

2.10 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of the Chairman of the Comité des Connétables regarding electoral registration:

Have the causes for the low return of electoral registration forms this year been identified and, if so, what are they?

Connétable K.P. Vibert of St. Ouen (Chairman of the Comité des Connétables):

Basically the answer is no, but the Connétables have the matter on their agenda for next Monday's meeting. Nevertheless, I would point out that the pattern is the same as has been in the past and the Connétables are now bound by law to send reminders to households who have failed to make a return. The low return is, as I have said, similar to the pattern in previous years. For example, in 2002 forms were sent to approximately 40,000 units of accommodation, but reminders had to be sent to approximately half these addresses, and as no forms had been returned, again, 10,000 had to be sent on the third occasion. The cause can therefore be attributed to people not bothering to fill forms in when requested to do so. The campaign last summer prior to the Autumn 2005 elections means, I believe, that many people believe their name is included on the register and are not aware that a new 3-year rolling register is being compiled. Connétables have made every attempt to bring this to the attention of the public through press releases and reminders and it is intended that when the next round of reminders goes out that a note to this effect will be contained in that circulation. Although the law places a duty upon every person who meets the criteria for registration to register as an elector, there is no penalty under the Public Elections (Jersey) Law 2000 for failing to do so. Whilst we would hope to get replies from all addresses, even if only to advise that no one at the address qualifies to register as an elector or even does not wish to qualify as an elector, this is unlikely to happen. As there are no Island elections expected in 2008 many may feel that no urgency to register is required. However, registration means that electors are also able to vote at Parish assemblies and take part in any referendum.

2.10.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I thank the Connétable for that information. Would the Connétable not admit that the concept of the rolling registration has not come across and further, Sir, would he not admit - and this was a continuing issue which has never been entirely resolved - the advertising needs considerable improvement?

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

Yes, Sir, I would certainly admit that that is part of the reason, although it must be realised that the same is happening this time as in the past. But as I have said, it is the intention of the Connétables to add-in with the next round of registration forms a note to the effect that this is a new rolling register and that people need to register.

2.10.2 Senator B.E. Shenton:

Is it not the case that the form reminds people that the Connétables are still in the States and this may account for the fact they do not return the forms? **[Laughter]**

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

I think it reminds people that the Connétables are in the States and they have to elect them, Sir.

2.10.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Connétable mentions the absence of any fine or whatever applicable to people who do not return their forms. Does he believe that any such measure should be introduced in the near future, or if failing that, should that level of fine be transferred up a level on to the Constable to make sure that he produces an accurate register?

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

I think basically the answer to that question is no and no, Sir.

2.10.4 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Other than the obvious urban/rural divide we get in terms of high and low registration, has the Constable noticed or has his Comité noticed any significant disparity as between Parishes in terms of registration and if so what are the explanations?

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

Those figures will be available to the Comité next Monday, but from the first look at them they are no different to what they have been in the past.