

PM/SC/339

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

(3rd Meeting)

5th December 2014

(Business conducted by electronic mail)

PART A

All members were present.

Senator I.J. Gorst, Chief Minister
 Senator A.J.H. Maclean, Minister for Treasury and Resources
 Senator L.J. Farnham, Minister for Economic Development
 Senator Sir P.M. Bailhache, Minister for External Relations
 Senator A.K.F. Green, M.B.E, Minister for Health and Social Services
 Deputy A.E. Pryke of Trinity, Minister for Housing
 Deputy E.J. Noel of St. Lawrence, Minister for Transport and Technical Services
 Deputy S.J. Pinel of St. Clement, Minister for Social Security
 Deputy S.G. Luce of St. Martin, Minister for Planning and Environment
 Deputy R.G. Bryans of St. Helier, Minister for Education, Sport and Culture
 Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Peter, Minister for Home Affairs

In attendance -

P. Bradbury, Director – Corporate Policy, Chief Minister’s Department
 P. Monamy, Clerk to the Council of Ministers

Note: The Minutes of this meeting comprise Part A only.

“Council of
 Minister’s
 meetings:
 public access”
 (P.163/2014) –
 Deputy M.
 Tadier –
 comment.
 1444/4(43)

A1. The Council recalled that a report and proposition entitled “Council of Minister’s meetings: public access” (P.163/2014) had been lodged ‘au Greffe’ on 3rd November 2014 by Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade.

It was noted that the projet asked the States to request the Council to hold its meetings in public, except when discussing any matter which, by virtue of any enactment or code, it was entitled to discuss in private.

The Council considered that it strongly supported openness, transparency and accountability in government, which commitment was demonstrated through –

- the States website including a wide range of information, including Ministerial Decisions, Reports, Accounts, Budgets, and Public Consultations, and that the level of public information in that and other forms would continue to expand;
- support of this commitment by the introduction of the Freedom of Information (Jersey) Law 2011 on 1st January 2015, which would provide a statutory right to information with an independent Commissioner, strengthening public access to information; and

- the Council's intention to introduce a range of measures to support access to Ministers, including –
 - twice-yearly Ministerial 'drop-ins' (Chief Minister and other Ministers);
 - twice-yearly 'Council of Ministers in the Community' meetings;
 - monthly 'Ask the Minister' online question and answers sessions;
 - and
 - sessions for States Members to meet Ministers.

It was recalled that a majority of Members of the States Assembly as previously constituted had, in 2011, agreed that the Council of Ministers, as the policy-making body of government, should be able to undertake its work in private. This approach was noted as being consistent with that taken by all other governments throughout the British Isles, given that the United Kingdom did not hold Cabinet meetings in public, neither did the equivalent bodies of the other British-Irish jurisdictions. The Council considered that the adoption of collective responsibility for the Council of Ministers reinforced this principle, enabling full and frank discussions in private on a range of matters.

The Council concluded that it could not support the proposal that its meetings should be held in public, as it considered that this would impede the effectiveness of decision-making. The Council was of the view that it should focus on the implementation of the new Freedom of Information Law, the use of technology to provide increasing levels of information, and on taking democracy into the community.

The Council accordingly approved its comment on P.163/2014 and requested the Greffier of the States to arrange for this to be presented to the States for their information.