

STATES OF JERSEY



MINISTERIAL OFFICE: INDEPENDENT SUPPORT TO MINISTERS (P.23/2026): COMMENTS

Presented to the States on 5th March 2026
by the Chief Minister

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

P23/2026, “Ministerial Office: Independent Support to Ministers” asks for a framework to be developed and implemented which ensures that the Ministerial Office (the administrative functions that directly support Ministers) maintain the explicit ability to challenge their colleagues. The Council of Ministers consider the Ministerial Office to have this ability. They believe their officials, whether in the Ministerial Office or otherwise, set out the facts and relevant issues faithfully, and that they do so without fear or favour and in a way that maintains political impartiality. Nevertheless, there is merit in outlining arrangements in more depth to provide assurance and to be transparent. For that reason, the framework requested in the Proposition is set out in the annex.

The Council of Ministers can also see that the States Employment Board may wish to consider embedding some of these principles in the civil service code, in so far as they are not already.

As to the Amendment to P23/2026, the Council of Ministers consider this goes considerably further than the Ministerial Office. The Amendment requests a splitting of the role of the Chief Executive Officer. This is not implementing recommendations 35 of the Democratic Accountability and Governance Report¹. The Report instead recommended that these matters be considered. It would be premature to enact something that needs deep consideration, especially if the outcome would be a split of responsibility at the top of the civil service between delivery and implementation on the one hand; and policy formation on the other.

In our system of government, Ministers are legal entities on whose behalf all decisions are taken. Ministers are ultimately accountable, as outlined in the Code of Conduct and Practice for Ministers and Assistant Ministers², to the Assembly and the electorate for all actions in their areas of responsibility, including for the policies, decisions, and actions of the departments and agencies which discharge their responsibilities. Policy and operations are also closely related, in so far as policy decisions will direct operations and operational learning will inform policy. A split in leadership between policy and operations risks creating parallel organisational structures. While there is a central policy function within the Cabinet Office which leads some policy functions and sets standards, a very substantial proportion of policy is delivered by other Departments (fiscal, economic, health, transport, and regulation, most prominently) whose Chief Officers report to the Chief Executive Officer. If there is to be a single Head of Policy who does not report to the Chief Executive Officer, they may need to have line management of all policy functions in government. That is a fundamental restructuring of the public service. If a Minister’s Departmental Chief Officer is only responsible for delivery, it means changing their roles, and it means each Minister also has a completely separate policy officer directly reporting to a single Head of Policy. This proposal also has no precedent, as suggested, in the United Kingdom Government. In Whitehall, the Cabinet Secretary is akin to Jersey’s Chief Executive Officer and line manages all the Permanent Secretaries of the Departments (akin to Jersey’s Chief Officers). There is no distinction between policy and delivery at the most senior level.

¹ [R-23-2022.pdf](#)

² [R-31-2024.pdf](#) Paragraph 1: “Executive Members have a duty to the States Assembly to account for matters for which they are responsible, including for the policies, decisions, and actions of the departments and agencies which discharge their responsibilities.”

Conclusion

Ministers urge Members to reject both the main Proposition (as unnecessary and substantially addressed) and the Amendment (as the matter needs some substantially more work and has significant potential risks and costs).

Statement under Standing Order 37A [Presentation of comment relating to a proposition]

This comment was submitted to the States Greffe after the noon deadline as set out in Standing Order 37A due to the volume of States business and to enable drafting to be finalised.

Annex

Ministerial Office: Framework Agreement

Introduction

1. This framework, as requested by the P23/2026, “Ministerial Office: Independent Support to Ministers”, outlines and maintains the explicit ability of the Ministerial Office to support Ministers and Assistant Ministers, including, as necessary, being able to challenge civil service colleagues on behalf of Ministers and Assistant Ministers without “fear or favour”. This must be done alongside obligations to act in line with the civil service code and relevant corporate governance requirements.
2. The framework substantially reflects the existing arrangements and operating practices of the Ministerial Office, but outlining for the record reinforces these arrangements and practices and improves transparency.

Constitutional Context ³

3. Ministers are individually elected legal entities, empowered to make decisions and subject to democratic oversight and accountability. They do this individually as “corporation sole” and collectively as the Council of Ministers, and are subject to the Codes of Conduct and Practice for Ministers and Assistant Ministers. ⁴
4. The role of the public service is to advise Ministers, implement the decisions of Ministers, and administer services on their behalf. For the purposes of this, employees are organised into departments under the leadership of a Chief Officer who takes their policy direction from the responsible Minister.
5. The Chief Executive Officer has responsibilities for the overall administration and general management of the public service and the implementation of corporate and strategic policies. They discharge these responsibilities through the management of the Chief Officers and being the principal policy adviser to the Council of Ministers.

