



2019 Business Plan

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Making the Jersey consumer voice heard and making it count

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Executive Summary

The time has come for a full review of the role that the Jersey Consumer Council (“JCC”) plays in Island life. With increased pressures on public funding, an overhaul of government, the threat of Brexit and how it will affect consumers and the ever increasing cost of everyday living, there has never been a greater need for a strong, effective and impactful consumer voice.

In order to conduct that review effectively and within budget, and while at the same time maintaining strong representation for consumers under a dwindling annual States grant which equates to less than £1 per head of population, the JCC needs to make a number of changes to enable it to focus on the needs of consumers and how it will represent them in the future.

The JCC plans to achieve this by focusing its time and efforts on matters which directly affect consumers, and gradually pull away from areas of community projects where the JCC is being used as a ‘tick-box’ exercise for more wider public consultation.

Our aims

- To continue to be a strong and well-informed voice for the consumer
- To continue to investigate and publicise anomalies in consumer affairs in the Island
- To provide Islanders with accurate and timely information to help them make informed decisions

Key Performance indicators for 2019

- to bring together the current four separate JCC websites into a single, easy to use, price-check and JCC information site
- to ensure that effective, appropriate and timely communications continue to remain at the heart of our activities for 2019
- to continue to organise and provide talks in the community at a rate of at least two per month
- to monitor changes or reviews relating to consumer matters brought about by Government or other recognised organisations and to contribute an official response to any such changes or reviews with consumer interests in mind
- to complete a review of the JCC’s relationship with the States by end of Q2 to see if there is potential for the Council to become more centrally funded, with each department contributing towards its funding

The newly appointed JCC members will have also collectively prioritised their three main aims for the year ahead and will go about achieving them in the hope of making a real difference to Islanders' lives. These aims, or objectives, have been selected and prioritised on the basis of where we can deliver meaningful benefits and a positive impact for Jersey consumers through the next three years.

Background

The JCC was originally established by Act of the States on 25th April 1995. In February 2011, the States adopted P.182/2010, which set out a new mandate for the JCC. It included for the first time a provision that the Chairman would not need to be a States Member.

Part of the proposition also required the Minister for Economic Development to take the necessary steps to establish the JCC as an appropriate legal entity. Subsequently in July 2011, the States adopted P.89/2011, which recommended that the JCC be established as an Incorporated Association under Article 4 of the Loi (1862) sur les teneures en fidéicommiss et l'incorporation d'associations. The benefits of achieving this included greater independence for the JCC, as well as the ability to enter into employment, research and consultancy contracts in its own right.

Following legal work on drafting a formal constitution, the Royal Court granted an Act of Incorporation on 11th November 2011 and directed that a copy of the Constitution be lodged with the Judicial Greffe.

In April 2018, the States approved the appointment of former Deputy Editor of the Jersey Evening Post Carl Walker as the third chairman of the JCC since its inception.

JCC Structure

The constitution of the JCC sets out the rules regarding the appointment of the Chairman and members.

Article 12.3 states: "The Chairman shall hold office for a term of three years and may be appointed to hold office for a further term of three years but shall not hold office as Chairman for more than six consecutive years."

i) Chairman

The role of Chair is a high profile one, requiring awareness of the sensitivities of public and political opinions on consumer issues. Excellent communication and social skills are essential to engage with stakeholders, government and the media.

The Chair needs to be pivotal on setting and achieving business plan objectives in line with a grant and the associated partnership agreement with Growth, Housing and Environment.

This is an important and influential role that seeks to empower individuals by representation through a strong consumer voice.

ii) JCC Members

One of the first requirements placed on the newly appointed Chairman in May 2018 was to recruit a new Council, as the members serving at the time of his appointment were nearing the end of their term of office. A lengthy and detailed recruitment campaign, which attracted much media attention, saw 27 applications made and, ultimately, eight individuals appointed (one short of the maximum allowed).

The JCC is now made up of representatives who make up a broad section of Island life with varied working experiences and with an age range from teenagers to pensioners.

