

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
BY THE CONNÉTABLE OF ST. JOHN
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 26th APRIL 2021
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 4th MAY 2021**

Question

Will the Minister advise –

- (a) what the delay is in publishing the S.T.A.C. (Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell) minutes;
- (b) when the S.T.A.C. minutes will be published for the January, February, March, and April meetings;
- (c) what he will do to ensure that the minutes of all future S.T.A.C. meetings will be published in a timely manner;
- (d) when the Emergencies Council received minutes for S.T.A.C. meetings held in January, February March and April;
- (e) when the Competent Authorities Ministers received the minutes of these meetings held in January, February March and April;
- (f) when the Council of Ministers received the minutes of these meetings held in January, February March and April; and
- (g) whether it is his assessment that any delays in publishing the S.T.A.C. minutes could have an impact on the public's confidence in how the pandemic is being managed?

Answer

The Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell (STAC) provides a common source of health, scientific and technical advice to Government during emergencies. Minutes of discussions are published on gov.je in accordance with the STAC Terms of Reference, which state that:

“Advice is published as soon as it is reasonably practicable to do so, whilst upholding the safe space to debate live issues. It is likely that the policy development, security and/or personal information FOI exemptions may apply and this may mean that some information needs to be redacted or omitted before any publication. The timing of any publication will also need to be considered, with the most appropriate timing often being after the emergency is over.”

To date, all STAC minutes have been published without any redactions to the content. From March, minutes will include the names of participants and not just job titles. All minutes up to and including those for February have been published. Minutes for meetings held in March have already started to be published and minutes for April will be published as soon as possible.

STAC ensures that timely health, scientific and technical expertise is made available to inform Government during emergencies. The Chair and Vice Chairs of STAC are standing invitees to meetings of Competent Authority Ministers and Emergencies Council. They are also invited to attend Council of Ministers meetings as necessary. As such, the advice from STAC is generally conveyed in person as part of considering live issues, rather than via the subsequent circulation of minutes of STAC meetings, supporting good-quality and timely decision-making. As a result, once minutes are cleared by the Chair, they are able to progress straight to publication, rather than first being circulated within Government.

The public can be confident that Jersey has an effective mechanism in STAC through which to provide health, scientific and technical advice to Government during emergencies. That effectiveness of that mechanism is founded upon the preservation of the ‘safe space’ for members of STAC to consider issues

properly, balanced by the transparency of publishing STAC minutes as soon as reasonably practicable and in accordance with Freedom of Information principles.