STATES OF JERSEY

CHANGE THE COMMON STRATEGIC POLICY TO A REPORT PRESENTED TO THE ASSEMBLY

Lodged au Greffe on 13th November 2026
by Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity
Earliest date for debate: 8th December 2026

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

(a) to agree that Article 18(2)(e) of the States of Jersey Law 2005 and the Standing Orders of the States of Jersey should be amended to remove the requirement that the Common Strategic Policy of the Council of Ministers must be lodged "au Greffe" and approved by the States, and to insert an alternative requirement that the policy should, instead –

(i) be presented to the States as a report within 4 months of the appointment of a new Council of Ministers and subject to an In-Committee debate by the States Assembly a minimum of 6 weeks after it is presented; and

(ii) be the subject of an annual report by the Council of Ministers, presented to the States by 31st January each year, setting out progress against each of its priorities and actions, with measurable indicators where possible, and discussed by the States sitting In-Committee; and

(b) to request the Privileges and Procedures Committee to bring forward for approval the necessary amendments to the States of Jersey Law 2005 and the Standing Orders of the States of Jersey to give effect to the proposal.

DEPUTY H.L. JEUNE OF ST. JOHN, ST. LAWRENCE AND TRINITY

REPORT

Introduction

This proposition asks the Assembly to stop approving the Common Strategic Policy (CSP) by proposition and to receive it as a Report instead. Ministers would still prepare it, refer it to Scrutiny and present it to the Assembly.

Members would then debate it In-Committee, without a vote. That gives the Council of Ministers the chance to explain its priorities and each Minister's focus and gives Members an opportunity to raise concerns or offer support.

The Government describes the CSP as "the strategic framework for the Council of Ministers' term of office, setting out the Government's priorities and direction of travel." I agree. It is the Council's framework and the Government's priorities, which raises the obvious question of why the whole Assembly is asked to approve it.

Nothing in this proposition removes the CSP or stops Ministers setting their priorities. It simply treats the CSP as what it is: the Government's own plan.

The 2006 precedent

This is not a new concern. In May 2006, a year into ministerial government, Senator B.E. Shenton lodged P.55/2006, "Strategy Plan: approval by the States". He asked for the plan to be presented as a report and discussed in Committee rather than approved. He argued that:

- the plan "should be seen more as a manifesto of the Council of Ministers" than a policy document needing the Assembly's approval;
- approval would let Ministers cite the plan as authority for far-reaching policies, instead of bringing each one back to the Assembly;
- an In-Committee debate lets Members speak more than once and question Ministers, so Ministers can gauge opinion and adjust their plans.

The proposition was withdrawn before it was debated. In its Comments, the Council of Ministers said that without the plan "the States lacks direction", but also that new legislation and major policy "will still have to be referred to the States Assembly for a decision". That remains true today, and it supports this proposition. If every significant decision comes back to the Assembly anyway, approving the CSP adds very little, apart from the risk that it is later quoted as the Assembly's endorsement.

The current Chief Minister has made the same point. Answering Oral Question 122/2026 on 10th November he told the Assembly:

> "the CSP is not a fixed four-year programme or an exhaustive list of everything the government or indeed the States Assembly will wish to do. Ministers will continue to lead their wider portfolios and if new challenges or opportunities arise, we will respond to them. Equally we welcome States members' contribution who can continue to bring forward new initiatives. The CSP gives us a clear direction and focus, but it does not prevent us from adapting as or if the circumstances change." (States Meeting - 10 November 2026 - AM -

Tuesday 10 November 2026, 9:30am - States of Jersey Webcasting, timestamp 1:55:13)

Later the same day, he said Ministers are "already accountable through annual Budgets" and "through scrutiny". Additionally, the Chief Minister stated that Ministers are "accountable through questions without notice, oral and written questions, propositions, debates and public reporting." (States Meeting - 10 November 2026 - PM - Tuesday 10 November 2026, 2:15pm - States of Jersey Webcasting, timestamp 0:55:47)

I agree with him on both points. If the CSP does not bind Ministers or Members, and Ministers are already accountable in all those other ways, then approving it adds nothing to accountability. If the CSP does not bind anyone, there is no need for the Assembly to approve it.