The new members have been appointed, in accordance with the processes approved by the Jersey Appointments Commission, on one, two and three year terms (all with the option to extend) so as to provide continuity and to avoid the necessity of another mass recruitment process.

iii) Executive Officer

For the first time in more than seven years, the JCC enters a new year without a full-time executive officer. Its long standing, knowledgeable and experienced executive officer left the post in September 2018 and has yet to be fully replaced.

An interim part-time officer has been recruited to help with the administration of the JCC while a full review of the future role of the JCC in Island life is undertaken.

Objectives for 2019 and beyond

Communications

i) Launch new website

At present, the JCC has four separate websites. In addition to the main JCC site it has the Fuel Watch, Telco Watch and the recently-launched Primary Health Care Watch sites. Not all sites are hosted in the same way or by the same company, with varying amounts being charged annually for domain names and site hosting.

This year the JCC shall aim to launch one all-encompassing website. Not only will it continue to contain useful information and data to help keep consumers informed and up to date with latest changes that affect their lives, but it should also absorb the other three price monitoring sites too.

Therefore, by the end of the year, consumers will have a one-stop-shop for all of their consumer needs. From the price of eggs to the cost of visiting the doctor, all of the information islanders need will be on one single website.

ii) The newsletter

Historically the only guaranteed way of getting the JCC's messages into every home is through the distribution of the newsletter.

Drawing on his media background, the Chairman wishes to explore a number of avenues with regards to finding new and cost-effective ways of reaching every islander using well-established printed and online media. The new website should help, but the Council believes it should keep up with the times and see if there might be alternative, or at least additional, ways in which islanders can be reached and money saved.

At the very least, it is easier for the JCC to commit to publishing a set number of articles each year, allowing flexibility until potentially new, cheaper, printing and distribution models are identified.

Role in the community

i) Involvement in consultations and discussion groups

In order to help focus the efforts of the JCC on matters which directly affect consumers, it will likely pull back from the number of meeting groups and consultation processes where it is felt the JCC is being used as a representative of the public at large.

The Chairman has already met with the Scrutiny Panel Chairmen's Committee and explained that while it welcomes the opportunity to be consulted on matters relating to consumer matters, the JCC can no longer afford the time to be consulted on behalf of the public on much wider issues.

When it is asked to consult on certain technical issues, applicants for information will be requested to attend a JCC meeting in order to run through the consultation subject and be questioned in detail before any written submission is made on behalf of consumers.

ii) Talks in the community

The JCC will review the frequency and topics of the talks in the community it delivers to ensure that the level of administrative work involved is significantly reduced and that the subject matters being discussed always remain both relevant and topical. Attendees will be asked to provide feedback so that quality control can be monitored.

iii) Continue to settle in the JCC members

In 2018, a new Council was formed with eight members. They make up a broad section of the community, from a teenage youth worker to a retired headteacher and could easily become a Citizen's Panel for Jersey. Although the current constitution requires the JCC to meet four times a year, it is anticipated (based upon work so far in 2018) that the number of meetings held will increase in order to meet the new targets being set.

Therefore, in 2019, the new Council members will continue to bed into their new roles, with perhaps some of them taking more leading roles in various campaigns that the JCC as a whole has identified as its priorities for 2019. This may involve some of them speaking to the media, industry experts and business leaders in the community.

iv) Campaigns

The new JCC members have highlighted a number of areas of Island life where they feel they can make a difference, either through campaigning, applying pressure or raising awareness. Once three main campaign plans for 2019 are finalised and planned, Islanders will be informed and, in some cases, asked for help or feedback. At the time of writing, top of the list is some kind of VAT campaign, which will positively highlight those retailers removing the equivalent of the UK taxes from the UK Recommended Retail Price. This is an issue that has frequently been raised with the JCC over recent months.

v) Review the JCC's role in Island life

Through the newly appointed political representation, the Chairman intends to explore the possibility and feasibility of becoming more centrally funded, taking away the sole responsibility for funding from Housing, Growth and Environment. Only once this important step has been achieved can the JCC properly plan and bid to better represent consumers in the Island through the widening of the funding net.

