

Dear Secretary to the Committee of Constables,

I am writing to request that the Committee of Constables considers a full review of Governance in relation to Island Parish Affairs and Administration.

Whilst I am sure historically the system suited the limited population and farming community well, I believe it is now verging on the undemocratic and certainly lacks transparency. In this respect I believe the Parish System is in danger of being brought into disrepute and the last thing Jersey needs is for the System to fail.

Some of the factors which I consider inadequate and this is by no means an exhaustive list are :-

There is no quorum for a Parish Assembly which means valid resolutions can be passed by just two attendees;

The notice for meetings is inadequate and I have seen these called, in very recent times, with five days' notice;

Adequate notice of an Assembly consists of it appearing in the "boite grille" outside the Parish Church, which can't be right; (I appreciate that most are Gazetted but many Parishioners do not look at the Gazette)

The Governance for Parish meetings such as Roads Committee, Rates Assessors, Accounts Committee etc. is totally inadequate or non- existent;

These first four points often result, inappropriately, in the same individuals being reappointed to the same roles for decades creating a sense of entitlement rather than service to the community. (Challenges to this situation ,which are starting to happen, can result in behaviour at assemblies verging on intimidation)

There seems to be a very arbitrary and out of date Financial Governance in place for Parish Accounting seemingly outside normal up to date accounting standards. This makes accounts difficult to read with assets not properly recorded. (I have a particular concern about the recording, audit and management of Parish Trust and Charity funds. There are significant differences between the Parishes with some not even being displayed for information purposes in Parish Accounts)

The meetings of Committees, particularly Roads' Committees should be open to the Public for the sake of transparency; (St. Helier is ahead of the game on this one and I was pleased to see your own minutes and meetings are available to the Public)

The role of Procureur is ill defined with no obvious accountability; (This guide goes some way to assist. <https://comite.je/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2022/03/Guidance-for-Procureurs-du-Bien-Public-2022.pdf>)

I did serve as a Parish rates Assessor many years ago but only did one term as I considered the system badly defined and inaccurate which I told the Constable at the time. Let's be honest the way it is calculated, intrinsically on the value of a property, means it is a form of Wealth Tax and not relevant to the utilisation of Parish costs by the ratepayer. In this respect you could have two identical houses, one occupied by a well off family of five and the other by a less well - off older person yet they will pay the same rates. The usage of the costs to which the rate is applied in this

respect should be five times more for the family of five than the one older person. Thus it is in effect a wealth tax and of course should be a poll tax.

I also believe that the relationship between the Church and the Parish is outmoded, outdated and discriminatory but do not want to confuse this with the Governance issues as it will be a much more emotive issue so will save this one for another day.

I have copied this e-mail to the Bailiff and Attorney General as I believe they should be aware of these comments but also to the Chief Minister and Chief Executive who will no doubt have to be instrumental in making the move to change the law which will hopefully be driven by your Committee.

I look forward to hearing about the action proposed in due course.

Kind Regards,

Leslie

Leslie Norman