Twenty years on, the question is still open. This proposition revives Senator Shenton's proposal, updated for the law as it now stands.

How the CSP 2026–2030 was developed

Article 18(2)(e) of the States of Jersey Law 2005 requires the Council of Ministers to lodge its CSP "for referral to one or more Scrutiny Panels … and approval by the States." Article 18(2A) sets the deadline: within four months of the Council's appointment and no later than its first Government Plan [now referred to as the Budget]. Standing Orders add a minimum lodging period of six weeks (SO 26(4)).

Despite the requirement for asking the Assembly's approval, the process gave non-executive Members about two and a half hours of input into a plan covering the whole four-year term. P.75/2026 was lodged on 29 September 2026 and debated on 10 November. During the debate on the CSP 2026-2030, there were Members who questioned both the CSP process and why the whole Assembly votes on it.

In outline:

1. The timescale was short, driven by the statutory deadlines.
2. The Council of Ministers drafted the document on its own.
3. Non-executive Members were offered a one-hour briefing. A 90-minute workshop followed only after the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel pushed for it.
4. The CSP was lodged for approval, leaving amendments as Members' only formal way to influence it.
5. No Scrutiny comments were presented on the CSP itself. On almost any other government proposition, Members would expect a Scrutiny view to help them decide how to vote. But even when Scrutiny does examine a CSP, as the CSP Review Panel did in 2024, it can only test gaps and deliverability. It cannot tell Members whether the Government's political priorities are the right ones. That is a choice for Ministers to cover strategic cross-cutting objectives. This panel specifically focused on scrutinising if the government was achieving its strategic policies, not on the original document.

Members and Panels lodged 24 amendments in total, including amendments from me and from the Panel I chair. We brought amendments because there was no other route.

Whose document is it?

The CSP is the Council of Ministers' agreement, not the Assembly's. The Council is a coalition in all but name. Its Ministers stood on different manifestos, hold different views and run very different portfolios. The CSP records what they can agree on together. In jurisdictions with established parties, it would be the coalition agreement: the terms the partners sign up to, and the document whose breakdown can bring a government down.

It should be published, presented, debated and scrutinised. But non-executive Members did not negotiate it or draft it and had little chance to shape it. Asking them to approve it treats them as co-authors of a plan they had almost no hand in.

Accountability and scrutiny

Approval blurs the line between those who govern and those who scrutinise. Once the Assembly has approved the CSP, Ministers can say the Assembly endorsed their priorities, which is exactly what Senator Shenton warned about.

It also puts Scrutiny in an awkward position. Panels are expected to hold Ministers to account for priorities their own members voted for, and Members who opposed parts of the plan find it described as the Assembly's.

Scrutiny adds most value by examining delivery. In 2025, the CSP Review Panel examined delivery of the 2024–2026 CSP and made recommendations, most of which the Government rejected. The annual progress report in part (a)(ii) of this proposition would give that work a regular, public anchor: a report each year, measured against the CSP's own actions and debated in the Chamber.

What this proposition would and would not do

The Council of Ministers would still prepare a CSP, refer it to Scrutiny and present it within the existing deadlines. The In-Committee debate would take place on broadly the same timetable as the current approval debate. The only change is that the Assembly would no longer be asked to approve it, and Ministers would report back each year.

If the Assembly is going to be asked to own a plan, it should be involved in building it. Until that happens, the plan should be presented as the Government's own, and the Assembly should hold Ministers to account against it.

Financial and staffing implications

There are no direct financial implications. Bringing forward the legal and Standing Order changes would need officer and law-drafting time from the Privileges and Procedures Committee and the States Greffe. The annual progress report can draw on performance information the Government already collects for its Annual Report and Accounts.

Children's Rights Impact Assessment

I consider that this proposition has no direct or indirect impact on children and that the duty to have due regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child does not arise. Accordingly, a Children's Rights Impact Assessment is not required under the Children (Convention Rights) (Jersey) Law 2022.