

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CHIEF MINISTER
BY THE CONNETABLE OF ST. HELIER**

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 28th MARCH 2006

Question

Would the Chief Minister outline his policy, if any, on communicating decisions made by the executive to non-executive members of the States and confirm what measures, if any, have been put in place to ensure that members do not have to hear of the majority of decisions made by the Council of Ministers or by individual ministers through the media?

Answer

My policy is to be open and transparent in communicating decisions made by the executive, and this policy is shared by my colleagues on the Council of Ministers.

Specific measures have been put in place to communicate decisions taken by the executive, and some of these were outlined in my letter of 7th February 2006, to all States members, a copy of which is attached. These measures have included changes to the States of Jersey website, and the website now displays copies of the part 'A' agendas, supporting papers, and minutes of the Council of Ministers. Copies of part 'A' ministerial decisions and supporting papers can also be found on the website under 'Ministerial Decisions'.

More recently, and in response to comments received from members, the Council of Ministers has arranged for summaries of their discussions on all part 'A' items to be circulated to States members on the morning after meetings. The summaries will also include, where appropriate, a record of discussions on individual part (B) items where it is felt that further information would be helpful. These summaries are circulated to States members at the same time as the press conference organised for the local media, thereby ensuring that members are apprised of decisions before they are reported by the media.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the offer that I made in my letter of 7th February 2006, in which I invited States members to contact me if they had any suggestions as to how we might make further improvements to the sharing of information. I have not received any suggestions to date in response to this invitation, although several members have chosen to make critical comments through the media. Should members have any remaining suggestions, comments or concerns, then I would invite them to contact me directly.

Chief Minister's Department

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Our ref: FHW/JMEH

7th February 2006

To:

All elected States members

Dear colleague,

Information for States members

The introduction of the ministerial system has seen a number of important changes to the way that information is made available to States members and the public.

Firstly, you will no doubt be aware of the improvements that have recently been made to the States website (www.gov.je). I hope that you have found the website to be informative and easy to use, but I would welcome any suggestions that you may have for further improvements.

I am pleased to inform you that the States website will include the part 'a' agendas, supporting papers, and minutes of the Council of Ministers, and these may be found on the website under the heading 'Council of Ministers'. Copies of part 'a' ministerial decisions and supporting papers may also be found on the website under 'Ministerial decisions'.

Another major change has been the introduction of new arrangements for public consultation, as described in the R.C. on 'Public Consultation' that was published in November last year (R.C.82/2005). Major policy decisions, or decisions that will affect a broad cross-section of the community, will be subject to a formal written system of discussion and draft policy papers. An explanation of how the system works, together with a list of current and future consultations, may be found on the States website under 'Chief Minister/ Communications Unit'.

I hope that you will find these changes to be helpful, but please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any suggestions as to how we may make further improvements.

Yours faithfully,

**Senator F.H. Walker,
Chief Minister**