft
 Amendment (No.
 27) of the
 Standing Orders
 of the States of
 Jersey P.171.
 1240/4(168)

A1. The Committee, with reference to Act No. A1 of its meeting held on 8th October 2004, recalled that it had agreed to make the necessary changes to Standing Orders to incorporate the trials on question time and closure on a permanent basis. Projet 'Draft Amendment (No. 27) of the Standing Orders of the States of Jersey P.171 had been lodged 'au Greffe' on 12th October 2004 and subsequent amendments had been proposed by Senator P.F. Routier, Deputy G.P. Southern and Deputy G.C.L Baudains.

L.D.
 Pub.Ed.
 States (2)

The Committee was apprised that Senator P.F. Routier wished to move the deadline for oral questions from noon on Friday preceding a States meeting to noon on the preceding Thursday. Whilst the Committee was mindful that senior officers were responsible for assisting with the preparation of answers, it did not perceive that the amount of preparation required would be excessive due to the 'concise' nature of oral questions.

The Committee agreed that it could not support the amendment as it considered that the assistance given by the amendment to Presidents outweighed the disadvantage of reducing the topicality of questions.

The Committee considered the amendment of Deputy G.C.L. Baudains which, if adopted, would reduce the deadline for written questions from 5pm on the Friday preceding the Friday preceding the States meeting to 9.30 a.m. on the Monday in the week preceding the week of the meeting. The Committee further noted that the amendment also proposed increasing the maximum length of oral questions from 60 words to 70 words.

The Committee agreed to accept Deputy Baudains' amendment to the deadline for written questions as it would allow members to work on questions over the

weekend whilst making little practical difference to the Greffier and his staff and to Presidents if questions were submitted early on Monday morning rather than at close of business on the previous Friday. The Committee further supported the amendment to increase the maximum length of oral questions from 60 words to 70 words despite not being aware of members being unduly constrained by the current word limit.

The Committee noted the final amendment lodged by Deputy G.P. Southern which would, if adopted, remove the 2 oral question limit and would therefore allow members to submit as many oral questions as they wished. **The Committee considered that a two question per member limit was adequate and that any member who had more than two topical questions could liaise with a colleague who may not already be asking questions. The Committee requested that members should note that asking questions through another member could influence the eventual ranking of their primary questions in the ballot held to finalise the order of questions. The Committee believed that because members choose their two best questions it ensured that the questions asked of Presidents were of a high quality.**

The second of Deputy Southern's amendments would increase the length of the oral question period from one hour to 90 minutes. The Committee pointed out that it strongly supported question time as a way of holding Presidents to account but expressed the view that it should not be allowed to dominate proceedings at the expense of public business and other items. The Committee considered that a one hour period was appropriate and that this period should not be increased as any increase would almost inevitably encourage the States to seek to fill the additional time at every meeting and the start of public business will be delayed.

The Committee did not support the amendment and agreed it would almost inevitably encourage members to submit large numbers of questions in order to gain a better chance of being near the top of the list after the drawing of lots and there would almost be certainly be many more questions listed than could be answered.

The Committee approved the aforementioned comments in response to the amendments submitted by Senator Routier, Deputy Baudains and Deputy Southern and agreed that it would continue to seek a debate on 26th October 2004 before the trial period expired.