

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER
FOR EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 10th DECEMBER 2013**

Question

What measures, if any, does the Minister have under consideration, in conjunction with the Privileges and Procedures Committee or otherwise, given that 2014 is an election year and that all those over 16 on election day will have the right to register and to vote, to improve:

- (a) the numbers of 16 to 19 year olds who register to vote;
- (b) access to politicians in schools and colleges through hustings, PSHE lessons or otherwise; and,
- (c) awareness of current election issues with the aim to significantly increase turnout of 16 to 19 year olds in the forthcoming elections?

Answer

Education, Sport and Culture, through States schools, has an ongoing role in teaching young people about the democratic process. This continues during election year in line with the Jersey Curriculum, which requires students in Key Stage 4 to develop knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities as citizens. The significance of active participation in democratic and electoral process is included in this.

It is a well-recognised principle that students should be able to learn about the democratic process in schools in a neutral environment. Teachers and lessons are expected to be unbiased and apolitical. They give students the background and context necessary for them to make informed decisions about political issues themselves.

The responsibility for promoting the election and organisation of hustings for candidates rests with the Privilege and Procedures Committee with assistance from the States Greffe. The ESC Department liaises with the States Greffe and supports its work to raise awareness about the election.

It is understood that the States Greffe are currently developing a plan for 2014. During the previous election period the following steps were taken and can be repeated next year:

- Voter registration forms were made available in schools and students were advised;
- Public information leaflets and posters, produced by the States Greffe on behalf of the Privilege and Procedures Committee, were made available in schools. These were specifically aimed at encouraging younger voters to register and explained the process;
- Specific areas were set aside in schools for candidates to display manifestos/posters if they wish;

- School premises were made available outside school hours for candidates to arrange hustings or meetings with prospective voters. This enables candidates to arrange times and venues that are especially convenient for younger voters.

Voting and attendance at hustings are not currently compulsory for any section of the population so it is appropriate to maintain the democratic principle of free choice in relation to younger voters.

As well as the above, ESC is investigating options for a new Youth Council which would aim to increase awareness of the political process and encourage greater participation among a range of young people.