

STATES OF JERSEY



STATES ASSEMBLY DIVERSITY FORUM: ESTABLISHMENT

Lodged au Greffe on 5th November 2018
by Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

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

- (a) that a States Assembly Diversity Forum be established to work towards the aim of the States Assembly fully reflecting the population of Jersey and representing all of the communities and interests in the Island;
- (b) that all elected Members of the States Assembly are eligible to participate in the Forum;
- (c) that a meeting to which all elected Members are invited shall be held to elect the Forum's convenor, mirroring the rules of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (Jersey branch);
- (d) that the Forum should be supported by the Greffier of the States; and
- (e) that the Forum should report annually to the States on its work over the preceding 12 months and its forward work programme.

DEPUTY L.M.C. DOUBLET OF ST. SAVIOUR

REPORT

In July 2017, I, along with the then Chief Minister, Senator I.J. Gorst, established the States Assembly Diversity Forum. The other Members involved at the outset were Deputy, now Senator, S.Y. Mézec and former Deputy A.E. Pryke of Trinity. A number of other Members have since attended meetings of the Diversity Forum, including Senator K.L. Moore, former Deputies R.G. Bryans of St. Helier and P.D. McLinton of St. Saviour; and Deputies J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour, K.F. Morel of St. Lawrence, C.S. Alves of St. Helier, K.G. Pamplin of St. Saviour and J.H. Perchard of St. Saviour.

We established the Diversity Forum following the briefing given to States Members by Professor Sarah Childs of Birkbeck College, University of London, on the subject of her [Good Parliament](#) report. This report looked at how the UK House of Commons could meet the Inter-Parliamentary Union's definition of what constitutes a "good parliament": an institution which is "truly representative, transparent, accessible, accountable and effective in its many functions". The principles underpinning her work were –

1. A greater diversity of MPs should be present in the House of Commons, not least in terms of class, disability, ethnicity, sex/gender, and sexuality.
2. An inclusive, effective and representative Parliament is about more than simply increasing the diversity of Members elected to the House; it also requires their equal and effective participation therein.
3. The House of Commons has an important symbolic role to play in British society, over and above its substantive role: it should embody the principle of equality and fairness, acting as a 'role-model' institution.
4. The responsibility of delivering on *The Good Parliament* resides with the House of Commons as an institution. In other words, the House should acknowledge its collective responsibility to redress current limitations in representation and inclusion.

We decided that these principles should apply in Jersey and that the States Assembly should follow Professor Childs' recommendation in establishing an internal action group to promote the *Good Parliament* agenda.

The Diversity Forum's initial aims were to –

- encourage more women candidates to stand in the 2018 election
- make connections with Jersey's Portuguese, Polish and other minority communities to encourage greater participation in the 2018 election
- raise the profile of the work undertaken by States Members and the characteristics, skills and experiences which States Members bring to the role, in order to encourage a broader range of candidates to come forward for election
- produce and gain agreement to a policy on maternity, paternity, parental, adoption and caring leave for States Members
- initiate an Inter-Parliamentary Union [Gender Sensitive audit](#) of the States Assembly, to identify future priorities for action.

Over the course of the last year the Forum has made good progress with some of these aims.

- The Forum worked with the *Jersey Women in Politics* group to organise a visit to the Island by Sophie Walker, leader of the Women's Equality Party, and acted as a link between Women in Politics and Assembly Members and the Greffe. A record number of women candidates were nominated in 2018 – 30 out of 92 – but the number of women elected increased by just one, from 12 to 13, demonstrating that much more work needs to be done.
- We gained PPC's approval to a change to Standing Orders which would enable Members to be absent from the Chamber because of parental care needs, without it being necessary for permission for absence to be requested (and potentially refused). The Standing Order change and associated guidance, which will ensure that parental leave follows the rules which apply to States employees, will be published shortly.
- We worked with the Greffe to publish short videos online of retiring States Members talking about why they had entered politics, in order to encourage more candidates from different walks of life to come forward. We need to build on this work ahead of the next election to ensure that we continue to broaden the range of candidates seeking election to the Assembly.
- We have conducted an audit of the States Assembly's procedures and practices from a gender perspective, as recommended by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and will be making a report and recommendations available shortly.

One area in which the Forum found it difficult to make an impact was in reaching out to the Portuguese, Polish and other minority groups in the Island to encourage their political participation. Deputy Alves' involvement with the Forum from now on will undoubtedly help us engage with the Portuguese community, but we were also held back by the informal nature of the Forum. We have no presence on the States Assembly website; we had no formal terms of reference or structure; and there was no States decision we could point to in order to explain to third parties who we were and why we were seeking to engage them.

The new Assembly now has an opportunity to aim for the States Assembly to be a “truly representative, transparent, accessible, accountable and effective” institution, in accordance with international best practice. This proposition provides the means of achieving this, by aiming to ensure “that the States Assembly fully reflects the population of Jersey and represents all of the communities and interests in the Island” and giving the Assembly's support to the establishment of a Forum with a clear mandate to achieve this.

The Forum would remain a body which all States Members could attend and contribute to – similar to the Jersey branches of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie. It would have broad terms of reference, to pursue the *Good Parliament* agenda, and would seek to influence and work with PPC, the Council of Ministers and the Assembly as a whole, in pursuit of that agenda. At the first meeting of the Forum, Members present would be invited to elect a convenor and deputy convenor, by secret ballot, which would ensure that the Forum had clear leadership and was not dependent on a single Member in order to function effectively. Members participating in the Diversity Forum would be able to invite non-members to get involved with the Forum's work. The Greffier has provided staff support

to the Diversity Forum on an informal basis up to now, but this proposition would ensure that this continues. I have consulted the Greffier on this point and he has confirmed that it would be helpful to include this specific provision, from a resource planning perspective. The Forum would also be accountable to the Assembly, publishing an annual report and forward work programme, which would be based on the decisions taken by Members when the Forum meets.

Should this proposition be successful, I will put myself forward as a candidate for Convenor of the Diversity Forum, because I am passionate about the improvements we can make to ensure that the Assembly fully reflects the diversity of our Island's people. Although we have focused on gender and nationality issues so far, I think we could do more in terms of people with disabilities and their access to the Assembly, and ensuring that there are no barriers to the participation of the LGBT+ community in the Island's political life. The Assembly's support for this proposition will signal our wholehearted commitment to inclusive politics and provide the Diversity Forum with the mandate it requires to identify and press for improvements well ahead of the next election.

Financial and manpower implications

The work of the Diversity Forum has been led by States Members, with the assistance of the Greffier, from within existing budgets. Putting the Diversity Forum on a clearer institutional footing does not necessitate any change to these working arrangements. Any additional resources required to support the Diversity Forum would need to be agreed by the Privileges and Procedures Committee, in line with the usual arrangements for funding the States Greffe.