

**WRITTEN QUESTIONS TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMITÉ DES CONNETABLES
BY DEPUTY G.C.L. BAUDAINS OF ST. CLEMENT**

ANSWERS TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 17th JANUARY 2006

Question 1

Would the Chairman inform members whether all details of the 'commercial rate' have now been finalised and what is the anticipated starting date for the new rate; if there is further work outstanding, what does this include?

Answer

The Rates (Jersey) Law 2005, came into force in December 2005 and provides for an Island-wide rate to be levied according to whether a property is assessed as used for "domestic purposes" or for 'non-domestic purposes'. This rate is to levy the annual Island-wide rates figure as set out in Article 20 of the Law. The 'commercial rate' to which the question refers is assumed to be the Island-wide 'non-domestic' rate.

The Island-wide rate will be paid for the first time in 2006 by all property owners and occupiers. The Annual Returns for 2006 will collect information to allow every property to be assessed according to whether it is used for 'domestic purposes' or for 'non-domestic purposes'. Owners and occupiers will in due course receive a notice of the assessment and will have the opportunity to seek a review of, and appeal against, that assessment should they not agree with it.

There is further work to be undertaken before the 2006 Island-wide rates per quarter can be set. This includes –

- (i) determining the annual Island-wide rates figure in accordance with Article 20 – this can only be done once the 2005/2006 audited accounts for each Parish are available; and
- (ii) determining the total number of rateable quarters assessed across the Island – this can only take place once the Rates List for each Parish is approved (not later than 31st May 2006).

Question 2

With regard to Welfare benefit being subsumed into the Low Income Support Scheme, would the Chairman advise whether any mechanism exists to ensure that the Parishes are protected against the need to subsidise any other aspects of the Support Scheme?

Answer

The Comité understands that the proposed Income Support Scheme will replace the current welfare system and be the sole source of funding for those in need. Accordingly the Income Support Scheme must be flexible to deal with exceptional situations and one-off costs such as those which are currently funded through the welfare system and this is, the Comité understands, to be provided for through the proposed Citizens Fund. Whilst the legislative framework for the scheme has yet to be drafted we expect this to ensure that no further subsidy is required from the Parishes.