As the JCC prepares to enter 2019, it remains woefully under-funded, with a further reduction due next year, in line with the States Mid-Term Financial Plan. While it is accepted that the JCC can apply to the Minister for 'top-up funding' for a particular project, it is not in the best interests of the consumer that before tackling an important subject, the JCC must first check the bank balance or prepare a case to convince a politician that more money is needed.

Part of the review should also consider updating the JCC's constitution, which is seen as restrictive and out-dated in certain areas. This may involve significant legal costs.

Other objectives

Remain ready

It is vital that while the JCC can do its best to predict what it will aim to achieve next year and beyond, it should be remembered that consumer matters are, on the whole, unpredictable. Therefore, the JCC must have the capacity to react, respond and take-on any relevant matter which may arise. As an example, the impact of Brexit on consumers and their everyday spending habits remains an unknown, but the JCC must be ready for all outcomes, ranging from helping to give advice to representing consumers who may suffer certain losses after March 2019.

2019 and beyond

Much of the work in 2019 will be helping to consolidate the work of the JCC so that its efforts, under the reduced budget and with the lack of a full-time executive officer, can be focused on key, obtainable targets which will have a positive impact on the lives of consumers.

That consolidated and targeted work will continue into 2020 and 2021, and with potentially choppy waters ahead as the UK fully withdraws from the EU, the work of consumer representation may never have been needed as much.

The JCC will continue to identify its three key targets each year, as well as seek to become more centrally funded, both to share the cost among all of the States departments and to give the JCC greater credibility and ability when tackling consumer-related challenges.

An unknown at this stage is what staff will be required to help the JCC in the future, so conservative estimates have been made at this stage, with a view to approach the relevant minister and/or States department in the future for top-up funding if needed. Equally, if constitutional changes are required, with the subsequent legal fees, a similar top-up application may also have to be considered.

Key Performance Indicators for 2019

JCC 2019 Business Plan Objectives	Key Performance Indicators	Targets and Timescales
JCC constitutional requirements	Jersey Consumer Council meetings	Hold a minimum of four full meetings
	Recruit or reappoint two new/existing Council members	Overseen by Jersey Appointments Commission, Q3
Communications	Publish minimum of 24 articles	Two per month/six per quarter
	Continue to increase social media following	Grow online following by 10% by Q4
	New website	Combine all four websites to one single site serving consumers by Q3
	Public talks	Hold minimum of two community talks a month. Topic / attendance review and provision of online / paper feedback forms by Q1
	Media requests	Continue to be pro-active to media exposure and reply to all requests for comment/interview
Advocacy/Consultation	Continue to monitor prices and publish results online	Ongoing throughout the year
	Continue to work with the Sustainable Primary Health Care Team	Ongoing throughout the year
	Continue to be part of the Jersey Retail Association	Ongoing throughout the year
	Continue to be part of the 'Consumer and Us' working group	Ongoing throughout the year
	Continue to update all information on all websites, and once merged	Ongoing throughout the year
Campaigns	Launch, run and complete three consumer campaigns throughout the year, as selected by JCC members	Launch first campaign no later than Q2

Estimated operating expenses 2019 - 2021

Estimated Operating Expenses	2019	2020	2021
Staff Costs			
Honorarium	£10,000	£10,000	Unknown
Officer	£15,000	Unknown	Unknown
Premises and Equipment			
Insurance	£400	£400	£400
Office space contribution	£1,500	£1,500	£1,500
Phones/internet	£600	£600	£600
Stationery	£150	£140	£140
Subscriptions	£650	£650	£650
Travel and meeting costs	£2,500	£1,000	£1,000
Professional Services			
Audit fees	£1,200	£1,300	£1,400
Business plan objectives			
3 x consumer campaigns	£9,000	£9,000	£9,000
Price monitoring	£4,000	Unknown	Unknown
Communications			
New website	£12,500		
Newsletters	£25,000	Unknown	Unknown
Website maintenance	£3,500	Unknown	Unknown
Sponsored social media	£1,000	Unknown	Unknown
Total	£87,000	Unknown	Unknown