

2.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour of the Chairman of the Privileges and Procedures Committee regarding the introduction of freedom of information legislation.

Given that in response to a question on Freedom of Information legislation on 1st April 2008, the Chairman stated that his Committee would be reviewing the need for legislation after receiving information due by 12th May 2008, would he advise Members what decision has now been reached?

Connétable D.F. Gray of St. Clement (Chairman, Privileges and Procedures Committee):

While in an ideal world consultees reply on time, in this instance the information referred to in the question was not received until 29th and 30th May 2008. The committee has decided that it will review the draft law carefully and address as many of the concerns responded to in the consultation exercise as it can by preparing amendments to the draft. These amendments will, among other things, attempt to ensure that costs are contained as far as possible and that there will be sufficient lead in time to allow departments to prepare for implementation. Once the committee has finalised and approved these amendments it will decide whether to lodge it at that time or to invite Scrutiny to review it.

2.3.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Would the chairman confirm that what amounts to a Freedom of Information law as opposed to a series of amendments will be lodged and debated before this session comes to an end?

The Connétable of St. Clement:

One always hopes that will be the case, Sir.

2.3.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Would the chairman not concede that we have gone through the greatest charade of all times in terms of freedom of information - there was a clear draft available in July 2005, we have been working on a never ending set of drafts of comments, the thing has been killed off by attrition from certain quarters of the House and this has been a total farce?

The Connétable of St. Clement:

No, I would not agree at all. It has not been a total farce. We are trying to get a law that is workable and affordable.

2.3.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Would the chairman confirm that the recent denial of information to the local press by the Chief Minister's office was a classic example of why a Freedom of Information law was needed to be in place instead of wishy-washy voluntary codes?

The Connétable of St. Clement:

I cannot answer for the Chief Minister's office.