

2.8 Deputy T.M. Pitman of the Chairman of Privileges and Procedures Committee regarding lessons to be learnt from the higher electoral turnout in the recent Guernsey elections:

What lessons for Jersey, if any, can be learnt from the higher electoral turnout in the recent Guernsey elections where electors vote for a single class of States Member?

Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier (Chairman, Privileges and Procedures Committee):

This is a matter for the Electoral Commission to consider as part of its work. It would not be appropriate for me to make assumptions at this stage as to how electing a single class of member might impact upon voter turnout. Percentage turnout should always be considered in the context of the number and proportion of people who are eligible to vote and who have registered to vote. The Electoral Commission will no doubt wish to examine these areas and to make comparisons between Jersey and Guernsey and any other jurisdictions that are considered to be relevant when it begins its work.

2.8.1 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I am sure the Chairman is not opting out of his responsibilities, but could he say whether, as Chairman of the Privileges and Procedures Committee, he will be making these thoughts known to the Electoral Commission, that surely this evidence suggests that a single-type member constitution and getting a system where a person's vote is all worth roughly the same as opposed to the situation in Jersey where the country Parish is obviously worth more than an urban vote? Is he going to make those representations from the Privileges and Procedures Committee's perspective?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I hope that the Deputy and any other Members of the States and members of the public will make these kinds of points to the Electoral Commission. We hopefully will be choosing the members at the next meeting and the Commission, I know, is eager to begin work.

2.8.2 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Has the Chairman of the Privileges and Procedures Committee been in contact with Guernsey, because I understand that they have a new electoral register and the registration was a great deal lower than they anticipated, therefore it looks as if it has gone up, but has it really gone up compared to the old register? Has the Chairman of the Privileges and Procedures Committee spoken with them?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I have not, myself, spoken with Guernsey other than to congratulate a few members on their recent re-election. However, we have a Sub-Committee working, as the Senator knows, on the electoral system in Jersey and I would hope that that Sub-Committee, which is being ably chaired by Deputy Martin of St. Helier, will indeed be looking at the lessons we can learn from Guernsey.

2.8.3 Connétable L. Norman of St. Clement:

Is the Chairman aware that registering to vote in Guernsey is voluntary while in Jersey it is compulsory? Those most likely to register in Guernsey are those who are more likely to vote and therefore there is bound to be a significant difference in voter turnout in percentage terms.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Another interesting observation and question, which I am sure the Electoral Commission will take on board.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I am always happy to give way to the Minister for Treasury and Resources, Sir.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Well, there you are. There is a first time for everything. **[Laughter]**

2.8.4 Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

Does the Chairman of P.P.C. agree with me that polling cards are one of the key issues that could drive up future increases in electoral turnout?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Yes, indeed, and with my other hat on as Connétable of St. Helier, in fact we did issue polling cards for the General Election and they did make an appreciable difference. We did not issue them for the Procureurs election recently, which had a very low turnout and that may indeed have had a role, but as I say, I do not have any hard and fast views. I think it is entirely right if the Election Commission approaches this with a blank canvas and takes views from the House as well as from members of the public.

2.8.5 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Could the Chairman just confirm, which I am sure he will, that working towards measures where we can increase turnout is absolutely essential and that will then form ongoing discussions within the Privileges and Procedures Committee?

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I am happy to confirm that.