

STATES OF JERSEY



DRAFT ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2011 (P.99/2010): SEVENTH AMENDMENT (P.99/2010 Amd.(7)) – COMMENTS

**Presented to the States on 13th September 2010
by the Privileges and Procedures Committee**

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

The Privileges and Procedures Committee does not support either of the amendments being forward by Senator Shenton, namely paragraphs 23 and 47 of his amendments to the Annual Business Plan.

Amendment 23 suggests that a saving of £44,400 should be made by not implementing the £800 per annum increase recently recommended by the independent States Members Remuneration Review Body.

PPC considers that the amendment raises a very important point of principle. In 2003 the Assembly agreed that it was totally inappropriate for States members to continually discuss their own remuneration as had happened up to that time. In the report accompanying his proposition that first proposed an independent body the then Senator E.P. Vibert wrote *“By any standards of propriety, the current system where members debate and decide upon their own remuneration is indefensible. It is vexatious to the public whom we serve and invites justifiable criticism of the whole integrity of government.”*

PPC fully supports the sentiments in the above quote. The whole purpose of establishing an independent remuneration review body was to prevent debates on members’ remuneration and rely on the SMRRB to consider this matter objectively and independently. PPC does not believe it would be appropriate to comment on the merits or otherwise of the recommendation of the SMRRB for 2011 as to do so would interfere with the body’s independence. PPC is nevertheless confident that the SMRRB always takes account of all relevant factors when making its recommendations and will have taken account of the pay freeze in place for States members in 2010 before making its recommendations for 2011. PPC believes it is extremely important to defend the principle that the body’s recommendations should be accepted by members, without the need for any debate.

PPC would point out to all members that there is no requirement for elected members to claim the full amount of remuneration available. As a result if any member wishes to take an individual decision that he or she would prefer not to receive the £800 increase next January a simple notification to the States Treasury is all that is required.

Amendment 47 proposes a much more significant decrease in States members remuneration for 2012 and beyond and Senator Shenton has stated that this could either be achieved by reducing the level of remuneration for members by some £7,000 per annum or by reducing the membership of the Assembly by 10. For the reasons given above PPC does not believe it is appropriate for members to take decisions on the actual level of remuneration as this is a matter for the SMRRB.

Although Senator Shenton is correct in stating that a significant saving could be made in the budget for the remuneration of elected members if the membership of the Assembly were reduced, the Committee believes it is irresponsible to take a budgetary decision in relation to this matter before the States have debated and agreed changes to the composition of the Assembly. Senator Shenton has given no indication of the manner in which he considers a reduction of 10 could be made and members will be well aware that all previous attempts to reduce the membership of the Assembly have been rejected. In PPC’s view the amendment is therefore totally premature as considerations on the appropriate number of States members to serve the people of Jersey and the appropriate composition of the Assembly should not be driven by

purely financial considerations. This is particularly the case at a time when further changes to the machinery of government have just been put forward by Senator Breckon (P.120/2010) and the impact of these potential changes on the appropriate membership of the Assembly has not been assessed. In addition PPC itself has lodged proposals (P.118/2010) that would, if adopted, reduce the membership of the Assembly by four over time in a measured way. These proposals, if adopted, will have a consequential impact on the budget for remuneration but as PPC has made it clear in P.118/2010 "*PPC has always made it clear that reform proposals should not be based on financial considerations alone.*"

PPC urges all members to reject both amendment 23 and amendment 47.