

Privileges and Procedures Committee

Constituency Office Sub-Committee

(3rd Meeting)

25th May 2023

Part A (Non-Exempt)

All members were present with the exception of Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf of St. Saviour, Deputy L.K.F Stephenson of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter, Deputy M. Tadier of St Brelade from whom apologies had been received.

Deputy C.S. Alves of St Helier Central, Chair
 Connétable K. Shenton-Stone of St Martin, Vice-Chair
 Deputy I. Gardiner of St Helier North
 Deputy R.J. Ward of St Helier Central
 Deputy M.R. Scott of St Brelade
 Deputy B. Ward of St Clement
 Deputy K.F. Morel of St Lawrence
 Deputy T.A. Coles from St Helier South

In attendance –

Mr. W. Millow, Deputy Greffier of the States
 Mr. Y. Fillieul, Assistant Greffier of the States
 Mrs. J. Hales, Research and Project Officer

Note: The Minutes of this meeting comprise Part A

Minutes. A1. The Sub-Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 6th April 2023.

CPA
 Westminster
 visit - Tour of
 a Constituency
 Office in
 Putney.

A2. The Sub-Committee received an update from those Members who had recently attended the CPA Westminster Tour of constituency offices. It was informed that Members had met Fleur Anderson, the Labour MP for Putney, Roehampton, Wandsworth Town and Southfields. The Sub-Committee was further informed that the constituency covered by this particular MP almost equated to the population of Jersey. The Members were given a tour by MP Anderson of recently revamped housing estates which highlighted the challenges faced in some of these areas due to deprivation. In relation to how safe it was for the MP to walk around without protection it was noted that MP Anderson was viewed as a ‘friend’ by residents in the area and whilst most of the walking tours were with another member of staff, walking around the housing estates was considered safe.

Members were informed that MPs in the UK were given an annual budget of £180,000 and it was decided by each MP how this would be spent. It was noted that shadow Ministers were also given an additional budget. MP Anderson used her budget on staffing and support plus constituency matters. It was explained that any constituency office would need to be budgeted for within this £180,000 and for this reason, MP Anderson worked from a church in her constituency, rather than having a dedicated constituency office, although she had an additional small office to work from in Westminster.

A query was raised as to how MP Anderson made contact with her constituents and it was noted that all the relevant contact details were readily available and regular visits to schools, prisons and hospitals were carried out by MP Anderson. Although a lot of work was undertaken directly by the MP, it was noted that a resource team was available to link constituents with their MP and help arrange further discussions or meetings.

The Sub-Committee noted that in the UK, one MP had responsibility for constituency whereas in Jersey, there could be four Members with responsibility for one area. It was suggested that this could cause overlap and duplication of work and that it would be helpful if a template were provided to constituency colleagues with which they could manage and organise their communications.

Members were also informed that MP Anderson used a portion of the budget to deliver her annual report to all her constituents. Deputy Gardiner informed the Sub-Committee that she had previously delivered leaflets and correspondence to members of her constituency which took time and incurred a direct cost. It was highlighted that there was no current budget for this for Members and it was difficult to claim this sort of expense through the current system.

The Sub-Committee recalled the options identified at previous meetings in respect of constituency offices and agreed, in light of the Westminster visit, that the options pursued were in line with what the Sub-Committee needed. The Sub-Committee confirmed that a dedicated area, one day per week, with a space for Members to work and meet members of the public together with four members of staff allocated to the offices would be sufficient. It was noted that provisional bid for the 2024 Government Plan had been made on that basis. The Sub-Committee also asked if a cost for distribution of newsletters and other related correspondence could be added.

Disclosure Forms

A3. The Sub-Committee discussed the current process of disclosure forms and queried whether there was a more streamlined approach to this. Currently, Members had to complete separate forms for each Department for example, Andium Homes and Income Tax. The Sub-Committee asked whether the form currently used for Customer and Local Services (CLS) could be used as a template and that once this form had been completed, information could be shared with all Departments to avoid duplication. The Deputy Greffier of the States informed the Sub-Committee that there was an ongoing piece of work within the Members' Resources Team on the disclosure template.

Legalities of Advising Constituents

A4. The Sub-Committee discussed whether there were restrictions on how much information or advice could be provided to constituents in relation to personal liability. The Sub-Committee suggested that this matter could be clarified during the induction process provided to new Members, which could include clear guidelines setting out how advice could be given. The Sub-Committee also suggested that a form could be used to highlight that any advice given to constituents was not legally binding and that the States Member could not be held liable. It was agreed that a request be made to the Law Officers' Department be made in order to understand the situation; and that it would be beneficial for research to be undertaken into what was standard procedure in other jurisdictions when offering advice. The Research and Project Officer was tasked to take the necessary action.

Sites for constituency offices.

A5. The Sub-Committee, with reference to Minute No. A3 of 6th April 2023 received a paper which listed a number of potential sites in each parish including churches. The Sub-Committee suggested a number of additional sites for review. The Deputy Greffier suggested that one or two constituencies could be trialled in the first instance with additional sites being included in due course. The Sub-Committee agreed that potential sites in St. Helier Central, St. Helier South and St. Peter/St. Ouen/St. Mary should be focussed on initially with an updated paper circulated in due course.

Tour of 23 Hill Street. A6. The Assistant Greffier of the States gave an update on the offices in 23 Hill Street, informing the Sub-Committee that an invite to the 'show office' would be circulated the following week to the Sub-Committee and the PPC. The Sub-Committee asked whether their current key fobs could be configured for the Hill Street offices to avoid numerous keys. It was agreed this would be researched and an update provided in due course.

Future meetings. A7. The Sub-Committee agreed its next meeting would take place on 22nd June at 2pm in Blampied Room.