

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CHAIRMAN OF PRIVILEGES AND PROCEDURES
COMMITTEE BY DEPUTY R.G. LE HÉRISSEIER OF ST. SAVIOUR
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 1st NOVEMBER 2011**

Question

Following the recent elections, will the Chairman undertake to ensure that all manifestos and other material published online by candidates on the vote.je website will be available for future reference?

Will the Chairman undertake to invite those who were elected unopposed to file a manifesto for the same purpose, to ensure accountability for them also?

If the answer to either or both of the above questions is no, would the Chairman explain why?

Will the Chairman undertake to highlight the following items for future consideration by the new Committee –

- (a) whether the candidates' manifesto booklet should be published and circulated before the opening of pre-poll and postal voting?
- (b) whether pre-poll voting should be situated at the bus station?
- (c) whether there should be a review of every aspect of media coverage and involvement in the period between nominations and election day?
- (d) whether the public and States Members should be openly invited to submit suggestions for improving the election process?
- (e) whether the notion of a rolling registration be revisited so that electors are not, by default, completing a registration form every year?

Answer

The vote.je website from the recent elections will be kept online and the candidates' manifestos will remain available. The only information that will be removed is practical information that is now outdated such as the dates of hustings meetings.

PPC does not consider it would be appropriate to ask those elected unopposed to prepare a 'manifesto' at this stage. A manifesto is prepared for the purposes of a contested election and a successful candidate's mandate comes in part from the fact that the electors have supported the policy proposals set out in the manifesto. A member can then be held to account in relation to the manner in which he or she has sought to implement the manifesto policies. PPC believes that there would be little value in asking candidates who were elected unopposed to prepare a 'manifesto' at this stage when that document could contain anything that the member wanted with no means of knowing whether or not the policies would have been supported by the electorate.

It is extremely likely that the new PPC will wish to review the lessons learnt from the recent single election day and the new Committee may wish to look at the issues raised by the

questioner in parts (a) to (e) of this question. PPC's own views on the matters raised are as follows -

- (a) PPC agrees that candidates' manifestos should, if at all possible, be available as early as possible to electors and it was for this reason that they were uploaded to the vote.je website some 8 days after this year's nomination meetings. However there will always be an unavoidable delay in the production and distribution of the hard copy booklet to allow time for formatting, checking, printing and distribution (which can only be done by Jersey Post over the full course of a working week). It is likely that the opening of pre-poll voting (which occurred less than 2 weeks after the nomination meetings this year) would need to be delayed if it was necessary to await the distribution of the hard copy booklet. PPC would also point out that the time available for pre-poll voting will be further restricted if the whole election period is shortened to 4 weeks as proposed by the questioner in his recent proposition P.174/2011.
- (b) Pre-poll voting arrangements are made by the Judicial Greffe and PPC would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff of the Judicial Greffe for the manner in which they handled pre-poll and postal voting arrangements this year. Although the location of pre-polling is a matter for the Judicial Greffe the Committee's own view is that pre-poll voting should be located in a convenient and accessible town centre location. It must also be borne in mind that the location needs to be secure for the storage of ballot papers, registers, etc. and although the bus station might be a convenient location for bus users it is unlikely to meet the necessary security requirements. In addition it is not as centrally located as other town centre premises.
- (c) The freedom of the press to report on elections is a fundamental aspect of any democratic society and PPC has not been made aware of any concerns that would merit a review.
- (d) It is almost inevitable that a further review of the election procedures will be undertaken by the new PPC and the present Committee is content to recommend that this review should include public consultation.
- (e) The introduction of a true rolling register in 2008 following amendments made to the Public Elections (Jersey) Law 2002 means that the parish electoral registers will no longer ever again be started afresh. An elector's name can only now be removed from the register if the parish becomes aware that an elector no longer resides in the parish or if the elector does not return the annual return for 3 consecutive years and attempts to contact the elector are unsuccessful. Despite the existence of a rolling register it is nevertheless important for steps to be taken to keep it as up to date as possible and the sending out of an annual return which shows the names of the electors on the register at the address in question is part of that updating process. It must nevertheless be stressed that any failure to return the annual return in any particular year does not lead to an elector being removed from the register and removal would only happen if this happened for 3 consecutive years.