

# STATES OF JERSEY



## STATES MEETINGS IN 2021: MOVE TO A THREE-WEEK CYCLE (P.106/2020) – AMENDMENT

---

Lodged au Greffe on 8th September 2020  
by Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier

---

STATES GREFFE

STATES MEETINGS IN 2021: MOVE TO A THREE-WEEK CYCLE (P.106/2020)  
– AMENDMENT

---

**1 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (a) –**

After paragraph (a), insert the following new paragraph –

“(b) to request the Privileges and Procedures Committee to bring forward amendments to the Standing Orders of the States of Jersey to establish a procedure during the trial whereby Written Questions may be submitted and answered outside of States meetings, ensuring that the procedure allows States Members either the same or a greater opportunity to submit Written Questions than exists at present;”

and re-designate the remaining paragraph accordingly.

DEPUTY I. GARDINER OF ST. HELIER

**Note:** After this amendment, the proposition would read as follows –

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

- (a) to agree that meetings of the Assembly in 2021 should follow a 3-weekly cycle, on a trial basis, in accordance with the schedule of dates contained within Appendix (a) of this proposition;
- (b) to request the Privileges and Procedures Committee to bring forward amendments to the Standing Orders of the States of Jersey to establish a procedure during the trial whereby Written Questions may be submitted and answered outside of States meetings, ensuring that the procedure allows States Members either the same or a greater opportunity to submit Written Questions than exists at present;
- (c) to request that, having monitored the impact of the trial, the Privileges and Procedures Committee bring forward, for debate by the Assembly before September 2021, any proposals to permanently alter the frequency of future States meetings.

## REPORT

Although the number of days on which the States meets will be increased, the number of States meetings in 2021 will be reduced from 19 to 15 (including the special Liberation Day sitting) should [P.106/2020](#) be adopted, thereby reducing the opportunity for States Members to submit Written Questions by 21 per cent. The intention behind this Amendment is to ensure that any such reduction is negated, by seeking amendments to the Standing Orders of the States of Jersey. The current Standing Orders do not allow for the submission of Written Questions outside of the cycle of States meetings. The Amendment will allow the establishment of new procedures surrounding Written Questions to ensure that the current number of Written Questions is at least retained, if not increased.

The importance of Written Questions cannot be understated as they can be used as a tool to obtain information on any topic from Ministers and those who hold other office (e.g. the Chair of the States Employment Board). Questions can be raised for a variety of reasons, including to provide clarity on policies or procedures, to establish insight into the work carried out by a specific States department, to provide information for forthcoming debates or to assist with constituency issues.

In addition, there might be times when the response to a question is time-critical and the need to wait a further week resulting from the change to a 3-weekly cycle may cause difficulties and / or problems. It is, of course, open to States Members to ask questions through the normal channels but, in some instances, this can lead to lengthy, protracted correspondence. In addition, these questions are on matters of public interest and the answers should be published on the States Assembly website, something that only happens with Written Questions in the States.

Certain jurisdictions adopt different approaches to Written Questions. In New Zealand, they can be asked every week (on working days) even when the House is not sitting and both questions and answers are published on the Parliament website (<https://www.parliament.nz/en/get-involved/features/hundreds-of-written-questions-asked-every-week-even-when-parliament-isn-t-meeting/>).

In Guernsey, the States of Deliberation meet every 3 weeks and the Rules of Procedure for States' Meetings can be found within the Red Book. Under "Questions for Written Reply" Rule 14(i) "A member may at any time place a question on a subject in accordance with this Rule for a written reply by..." (<https://gov.gg/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=104054&p=0>).

The current Standing Orders do not allow for the submission of Written Questions outside of the cycle of States meetings. This Amendment will allow the establishment of new procedures surrounding Written Questions to ensure that the current number of Written Questions is at least retained if not increased.

It is imperative that the opportunity to ask Written Questions is not minimised and that the public continues to have the opportunity to witness the workings of the States Assembly by the publishing of all questions and responses on the States Assembly website.

**Financial and manpower implications**

There are no financial and manpower implications which cannot be met from existing department budgets although drafting time will be required for the amendment to Standing Orders.