Ministerial Office

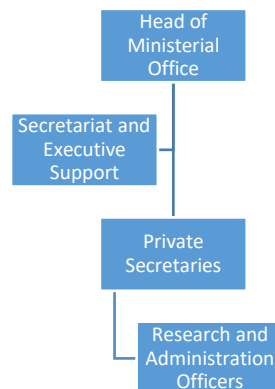
6. The staff of the Ministerial Office, in common with other public servants, seek to ensure the objectives of the Council of Ministers and Ministers are delivered. They do this by providing “private office” administrative and advisory functions directly to Ministers and Assistant Ministers, helping ensure that they are appropriately supported in the performance of their duties, including accounting to the States Assembly and its Committees, and Panels.
7. The Ministerial Office is hosted within the Cabinet Office, which also comprises the Communications and Policy Directorates. This aligns with the recommendations of the Democratic Accountability and Governance Report. The purpose of bringing these functions together is to support coordination across government, without

³ Established in the following legislation: [States of Jersey Law 2005](#); [Employment of States of Jersey Employees \(Jersey\) Law 2005](#); [Public Finances \(Jersey\) Law 2019](#). The consequent structures are shown the published organisational charts of government: [Government of Jersey structure](#)

⁴ [States Assembly | R.31/2024](#)

detracting from the individual authority of each Minister to provide direction in their areas of responsibility, or the ability of the staff of the Ministerial Office to support Ministers in accordance with the instructions of Ministers.

8. The services provided by the Ministerial Office include support services such as diary and correspondence management; the compilation of information for meetings and events; and generally, the processing of ministerial business and decisions. They also act, with the States Greffe, as the secretariat to the Council of Ministers and other Ministerial Groups⁵; and aid Ministers and civil service colleagues with procedural, conduct, and practical advice; and over the course of these responsibilities, seek to provide appropriate and constructive challenge as part of decision-making.
9. In this sense, the Ministerial Office perform for Ministers and Assistant Ministers a comparable function to that provided by the States Greffe to the States Assembly, its Committees and Panels, and States Members. The remit of the States Greffe is to be “responsible for providing independent administrative support”.
10. As to the structure of the Ministerial Office, it is led by a senior officer who has line management responsibilities for Private Secretaries (and the shared administrative functions of the office) who are assigned to Ministers.
11. Organisational Chart: Ministerial Office:



12. The role of the Private Secretary role is to provide “advice and guidance to Ministers and Assistant Ministers to support a coherent, effective and rapidly delivered programme of policies and projects, holding to the highest standards of probity and professionalism, and promoting confidence in the operation of government”.⁶
13. The staff of the Ministerial Office aim to ensure Ministers and Assistant Ministers are aware of any matters they feel they should be aware of, by providing access to expert officials and materials or otherwise raising matters as they see fit.
14. The staff are not constrained as to the content of the advice they provide in relation to any policy or operational matter they encounter or anticipate; on the contrary, the

⁵ [How the Council of Ministers works](#)

⁶ [ID FOI 6305 Private Secretary Job Description 20230329.pdf](#)

advice must be free and frank. They also cannot be directed in these matters by colleagues. At the same time:

- a. The staff do not purport to be subject matter experts on policy or operational matters (save in relation to matters relating to the responsibilities Ministers) nor do they instruct other civil servants save by passing on the instructions of Ministers.
 - b. The staff must also always abide by the civil service code⁷, acting with respect, objectivity, and integrity; and working collaboratively and constructively with fellow civil servants as part of team effort.
15. The Ministerial Office is also subject to all relevant corporate governance requirements, including financial management, data processing, employment practices, and more generally, are obliged to positively participate in management and staff forums, whether within the Cabinet Office or across government. Such matters nevertheless should not impede the primary function of acting for Ministers and Assistant Ministers.
16. As to the line management of the senior officer in the Ministerial Office, this is a matter for the States Employment Board and Chief Executive; and bearing in mind the above is largely immaterial. In any case, the senior officer and all the team are subject to performance assessment, just as all other civil servants are, and this should be done seeking to views of Ministers and Chief Officers.

Arrangements

17. Any dispute concerning the above is resolved by consultation between the Chief Minister and Chief Executive Officer, or where otherwise necessary, by reference to the Council of Ministers and States Employment Board.
18. The above arrangements are kept under review and may be changed, consulting with the Machinery of Government sub-Committee, or another relevant Committee. In that way, structures and arrangements are always under the direction of Ministers and considered in consultation with the Assembly.
19. The costs of the Ministerial Office must be within approved budgets, and the staff are obliged to continuously seek to deliver value for money both in their own budget and by way of supporting effective decision making across government.

Conclusion

20. The Ministerial Office has an important, if subordinate, role in promoting effective government and trust in government. They provide support and assurance directly to Ministers and Assistant Ministers in furtherance of their objectives, doing so within the confines of the codes that apply to all civil servants.

⁷ [States of Jersey Codes of Practice](#)