

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION
BY DEPUTY T.M. PITMAN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 29th JANUARY 2013**

Question

Will the Chairman of the Electoral Commission explain why the Commission chose to base its proposals on the number of eligible voters in each Parish rather than the higher figure of the population of each Parish, given that all parishioners can expect to receive representation?

Answer

The Commission's terms of reference required it to consider constituencies and mandates. Proposals based on the population of each parish would potentially have taken it into territory that fell outside its terms of reference, and would have required the Commission to set aside academic advice on best practice.

In paragraphs 5.27 – 5.33 of the final report, the Commission makes the case for each eligible voter to be able to exercise broadly similar voting power whilst maintaining the simplicity of a system based on parish boundaries. Considered advice from Dr. Alan Renwick, a reader in comparative politics and Director of Postgraduate Research Studies in Politics at the University of Reading, refined the Commission's thinking in this regard. Dr. Renwick prepared several reports at the request of the Commission and these can be accessed via the Commission's website using the following link -

<http://www.electoralcommission.je/news/research/>

In his report entitled: 'The Jersey States Assembly in Comparative Perspective,' Dr. Renwick provides, amongst other things, a most helpful explanation of the standard measure of mal-apportionment and of the value of the Sainte-Laguë apportionment method (also known as Webster's method) to achieve equality in the value of the vote among pre-determined districts. In both cases, the number of eligible voters is taken into account, rather than the overall population.

The final part of this question raises the issue of who should be entitled to vote, as well as how those who are not entitled to vote have their voices heard in a democracy. Neither of these questions fall readily within the Commission's terms of reference. It is nevertheless a matter of record that the States revisited the former question as recently as 2007, when it elected to lower the voting age from 18 to 16. Regarding the latter issue of voices being heard, the Commission is sure that all Members endeavour to uphold their duty to represent all their constituents in a manner consistent with their oath of office.